

Chapter 1932(1)

Janamejaya asked, ‘After having obtained the kingdom, how did the immensely fortunate Pandavas, my grandfathers, act towards the great-souled and great king, Dhritarashtra? The king’s advisers and sons had been slain. He was without a refuge. With the prosperity gone, what did the illustrious Gandhari do? How long did my great-souled forefathers and ancestors remain in that kingdom? You should tell me this in detail.’

Vaishampayana replied, ‘With the enemy slain, the great-souled Pandavas obtained the kingdom. Placing Dhritarashtra at their head, they protected the earth. Vidura, Sanjaya and the intelligent Kourava Yuyutsu, the son of a vaishya lady, tended to Dhritarashtra. Before undertaking any task, the Pandavas asked the king and obtained his permission. They did this for fifteen years. Those brave ones always went to the king and worshipped him. Acting according to the views of Dharmaraja, they touched his feet. Before they engaged in any task, he inhaled the fragrances of their heads. Kuntibhoja’s daughter¹ also followed Gandhari. So did Droupadi, Subhadra and the other Pandava women. They followed the rites in attending to them, as if they were their own father-in-law and mother-in-law. O great king! Yudhishtira presented Dhritarashtra with extremely expensive beds, garments, ornaments, everything that should be given to a king and large quantities of food and objects of pleasure. Kunti acted in the same way towards Gandhari, treating her like a senior. Vidura, Sanjaya and Kourava Yuyutsu tended to the aged king, whose sons had been slain. Drona’s brother-in-law, Kripa, the great archer and beloved and great brahmana, also attended on him. The illustrious Vyasa always dwelt with the king. O king! He told him accounts of the ancient rishis, devaishis and rakshasas. On Dhritarashtra’s instructions, Vidura undertook many kinds of tasks and rites that were in conformity with dharma. Because of Vidura’s influence, they obtained riches, large and small, from vassal kingdoms and were loved by them. Those who were imprisoned were freed. Those identified for capital punishment were also freed. With dharma in his soul, the king never said anything about this.² When Ambika’s son³ went out on a pleasure trip, the immensely energetic king of the Kurus, Yudhishtira, gave him every object of pleasure. As in earlier times, cooks, chefs⁴ and confectioners served King Yudhishtira. As is proper, the Pandavas offered Dhritarashtra extremely expensive garments and many kinds of garlands. As was the case earlier, he was given maireya liquor, meat, light beverages and wonderfully concocted food. Lords of the earth assembled on every side. As in earlier times, all of them served the Indra among the Kouravas.⁵ Kunti, Droupadi, the beautiful Satvati,⁶ Ulupi, the naga princess, the queen Chitrangada, Dhristaketu’s sister and Jarasandha’s daughter⁷—all of them served Subala’s daughter⁸ like servants. Yudhishtira’s perpetual instruction to his brothers was that the king should not suffer the slightest bit of misery because of being deprived of his sons. All of them paid special attention to Dharmaraja’s purposeful words and acted according to them, with the sole exception of Bhima. The evil intelligence and conduct of the sons of Dhritarashtra at the time of the gambling match were still lodged in the brave one’s heart.’

Chapter 1933(2)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The king who was Ambika’s son was thus worshipped by the Pandavas. He found pleasure, as in earlier times, and the rishis tended to him. The king who was Kunti’s son, the extender of the Kuru lineage, gave everything that should be given to brahmanas. King Yudhishtira was affectionate and non-violent. The lord of the earth told his brothers and advisers, “The lord of men⁹ must be worshipped by me and you. A person who follows Dhritarashtra’s instructions is my well-wisher. A man who acts contrary to this is an enemy and will go to hell.” At the time of performing the funeral ceremonies for his sons, it was instructed that everything that the king¹⁰ desired should be given. The immensely intelligent Kouravya, King Dhritarashtra, gave brahmanas great quantities of riches, just as they deserved. Dharmaraja, Bhima, Savyasachi and the twins—all of them followed Dhritarashtra’s instructions. How could the aged king suffer grief on account of his sons? They wished to ensure

that he did not die because of grief. They made sure that the foremost among the Kurus obtained all the objects of pleasure that he enjoyed as long as his sons were alive. Together, all the five Pandava brothers followed this good conduct and obeyed Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra saw that those brave ones were humble and always behaved with modesty. He was like a preceptor surrounded by disciples. Gandhari performed all kinds of funeral ceremonies for her sons and freed herself of her debt towards them, giving to brahmanas. In this way, Dharmaraja Yudhishtira, intelligent and foremost among those who upheld dharma, together with his brothers, worshipped the king.'

Chapter 1934(3)

Vaishampayana said, 'The extremely energetic and aged king, the extender of the Kuru lineage, could not see anything unpleasant in Pandu's descendant. The great-souled Pandava always followed virtuous conduct and King Dhritarashtra, Ambika's son, was pleased with him. Gandhari, Subala's daughter, forgot all sorrow on account of her sons. She was always pleased with them, as if they were her own sons. O extender of the Kuru lineage! Kouravya always acted in an agreeable way towards the king who was Vichitravirya's son and never did anything disagreeable. O great king! Whatever King Dhritarashtra said that he wanted done and whatever the illustrious Gandhari desired, small or large, was done by the Pandava king, the bearer of burdens. The destroyer of enemy heroes honoured those words and acted in accordance with those wishes. Therefore, the king was pleased at this conduct and was tormented by memories of his evil-minded son. The king always arose at dawn, meditated and purified himself. He then blessed the sons of Pandu that they might be invincible in battle. As instructed by brahmanas, he offered oblations into the fire. The king pronounced benedictions that the sons of Pandu might live for a long time. The king had never obtained such great delight from his own sons, nothing like the joy the king got from the sons of Pandu. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The state of brahmanas, the aged, kshatriyas and large numbers of vaishyas and shudras was extremely agreeable. Following the king,¹¹ the king acted so that his heart no longer bore the evil acts that the sons of Dhritarashtra had done towards him earlier. If a man did anything unpleasant towards Ambika's son, the intelligent Kounteya acted against him. Scared of Yudhishtira, no man said anything about the wicked deeds done by King Dhritarashtra or Duryodhana. O slayer of enemies! The Indra among men,¹² Gandhari and Vidura were pleased with Ajatashatru's fortitude and purity, but not with Bhima. Bhima did follow the instructions of the king, Dharma's son. However, he became cheerless whenever he saw Dhritarashtra. Kouravya¹³ saw that Dharma's son followed the extremely intelligent king and also followed him, but his heart was not in it.'

Chapter 1935(4)

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! The people did not see anything missing in the affection that King Yudhishtira and Duryodhana's father displayed towards each other. O king! However, whenever the Kourava king remembered his foolish son, the king couldn't help mentally censuring Bhima. O Indra among kings! In that way, Bhimasena could never tolerate King Dhritarashtra and caused the aged one displeasure. Vrikodara didn't reveal these disagreeable acts. Instead, he used deceitful men to ignore his commands. One day, in the midst of his well-wishers, Bhima intolerantly slapped his palms, in Dhritarashtra and Gandhari's hearing. He remembered his enemy, Duryodhana, and Karna and Duhshasana. Extremely enraged, Bhima spoke these harsh words. "This aged king's sons were skilled in the use of all weapons. However, my arms are like clubs and I used these to kill them and convey them to the world hereafter. My arms are said to be like clubs and are impossible to withstand. The sons of Dhritarashtra were embraced by these and were destroyed. That is the reason these arms should be smeared with sandalwood paste and revered. It is because of these that Duryodhana and his sons and relatives have been destroyed." Vrikodara spoke many other similar words and they were like stakes. Hearing these, the king was distressed. The intelligent queen, Gandhari, knew about the progress of time and knew about all kinds of dharma. De-

spite hearing this, she paid no attention. However, after fifteen years had elapsed, the king was extremely affected by similar words from Bhima and they were like arrows. The king became distressed. King Yudhishtira, Kunti's son, didn't know this, nor did the one with the white horses,¹⁴ Kunti, the illustrious Droupadi or Madri's sons. They did not know Bhima's mind, or that he was happy at this. They sought to protect the king and never spoke anything that was disagreeable. After this, Dhritarashtra summoned his well-wishers and in a voice choking with tears, spoke these purposeful and grave words.'

Chapter 1936(5)

'Dhritarashtra said, "All of you know how the destruction of the Kurus came about. O Kouravas! It is known that all this happened because of my crimes. He was evil-minded, foolish and increased the fear of his relatives. However, it was I who instated Duryodhana as a lord over the Kouravas. I did not listen to Vasudeva's words, which were full of importance. 'It will be a virtuous act to kill this wicked and evil-minded one, with his advisers.' I was overcome by affection towards my son and did not heed the learned and beneficial words of Vidura, Bhishma, Drona and Kripa. At every step, the illustrious and great-souled Vyasa said the same thing and so did Sanjaya and Gandhari. I am now tormented because of that. The great-souled sons of Pandu are full of qualities. But I did not bestow the blazing and prosperous earth, inherited from my ancestors, on them. Gada's elder brother¹⁵ foresaw the destruction of all the kings, but Janardana thought that this would be supremely beneficial. I did not control myself from engaging in what was futile. I always bear that in my heart, like thousands of snakes. In particular, it has tormented me for fifteen years. I am extremely evil-minded. I wish to control myself and purify my sins. Gandhari knows that I only eat and drink a little, at the fourth hour, and sometimes at the eighth hour. All my relatives think that I eat regularly. This has been hidden. Otherwise, Pandava Yudhishtira would have been sorely tormented. I clad myself in deerskin, lie down on darbha grass on the ground and meditate. The illustrious Gandhari also follows similar vows. One hundred brave sons, who did not retreat from the field of battle, have been killed. Knowing that this is the dharma of kshatriyas, I have not been tormented.'"

Vaishampayana continued, 'Kourava spoke in this way to Dharmaraja. "O fortunate one! O Yadavi!¹⁶ Listen to my words. O son! I have been sustained by you in great happiness. I have given great gifts away and have repeatedly performed funeral ceremonies. O son! My age and strength are just right to earn auspicious merits. Though her sons have been slain, it is Gandhari who has taught me patience. They oppressed Droupadi and stole away her riches. However, following dharma, those violent ones have been slain in the battle. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! I do not see anything more that needs to be done for them. They have been killed while facing the battle and have conquered the worlds with their weapons. O Indra among kings! My best course of action is what brings benefit to me and Gandhari. Therefore, you should grant us permission. You are foremost among those who uphold dharma. You have always been devoted to dharma. You are the king who sustains the life of all beings. That is the reason I am speaking to you. O brave one! Grant us permission. We wish to resort to the forest. With Gandhari, I will wear tattered rags and skins. Pronouncing benedictions over you, we should resort to dwelling in the forest. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O son! In our lineage, that has always been regarded as the best. O king! When the age is right, one must hand over the possessions to the son and go to the forest. I will reside there, subsisting on air and fasting. O brave one! With my wife as a companion, I will observe supreme austerities. O son! As a king, you will also obtain the fruits of those austerities. The king has a share in the fruits, good or bad, of anything done in the kingdom.'"

Chapter 1937(6)

'Yudhishtira said, "O king! I am not pleased at your leaving the kingdom in such grief. Shame on me. I am extremely evil-minded. I have been addicted to the kingdom and have been careless. O king! I did not know

that you were afflicted by grief and have become thin because of fasting. With my brothers, I did not know that you were not eating and were lying down on the ground. I am foolish and have been deceived by your deep intelligence. Before this, though you were afflicted by sorrow, you assured me. What will I do with this kingdom or with these objects of pleasure? What will I do with sacrifices and happiness? My king has suffered from a great deal of misery. I now know that my kingdom is diseased and so am I. O lord of men! But what is the point in speaking these words of sorrow to you? You are our father. You are our mother. You are our supreme preceptor. Separated from you, how will we remain alive? O supreme among kings! Yuyutsu is a son who has been born from your own loins. O great king! Let him be the king, or whoever else you think fit. I will go to the forest. You rule the kingdom. I am being burnt through ill fame. Do not burn me again. I am not the king. You are the king. I am dependent on you. You know about dharma. How can I grant permission to someone who is a senior? O unblemished one! Because of what Duryodhana did, I bear no rancour in my heart. Know it to be destiny and we were all confounded by it. We are your sons, just like Duryodhana and the others. It is my view that there is no difference between Gandhari and Kunti. O Indra among kings! If you abandon us and leave, I will follow you at the rear. I will take a pledge on that. This earth, up to the girdle of the ocean, is full of riches. Without you, this will no longer be agreeable to me. All of this belongs to you. To gratify you, I bow down my head. O Indra among kings! All of us are under your subjugation. Please dispel this mental fever. O lord of men! I think it is destiny which has come over you. It is through good fortune that we are able to serve you. Free us from this mental fever.”

‘Dhritarashtra replied, “O son! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! My mind has turned towards austerities. O lord! Going to the forest is appropriate for our lineage. O son! You have honoured me for a long time. You have served me for a long time. O lord of men! Since I am aged, you should grant me permission.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘King Dhritarashtra, Ambika’s son, spoke these words to Dharmaraja and joining his hands in salutation, trembled. He told Sanjaya, the great adviser, and maharatha Kripa, “I wish to entreat the king through you. My mind and heart are distressed. My mouth is dry. I am aged and speech leads to exertion.” The aged king, the extender of the Kuru lineage and with dharma in his soul, spoke in this way. The intelligent one leaned on Gandhari and seemed to be lifeless. The king of the Kurus was seated there, immobile. On seeing him, King Kounteya, the slayer of enemy heroes, was suddenly filled with great depression.

‘Yudhishtira said, “His strength was equal to that of ten thousand elephants. That king is lying down now, leaning on a woman and seems to be lifeless. In earlier times, he used his strength to crush Bhimasena’s iron image into fragments.¹⁷ For the sake of strength, he now has to hold on to a woman. Shame on me. I do not know about dharma. Shame on my intelligence. Shame on my learning. The lord of the earth is now lying down in a way that does not befit him. I will also fast, like my preceptor, if the king and the illustrious Gandhari do not eat.”’

Vaishampayana continued, ‘Pandava rubbed the king’s hands with cold water. Knowledgeable about dharma, he also gently rubbed his chest and face. The water was auspicious and fragrant, mixed with jewels. At the touch of the king’s hand, the king regained his senses.’

Chapter 1938 (7)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Pandava! Touch me with your hands again and embrace me. O lotus-eyed one! I have regained my senses through your touch. O lord of men! I wish to inhale the fragrance of your head. If you touch me with your hands, I will not give up my life. It is the eighth hour and time for me to eat. O tiger among Kurus! Having not eaten, I am incapable of moving. I have committed a great deal of exertion in seeking your permission. O son! That is the reason I was weak and seemed to have lost my senses. O lord! The touch of your hand has been like the touch of amrita. O extender of the Kuru lineage! I think that I have got back my life again.”’

Vaishampayana continued, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus addressed by his father’s elder brother, Kounteya gently and affectionately touched him all over the body. At this, King Dhritarashtra regained his senses. He embraced Pandava with his arms and inhaled the fragrance of his head. In great sorrow, Vidura and all the others wept loudly. However, since they were overcome with sorrow, the Pandavas had nothing to say to the king or to Gandhari, who was knowledgeable about dharma and bore the severe mental pain. Kunti and the other women were

also extremely distressed. In their great grief, they tried to restrain the king. Tears of sorrow flowed down their faces. They surrounded him and stood there. Yet again, Dhritarashtra spoke these words to Yudhishtira. “O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! I seek your permission to become an ascetic. O son! My mind is full of distress and I have been thinking about this repeatedly. O son! You should not cause me greater grief.” This is what the Indra among the Kouravas told the Pandava. At this, a great sound of lamentation arose among all the warriors. Dharma’s son saw that the king was wan and faded, exhausted with the fasting, as if he was made out of only skin and bones. The mighty-armed one embraced his father. He shed tears of sorrow and again spoke these words. “O best among men! I do not desire to remain alive, nor do I wish for the earth. O king! O scorcher of enemies! If I have done what you wish and if you are fond of me, if you love me and wish to gratify me, then stay with us and eat something.” The immensely energetic king told Dharma’s son, “O son! If you wish that I should eat something, with your permission, I shall.” Dhritarashtra, Indra among kings, told Yudhishtira this. Satyawati’s son, the rishi Vyasa, arrived and spoke these words.’

Chapter 1939(8)

‘Vyasa said, “O Yudhishtira! O mighty-armed one! Do what the great-souled Dhritarashtra, descendant of the Kuru lineage, has asked. Do not think about this. This king is aged. More specifically, his sons have been killed. It is my view that he will not be able to bear this hardship for a long time. The immensely fortunate Gandhari is wise and speaks piteously. O great king! She has borne the grief on account of her sons with great fortitude. I am asking you to act in accordance with my words. Grant the king permission. Let him not die in vain.¹⁸ Let the king follow the ancient path meant for rajarshis. At the end, all rajarshis have resorted to the forest.”’

Vaishampayana continued, ‘Vyasa, extraordinary in his deeds, spoke in this way to the king. The immensely energetic Dharmaraja Yudhishtira replied, “O illustrious one! We respect you. O illustrious one! You are our preceptor. O illustrious one! You are the refuge of the kingdom and the lineage. O illustrious one! I am your son. You are my father, my king and my preceptor. According to dharma, the son must follow the instructions of the father.” Vyasa, supreme among the upholders of dharma, was addressed in this way. O lord of the earth! He again spoke to the immensely energetic Yudhishtira. “O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It is exactly as you have said. The king is aged and it is evident that he is in the last stages. O lord of the earth! You and I should grant him the permission. Act according to his wishes and do not cause an obstruction. O Yudhishtira! This is the supreme dharma of rajarshis. Their death should be in the field of battle, or following the proper ordinances, in the forest. O Indra among kings! When your father, Pandu, ruled the earth, he served this king, like a disciple tends to his preceptor. He¹⁹ performed sacrifices with different kinds of dakshina that were piled up as high as hills. He obtained large objects of pleasure and enjoyed them, also protecting his sons. For the thirteen years when you were in exile, he ruled the subjects of the kingdom like sons and enjoyed and gave away many kinds of riches. O tiger among men! With your servants, you have served this king and the illustrious Gandhari as seniors. Grant your father permission. The time has come for him to perform austerities. O Yudhishtira! He does not harbour the slightest bit of anger towards you.” With these words, he gave the king permission and Kounteya agreed. After the illustrious Vyasa left for the forest, the king who was Pandu’s son spoke these soft and gentle words to his aged father. “I will swiftly follow the instructions of the illustrious Vyasa, your views, the words of the great archer, Kripa, and those of Vidura, Yuyutsu and Sanjaya. All of them are well-wishers of our lineage and I must pay heed to them. O king! However, I am lowering my head in front of you and asking for something. Before going to the hermitage, please eat something.”’

Chapter 1940(9)

aishampayana said, ‘Having obtained the king’s permission, the powerful King Dhritarashtra, followed by Gandhari, went to his own house. Because of the hardships the intelligent one had undergone, he was weak and frail and walked slowly. The king was like the aged leader of an elephant herd. The learned Vidura and the suta, Sanjaya, followed him. So did the great archer, Kripa Sharadvata. Having entered his house, the king performed his morning ablutions. He satisfied the best among brahmanas and then ate. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Gandhari, knowledgeable about dharma, and the learned Kunti were honoured by their daughters-in-law with various items and also ate. When they had eaten, Vidura and the others also ate. The Pandavas then sat down around the king who was the foremost among the Kurus. O great king! Kunti’s son was seated near him. Touching him on the back with his hand, Ambika’s son said, “O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Never be distracted in your tasks in any way. O tiger among kings! In the eight aspects of the kingdom, always have dharma at the forefront.²⁰ O son! O descendant of the Pandu lineage! You are capable of protecting it in that way. O Kounteya! You are learned. Listen to the dharma of the kingdom. O Yudhishtira! You must always respect those who are learned and aged. You must listen to what they say and act accordingly, without any reflection. O king! You must arise in the morning and following the proper rites, worship them. When the time comes for acting, you should ask them what you should do. O king! O son! O descendant of the Kourava lineage! When you have the welfare of the kingdom in mind and ask them respectfully, they will tell you everything that should be done for your benefit. All the senses must be controlled like horses. You will then obtain benefit and it will be like your wealth being preserved. The advisers must be tested. They must be pure and must be those whose fathers and grandfathers have also served. They must be self-controlled in all the tasks. Whether in superior or inferior positions, such are the people who should be employed. The spies employed in your kingdom and in that of the enemy must always be tested in many ways and these spies must be unknown to the enemy. The city must be protected well, with firm walls and gates. In every direction, the walkways along which guards march must be such as to permit six people to walk abreast. One must ensure that the gates are adequate and large. They must always be suitably apportioned and protected by machines. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You must always protect yourself and your food²¹ using men who are born in noble lineages and have good conduct. They must know about the objectives. This is also true of periods of pleasure and in protecting garlands and seats. O Yudhishtira! The women must be properly protected through aged guards and these must have good conduct, be born in noble lineages and learned. Consultations should be with those who are humble, born in good lineages, accomplished about dharma and artha and upright. One should not consult with too many people. Sometimes one needs to consult all of them, sometimes only a few. The chamber for consultations must be protected well. The place for consultations must be one that one climbs up to.²² It can also be a forest that is bereft of thorns. However, consultations must not be during the night. All birds and animals that imitate men must be barred from the chamber for consultations and so must stupid and lame people.²³ It is my view that the sins that follow from the divulging of consultations of kings can never be countered in any way. O king! O scorcher of enemies! In the circle of ministers, you must repeatedly speak about the sins that result from the divulging of consultations and the gains if they are not divulged. O Yudhishtira! Ascertain the good and the bad in the city and in the countryside. O king! O scorcher of enemies! Your action must be based on what you get to know.”’

Chapter 1941(10)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O son! O king! Learned and content people must always be employed in the administration of justice and spies must always be employed to observe them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O Yudhishtira! These men must not be driven by affection. They must ascertain the gravity of the crime and, under the law, impose a punishment that is commensurate. Those addicted to bribery, those who oppress other people’s wives and those who are false in conduct warrant the severest of punishments. Depending on the time and the place, those who indulge in calumny, those who are greedy, those who are murderers, those who are rash,²⁴ those who cause disturbances in assemblies and at the time of pleasure and those who cause a pollution of the varnas should be killed or punished with a fine of gold. In the morning, you must first ensure that all the acts of expendi-

ture are taken care of. You must then attend to ornaments and food. After this, you must always seek to cheer the warriors. In the evening, you must always attend to messengers and spies. The next part of the night must be devoted to determining acts connected with artha. One must always engage in pleasure at midnight or midday. O bull among the Bharata lineage! You must always undertake all the tasks without any delay. At the right time, you must adorn yourself with ornaments and give away large quantities of dakshina. O son! Like a revolving wheel, in due order, all the duties must be undertaken. Following lawful means, you must always endeavour to fill the treasury. O great king! But you must always avoid duplicity and perversity. Using spies, get to know about enemies who are inside the kingdom. From a distance, use learned men to ensure that the enemies destroy each other. O extender of the Kuru lineage! After examining their deeds, appoint the best servants. Use them to accomplish those tasks, irrespective of whether they have been employed for that particular task or not. O son! The commander of the soldiers must be firm in his vows. He must be brave. He must love you and respect you. He must be capable of enduring hardships. O Pandava! It is your task to ensure that all the noble residents of the countryside and the city have a means of subsistence, like cattle. O Yudhishtira! You must always determine your own weaknesses and the weaknesses of the enemy. Inside the kingdom, there will be brave men. They must be shown proportionate favours, so that, in all tasks, they ensure your welfare. O lord of men! It is your task to enhance the qualities of those who have qualities and are learned. They will then be devoted to you and will not waver, like the great mountain, Meru.”

Chapter 1942(11)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “You must know the provinces²⁵ that are devoted to you, devoted to the enemy, those who are indifferent to both and those who are neutral. O afflicter of enemies! You must know the four kinds of enemies, all the kinds of assassins, friends and the enemy of an enemy.²⁶ O foremost among the Kuru lineage! Advisers, the countryside, forts, uneven ground and soldiers must not be wilfully tampered with. O Kounteya! These are the twelve different attributes of the kingdom.²⁷ O lord! Out of the seventy-two attributes, the ministers are the foremost.²⁸ Teachers who know about policy have spoken about these mandalas. O Yudhishtira! In this connection, listen to the six techniques.²⁹ O descendant of the Kuru lineage! One must know the determinants of growth, decay and maintenance of the status quo. O mighty-armed one! Therefore, one must act in accordance with the seventy-two and the six. O Kounteya! When one’s own side is strong and the enemy is relatively weak, that is the time when a king should try to seize the enemy. When one’s own side is weak, one must try for an alliance. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! One must then try to build up one’s store of riches. As soon as one is strong, one must advance without delay. At that time, it is recommended that everyone must be in his own place, without a division in the ranks. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When obliged to surrender territory, it should be infertile land. When obliged to give gold, it should be adulterated. As with the treasury, when obliged to surrender friends, it should be relatively weak ones. When receiving back in turn, those who are skilled about alliances know that the opposite should be practised.³⁰ O bull among the Bharata lineage! At the time of an alliance, one should try to obtain a prince as a hostage. O son! However, if one faces a calamity and has to give, the opposite should be practised. One must resort to counsel and seek means to escape from that calamity. O Kounteya! When the king is distressed, so are ordinary people. Depending on strength and weakness, he must simultaneously fight and seek to get rid of the calamity. While himself protecting his own kingdom, he must try to afflict and paralyse the enemy and reduce his treasury. If one desires prosperity, one should not cause injury to vassals who have accepted subjugation. O Kounteya! One should not cause injury to someone who desires to conquer the entire earth.³¹ Using one’s ministers, one must seek to create dissension among the tribes.³² The virtuous must be nurtured and the wicked must be punished. O tiger among kings! If a weak king is attacked by a stronger one, he must follow the behaviour of cane, and yield.³³ When a strong king advances against a weak king, the weak one must use conciliation and other means to gradually dissuade him. If he fails, he must fight, using his advisers, his treasury, the citizens, using the staff, and all those who wish to do him good.³⁴ Despite attacking with all his best devices, one after another, if it becomes an impossible task, he must then seek emancipation by giving up his body.”

Chapter 1943(12)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O supreme among kings! Consider war and peace. O Yudhishtira! For both of these, three kinds of situations and many kinds of techniques have been thought of.³⁵ O Indra among kings! For your own self, you must progressively and calmly, examine both of these.³⁶ You must remember not to advance against an enemy who is content, nourished and strong. At such a time, the opposite is recommended and one must excuse oneself. O Indra among kings! It is better to retreat and wait for a time to attack. One must act so as to cause hardship to the enemy and create dissension in his ranks. After creating this great affliction, one must create great destruction through a battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Before advancing, a king who knows about the sacred texts thinks of the three kinds of strength that characterize him and the enemy—enterprise, power over the soldiers and the strength of good advisers. A man who possesses these, advances. If one doesn’t possess these, one acts in the opposite way. The king must accumulate the strength of riches, the strength of friends, the strength of forests, the strength of servants and the strength of traders. O king! Of these, the strength of riches and the strength of friends are superior. It is my view that the strength of servants and the strength of traders are equal. O king! The strength of spies is equal to either of these. When all this strength has accumulated, the king knows it is time. O lord of men! Know that calamities kings face are of many different types. O Kouravya! Listen to what these separate types are. O king! O descendant of the Pandu lineage! There are many ways of countering these calamities. A king must use conciliation, pacification and the others. O scorcher of enemies! When united with the six kinds of strength, a king must advance, combining these with the strength of his own qualities and considering the time and the place. A king who desires growth must not advance unless the soldiers are content, nourished and strong. A king can also falsely claim that these exist and advance. To destroy the enemy, the king must advance along a river that has quivers as stones, horses and chariots as currents, standards as trees that cover the banks and large numbers of foot soldiers and elephants as mire. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O lord! The sacred texts known to Ushanas have recommended battle formations in the form of a cart, a lotus and a vajra. Having deprecated the enemy’s soldiers, act to increase cheer in your own soldiers. This is irrespective of whether you are fighting in your own territory or the enemy’s territory. After having rested, the king must hurl the best men against the enemy. Knowing the state of one’s own kingdom, one should resort to conciliation and the other techniques. O great king! The body must be protected in every possible way. One must ensure supreme benefit for one’s own self, in this world and in the world after death. A king who listens to these auspicious words protects the subjects according to dharma and obtains this world. After death, he obtains heaven. O foremost among the Kuru lineage! For the welfare of the subjects, this is the way you must act. O son! You must always act so as to obtain both the worlds. Bhishma has spoken to you about this earlier, and so have Krishna and Vidura. O supreme among kings! However, since I bear affection towards you, I must also tell you. O one who grants a lot of dakshina! Following the law, you must do all of this. You will then be loved by the subjects and will obtain happiness in heaven. A king who performs one thousand horse sacrifices and one who protects the subjects according to dharma obtains fruits that are equal.’”

Chapter 1944(13)

‘Yudhishtira said, “O lord of the earth! I will faithfully do all of this. O bull among kings! But you should instruct me yet again. Bhishma has gone to heaven and Madhusudana has left.³⁷ Vidura and Sanjaya will also go.³⁸ Who else is capable of speaking to me? I will adhere to whatever you instruct me today. O lord of the earth! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You should not hold yourself back.’”

Vaishampayana continued, ‘The rajarshi was thus addressed by the intelligent Dharmaraja. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He took Kounteya’s permission and said, “O son! Desist. My strength has been exhausted.” Having said this, the king and Gandhari entered their house. The queen Gandhari followed dharma. She knew about time. Her husband was like Prajapati. When he was seated, at the right time, she said, “You have obtained the per-

mission of maharshi Vyasa himself. Having obtained Yudhishtira's permission, when will you leave for the forest?" Dhritarashtra replied, "O Gandhari! My great-souled father has himself given me permission. After I have obtained Yudhishtira's permission, I will leave for the forest, without any delay. All my sons engaged in a deceitful act of gambling with the dice. In their names, in the annual funeral ceremony, I wish to give away riches to ordinary people, inviting them to my own house." Having said this, the king told Dharmaraja and, instructed by the king, he brought everything that was required. All the well-wishers, all the ordinary people, all the inhabitants of the city and all the inhabitants of the countryside assembled. Brahmanas and kings came from many countries. The king emerged from his inner quarters and saw all of them. The immensely energetic King Dhritarashtra said, "Brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras who have assembled from Kurujangala. Listen to me attentively. You and the Kurus have lived together for a long time. You are affectionate towards each other and are engaged in each other's welfare. The time has presented itself and I am going to speak about it to you now. Without thinking about it, you should act in accordance with my words. With Gandhari, I have made up my mind to leave for the forest. I have obtained the permission of Vyasa and the king who is Kunti's son. You should also grant me leave and not act contrary to this. There has been an eternal fraternal affection between you and us, the king and the subjects. It is my view that this does not exist in any other country. I am exhausted. I am old and have lost my sons. With the unblemished Gandhari, I have fasted and have become emaciated. I am extremely happy that the kingdom has passed on to Yudhishtira. O excellent ones! I think that joy is greater than what I would have obtained from Duryodhana's prosperity. I am blind, aged and have lost my sons. O immensely fortunate ones! Other than the forest, what other refuge can there be for me? You should grant me permission." O bull among the Bharata lineage! On hearing his words, all those from Kurujangala wept, their voices choking with tears. They were overcome with sorrow and grief. The immensely energetic Dhritarashtra spoke to them yet again.'

Chapter 1945(14)

Dhritarashtra said, "Shantanu ruled this entire earth. In that way, protected by Bhishma, so did Vichitravirya. There is no doubt that you know about that protection. I loved my brother Pandu. It is known to you that he also protected you in that way. O unblemished ones! I have also sought to serve you well. O immensely fortunate ones! If I have failed to do it properly, or if I have been distracted in this, you should forgive me. After all, without any thorns, Duryodhana also enjoyed this kingdom. He was foolish and evil in intelligence. However, he also protected you. Because of the crimes of that evil-minded one and his insolence, and because of what I myself did, there has been this great carnage of kings. Whether I have done something good or whether I have done something bad, you should not bear it in your heart and you should grant me permission. This king is aged and miserable. His sons have been slain. He is the son of your earlier kings. Because of these reasons, you should grant me permission. This aged ascetic is miserable. Her sons have been slain. Gandhari is afflicted on account of her sons. Like me, she is also asking you. You know that our sons have been killed. We are aged and unhappy. O fortunate ones! We have sought refuge with you. Grant us leave. This Kourava king, Yudhishtira, is Kunti's son. You must look after him, in prosperity and in adversity. However, he will never face any adversity. His four brothers are greatly energetic and are his advisers. All of them know about dharma and artha and are like the guardians of the world. The illustrious Brahma is the lord of all creatures in the universe. The greatly energetic Yudhishtira will protect you, like him. I have now said what I should certainly have said. I am handing all of you over to Yudhishtira as a trust. I have handed you over to this brave one as a trust. If there is anything disagreeable that my sons have done, or anything else by anyone on our side, you should forgive that. Earlier, you have never harboured any anger towards me. Your devotion towards me is exceedingly great. I join my hands in salutation and bow down before you. Their³⁹ intelligence was fickle. They were greedy and acted as they willed. O unblemished ones! With Gandhari, I seek forgiveness for everything.'"

Vaishampayana continued, 'The king spoke in this way to the inhabitants of the city and the countryside. Their voices were choked with tears. They looked at each other and said nothing.'

Chapter 1946(15)

Vaishampayana said, “Thus addressed by the aged Kouravya king, the inhabitants of the city and the countryside were almost senseless. The king saw that they were standing in silence, their voices choked with tears. King Dhritarashtra again spoke to them. “O excellent ones! I am aged. My sons have been slain. I am lamenting in many ways. I am distressed. With my lawful wife, who knows about dharma, I have obtained the permission of my father, Krishna Dvaipayana to go to the forest. The king, who knows about dharma, has also agreed. O unblemished ones! With my head bowed down, I am again beseeching you, along with Gandhari. You should grant us permission.” O king! Hearing the piteous words of the king of the Kurus, all those who had assembled from Kurujangala wept. They covered their faces with their hands and their upper garments. Tormented by grief, like fathers and mothers,⁴⁰ they wept for a while. At the prospect of Dhritarashtra’s departure, their hearts were empty. Because of the misery they bore, it was as if they had lost their senses, at the prospect of being separated from the king of the Kurus. But they made a great deal of effort and controlled it. They spoke softly to each other. O king! All of them then got together, chose a brahmana, and charged him with the task of conveying their own words to the king. He was aged, revered and accomplished about artha. O king! He was learned about many hymns. His name was Sambha and he sought to speak.

“The brahmana was intelligent and eloquent. He took the permission of the great king and the entire assembly and spoke to the king. “O king! These people have entrusted their words to me. O brave one! O lord of men! I am telling you those words. Listen. O Indra among kings! O lord! Everything that you have said is true. There is no falsehood in your words. We wish each other well. In this royal lineage, there has been no king who has not protected the subjects or has not been loved by the subjects. You have protected us like a father and like a brother. O king! Nor has Duryodhana done anything that is improper. O great king! Act in accordance with what the sage who is Satyawati’s son, who knows about dharma, has said. He is our supreme preceptor. Abandoned by you, we will soon be overcome with sorrow and grief. O king! We will be without your hundreds of qualities. O king! We were protected by Shantanu, King Chitrangada and by your father, Bhishma, whose valour was deep. With the help of your intelligence, King Pandu also protected us in that way. In that fashion, King Duryodhana also protected us well. O king! Your son has not committed the slightest bit of falsehood. We trusted that king as if he was our own father. You know that perfectly well. O king! Protected by Kunti’s intelligent son and sustained by his fortitude, we have enjoyed happiness for thousands of years.⁴¹ Your lineage has come down from ancient rajarshis and has Kuru, Samvarana, the intelligent Bharata and others.⁴² The one with dharma in his soul⁴³ followed good conduct and gave away large quantities of donations. O great king! One cannot speak about the slightest bit of deviation in him. Protected and nurtured by you, we have always lived in great happiness. There has not been the slightest bit of falsehood in you and your son. You have spoken about Duryodhana’s role in the destruction of the kin. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! In that connection, this is what I have to convey to you.”

Chapter 1947(16)

“The brahmana said, “The destruction that the Kurus confronted was not caused by Duryodhana, you, Karna or Subala’s son.⁴⁴ We know it was destiny and no one was capable of countering it. Destiny is incapable of being thwarted through manliness. O great king! Eighteen akshouhinis assembled. The bulls among warriors killed them over eighteen days. O king! They were Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the others, the great-souled Karna, the brave Yuyudhana, Dhrishtadyumna and the four sons of Pandu, Bhima, Arjuna and the twins. O king! This destruction of people has been accomplished by the forces of destiny. In particular, in this world, there is no doubt that kshatriyas and relatives of kshatriyas must be slain in a battle, using weapons. Those tigers among men possessed learning and the strength of their arms. They destroyed everyone on earth, including horses, chariots and elephants. Your son, the king, was not responsible for that crime against the great-minded ones. Nor were you or your servants responsible, or Karna, or Subala. Thousands of kings and the best among the Kurus were destroyed. However,

everything was because of destiny. What else can be said about this? We hold the view that you are our preceptor and the lord of the entire world. You have dharma in your soul. We forgive your son. With his aides, that king has obtained the world meant for heroes. With the foremost among the brahmanas, let him enjoy happiness in heaven. May you also obtain the auspicious and be established in supreme dharma. O supreme among Bharatas! May you completely know everything that is sacred. The Pandavas are bulls among men. It can be seen that they are capable of ruling heaven. Why should they then be unable to establish their status on earth? O best among those of the Kuru lineage! The Pandavas possess the ornaments of good conduct. We, the subjects, will dwell with them in prosperity and in adversity. Pandava⁴⁵ protects like all the large number of kings who have preceded him. He gives liberally to brahmanas. He is always far-sighted and firm in his wisdom. He is like Vaishravana.⁴⁶ Kunti's great-minded son has advisers who are not inferior. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He is pure and compassionate, even towards his enemies. He is upright and intelligent and always looks upon us as his sons. O rajarshi! Because of their association with Dharmaraja, Bhima, Arjuna and the others will never act in a disagreeable way towards the people. O Kouravya! They are gentle and mild, but like the venom of snakes towards those who are fierce. They are brave and great-souled, engaged in the welfare of the residents. Kunti, Panchali, Ulupi and Satvati⁴⁷ will never do anything that goes against these people. Your affection towards us has been extended by Yudhishtira and the residents of the city and the countryside will not disregard it. Even if these men engage in adharma, these virtuous maharatha sons of Kunti are always devoted to dharma and will protect them. O king! Therefore, do not have any mental disquiet on account of Yudhishtira. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Engage in the acts of dharma. We bow down before you.”

Vaishampayana continued, ‘These words were full of dharma and possessed a flow of all the superior qualities. Hearing them, all the people applauded and accepted them. Dhritarashtra repeatedly applauded those words. He then gently dismissed all the ordinary people. They honoured the king and cast auspicious glances towards him. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He also joined his hands in salutation and honoured the people back. With Gandhari, the king entered his house. Listen to what he did when the night was over.’

Chapter 1948(17)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When night was over, Dhritarashtra, Ambika’s son, sent Vidura to Yudhishtira’s house. The greatly energetic one, supreme among all those who are intelligent, went there. Having gone there, he spoke these words to King Yudhishtira, the lord who had no decay. “O great king! Dhritarashtra has consecrated himself for departure to the forest. The king will leave for the forest on the day of the full moon in the month of Kartika.⁴⁸ O best among those of the Kuru lineage! He desires some riches. He wishes to give this away at a funeral ceremony for the great-souled Gangeya, Drona, Somadatta, the intelligent Bahlika, all his sons, the well-wishers who have been killed and, if you allow it, for the wicked Saindhava.”⁴⁹ Hearing Vidura’s words, Yudhishtira and Gudakesha Pandava⁵⁰ were delighted and applauded them. However, Bhima was unwavering in his anger and did not accept Vidura’s words. The greatly energetic one remembered what Duryodhana had done. ‘Phalguna understood Bhimasena’s thoughts. Kiriti lowered his face and spoke these words to Bhima. “O Bhima! Our aged father has consecrated himself for going to the forest. He wishes to give something for the funeral ceremonies of all the well-wishers. Kourava wishes to give away riches that have been conquered by you. O mighty-armed one! It is for Bhishma and the others. You should grant permission. O mighty-armed one! It is good fortune that Dhritarashtra is asking us now. Behold the progress of time. Earlier, we used to ask him. This king used to be the lord of the entire earth earlier. With his offspring killed by the enemy, he now desires to go to the forest. O tiger among men! You should not consider any option other than giving. O mighty-armed one! Everything else will bring ill fame and will be adharma. We serve the lord and king who is our elder brother. O bull among the Bharata lineage! From him, we should learn to give and not refuse.” When Kounteya said this, Dharmaraja applauded these words. However, Bhimasena angrily spoke these words in reply. “O Phalguna! We should perform funeral rites for Bhishma, King Somadatta, Bhurishrava, rajarshi Bahlika, the great-souled Drona and the other well-wishers. Kunti will give for Karna. O tiger among men! The king should not perform funeral rites for the Kouravas. That is my view. Let the ene-

my not find an opportunity to rejoice. Let Duryodhana and all the others move from misery to greater misery. They were the worst of the lineage and destroyed everything on earth. How can you now forget that enmity of twelve years and the departure for a period of concealment, which increased Droupadi's grief? What was the affection Dhritarashtra showed towards us then? We attired ourselves in black antelope skins and our ornaments and adornments were lost. With the daughter of Panchala, we followed the king then. Where were Drona, Bhishma and Somadatta then? For thirteen years we dwelt there, roaming from one forest to another forest. Your elder father did not cast a paternal eye towards us then. O Partha! When we were defeated in the gambling match, have you forgotten what this wicked one, the worst of the lineage, asked Vidura? 'What has been won?'" When this was said, King Yudhishtira, Kunti's intelligent son, rebuked his brother and asked him to be quiet.'

Chapter 1949(18)

‘Arjuna said, “O Bhima! You are my elder brother and my senior and I am not interested in saying anything more. Rajarshi Dhritarashtra must always be honoured. Virtuous people, the best among men, remember the good deeds that have been done to them. They do not remember crimes and the breaking of agreements. O Kshatta! Convey my words to the Kourava king. I will give him whatever he desires on account of his sons and for Bhishma and all the others, all the well-wishers who helped our cause. O lord! It will be given from my store of riches. Let Bhima not be greatly distressed at this.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘When Arjuna spoke in this way, Yudhishtira honoured him. But Bhimasena cast angry glances at Dhananjaya. The intelligent Yudhishtira spoke these words to Vidura. “The king should not be angry at Bhimasena. In the forest, the intelligent Bhima was afflicted by cold, rain and heat and many kinds of hardships. That is known to you. However, convey my words to the king who is a bull among the Bharata lineage. He can take everything that he wishes from my house. Bhima sorrows greatly and has exhibited this intolerance. The king should not take these words to heart. Whatever riches exist in my house and that of Arjuna's, the great king is the owner of all of that. Tell the king these words. Let the king give to brahmanas and spend whatever he wishes. Let him repay the debt to his sons and well-wishers. This body of mine also belongs to that lord of men. O Kshatta! Knowing this, how can there be any doubt about the riches?”’

Chapter 1950(19)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The king spoke in this way to Vidura, supreme among intelligent ones. He went to Dhritarashtra and conveyed these words of deep import. “I first spoke about your message to King Yudhishtira. Having listened to my words, the immensely radiant one praised them. The greatly energetic Bibhatsu has given his houses, the riches in those houses and even his life to you. O rajarshi! Your son, Dharmaraja, has placed the kingdom, his life, his riches and everything else at your disposal. However, Bhima remembered all the misery and the many kinds of hardship. The mighty-armed one was filled with anger and sighed. However, because of the brotherly affection he bears towards the king who follows dharma in his conduct and his brother Bibhatsu, the mighty-armed one has also given his permission. Bhima remembered the enmity and the wicked deeds that were perpetrated. Dharmaraja has said that you should not be enraged with him. ‘O lord of men!’⁵¹ This is generally the dharma of kshatriyas.⁵² Vrikodara has been devoted to following the dharma of kshatriyas in battle. O king! I and Arjuna repeatedly crave your pardon for what Vrikodara has done. You are our lord. O king! As you wish, give whatever riches we possess. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You are the owner of all the lives in this kingdom. For the funeral rites of your sons and to give to brahmanas, here are jewels, cattle, male servants, female servants, goats and sheep. O foremost among the Kuru lineage! Bring them and give them to brahmanas, the distressed, the old, the blind and the weak. O Vidura! On the king's instructions, let an assembly hall be constructed and let it be stocked with many kinds of juices, drinks and food. Let places for cattle to drink from be constructed.

Let diverse kinds of auspicious acts be performed.’ This is what the king and Partha Dhananjaya told me. You should tell me what needs to be done next.” This is what Vidura said and Dhritarashtra applauded this. O Janamejaya! He made up his mind to give large quantities of gifts on the day of the full moon in Kartika.’

Chapter 1951(20)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Vidura spoke in this way to King Dhritarashtra. The king was delighted at what the king⁵³ and Jishnu had done. For the sake of Bhishma, his sons and his well-wishers, he examined and invited thousands of brahmanas and superior rishis. The supreme among kings instructed that food, drink, vehicles, spreads, gold, gems, jewels, female servants, male servants, garments, blankets, hides, gems,⁵⁴ villages, fields, goats, sheep, ornaments, elephants, horses, maidens and the best of women should be readied for the brahmanas. He named Drona, Bhishma, Somadatta, Bahlika, King Duryodhana, his other sons and all the well-wishers, with Jayadratha as the foremost, separately and gave these away in their respective names. With Yudhishtira’s sanction, the funeral ceremony prospered, with large amounts of cattle, riches, dakshina and diverse kinds of wealth and jewels given away. On Yudhishtira’s instructions, men, enumerators and writers incessantly told the king, “Command us. What should be given? Whom should it be given to? Everything is here.” They recorded this. No sooner had he spoken, than these objects would be seen. On the instructions of the intelligent king who was Kunti’s son, a thousand was given to the one who should be given one hundred and ten thousand was given to the one who should be given one thousand.⁵⁵ Like the monsoon showering down rain on the ground, the king⁵⁶ was like an ocean and showered down a flow of riches on the brahmanas, thereby satisfying them. After this, the king segregated all the varnas. The king flooded them with food and drink. The garments were like foam, the jewels were like currents, the drums were like the roar of the waves. Cattle and horses were like whirlpools. There were extensive amounts of women and gems. The villages were like crocodiles on the shore. The water in that ocean was made out of jewels and gold. The ocean that was Dhritarashtra flooded the earth. O great king! Thus, he donated at that funeral ceremony and gave for his sons, his grandsons, his forefathers, for himself and for Gandhari. After he had given away many gifts, he became exhausted. The extender of the Kuru lineage then terminated the sacrifice of donations. In this way, the Kouravya king performed that festival of donations. There was a lot of dakshina that was succulent⁵⁷ and actors and dancers performed incessantly. For ten days, the king who was Ambika’s son gave away gifts in this way. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He thus freed himself from the debt to his sons and grandsons.’

Chapter 1952(21)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When it was morning, King Dhritarashtra, Ambika’s son, determined that the time had come for departure to the forest. He summoned the brave Pandavas. With Gandhari, the intelligent one greeted them in the proper way. Using brahmanas accomplished in the Vedas, he performed the rites associated with the full moon in Kartika, agnihotra being the foremost. He attired himself in bark and deerskin. Surrounded by his daughters-in-law, the king emerged from his house. The king who was Vichitravirya’s son departed in this way. The Kourava and Pandava women and all the others who belonged to the royal lineage of the Kouravas were distressed and lamented loudly. Using parched grain, the king cheerfully worshipped the wonderful house where he had lived. The Indra among men met all the large numbers of servants, said farewell to them and left. King Yudhishtira trembled and joined his hands in salutation. In a voice that was choking with tears, he exclaimed, “O virtuous and great king! This is a time for lamentation. Where are you going?” He said this and fell down on the ground. Arjuna was tormented by great grief. The foremost among the Bharata lineage sighed repeatedly. He restrained Yudhishtira and told him that he should not act in this way. However, he was himself distressed. Vrikodara, Phalguna, Madri’s brave sons, Vidura, Sanjaya, the son of the vaishya,⁵⁸ Goutama,⁵⁹ Dhoumya and other brahmanas followed the king, their voices choking with tears. Gandhari’s eyes were covered with a strip of cloth.⁶⁰

For support, her hand was placed on Kunti's shoulder, who walked ahead. King Dhritarashtra advanced cheerfully, grasping Gandhari's shoulder with his hand. Krishna Droupadi, Yadavi,⁶¹ Kouravi Uttara, who had had a son as offspring,⁶² Chitrangada, other women and daughters-in-law advanced with the king. O king! Their lamentations were piteous, like the shrieks of she-ospreys. In every direction, brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra women also emerged. O king! The large numbers of citizens of Gajasahvya were distressed at the departure. O king! This was just like in earlier times, when after the gambling match, they had witnessed the departure of the Pandavas from the assembly hall of the Kouravas. There were women who had never seen the sun or had been seen by it. But when that Indra among men, the Indra among the Kouravas, left for the forest, they were afflicted by grief and emerged onto the royal roads.'

Chapter 1953(22)

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! A great uproar arose from the women and men who were standing atop the palaces or on the ground. The royal road was crowded with men and women. With difficulty, the king advanced along that, trembling and with his hands joined in salutation. He emerged from Gajasahvya through the main gate and repeatedly took his leave from those large numbers of people. Vidura decided that the time was right for him to also go to the forest with the king. The chief adviser and suta, Sanjaya, Gavalgana's son, also took the same decision. King Dhritarashtra persuaded Kripa and maharatha Yuyutsu to return and handed them over to Yudhishtira. After the citizens had returned, the king⁶³ sought Dhritarashtra's permission to return, with the women from the inner quarters of the palace. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He told his mother, Kunti, "I will go with the king.⁶⁴ You should return. O queen! Surrounded by your daughters-in-law, you should return to the city. The king is devoted to dharma and is firm in his resolution that he will devote himself to austerities." With tears flowing down from his eyes, Dharmaraja said this. But Kunti clung on to Gandhari and continued to advance. She said, "O great king! Never disregard Sahadeva. O king! He has always been affectionate towards you and me. Karna never retreated from battle and you must always remember him. It is because of my stupid intelligence that the brave one was destroyed. O son! My wicked heart is certainly made out of iron. Despite my being unable to see the son of the sun, it has not shattered into a hundred fragments. O destroyer of enemies! That being the case, what can I possibly do now? It is my sin that I did not reveal that he was the son of the sun. O mighty-armed one! Therefore, with your brothers, I hope you will give excellent gifts in his name. O slayer of enemies! He was your elder. O afflicter of enemies! Always be devoted to Droupadi. O extender of the Kuru lineage! Always look after Bhimasena, Arjuna and Nakula. O brave one! You have to bear the burden of the Kuru lineage now. I will dwell in the forest now and devote myself to serving my father-in-law and mother-in-law.⁶⁵ I will dwell with Gandhari, cover myself with filth and devote myself to austerities." Yudhishtira had dharma in his soul. Thus addressed, he controlled himself. With his brothers, he was immersed in great grief and did not say anything.

'After having thought for some time, though he was distressed, full of reflection and overcome by sorrow, Yudhishtira, Dharma's son, spoke to his mother. "Why are you going away? You should not speak in this way. I will not give you permission to go. You should show us your favours. O beautiful one! In earlier times, you spoke agreeable words to energize us. You spoke to us about Vidula's words and you should not abandon that principle.⁶⁶ I have obtained this earth after slaying the kings. Those were your words of wisdom, received by me through Vasudeva, bull among men. I had heard about your intelligence earlier. Where has that gone now? You spoke to us about adherence to the dharma of kshatriyas, but you wish to deviate from those now. How will you dwell alone in the forest after abandoning us, the kingdom and these illustrious daughters-in-law? Show me your favours." Her eyes flowing with tears, Kunti heard these words from her son. However, with tears flowing from her eyes, she continued to advance and Bhima spoke to her. "O Kunti! You should enjoy this kingdom that has been conquered by your sons. Having obtained it, why does your mind turn away from the dharma of kings? Earlier, why did you then ask us to destroy the earth? For whom do you wish to give it up and go to the forest? When we were children, why did you bring us back from the forest?⁶⁷ Madri's sons are overcome with sorrow and grief. O mother! O illustrious one! Be gratified and do not go to the forest. Enjoy Yudhishtira's prosperity, conquered through Partha's⁶⁸

strength.” But she had made up her mind that the time had come to go to the forest. Though her sons lamented in many ways, she did not pay any attention to their words. Droupadi’s face was distressed. As her mother-in-law left for the forest, she wept, and with Bhadra,⁶⁹ followed her. The immensely wise one⁷⁰ had made up her mind to leave for the forest. She repeatedly glanced at her sons, who were weeping, but proceeded. The Pandavas, the servants and the women from the inner quarters continued to follow. She restrained them and tearfully, spoke these words to her sons.’

Chapter 1954(23)

‘Kunti said, “O mighty-armed one! O Pandava! It is exactly as you have described it. O king! Earlier, when you were suffering from lassitude, I reprimanded you. Your kingdom was lost in the gambling match. You were dislodged from happiness. You were defeated by your relatives and I reprimanded you. How could Pandu’s sons, bulls among men, be destroyed? How could their fame be destroyed? That is the reason I goaded you into action. All of you are Indra’s equal. You are the equal of the gods in valour. You should not have to depend on others. That is the reason I acted in that way. You are best among those who uphold dharma. You are a king who is Vasava’s equal. You should not have returned to the forest and undergone hardships there. That is the reason I goaded you. Bhima is known for his great valour and manliness, equal to that of ten thousand elephants. I goaded you so that he did not face a decline. Vijaya⁷¹ is Vasava’s equal and is younger to Bhimasena. I goaded you so that he did not suffer from lassitude. Nakula and Sahadeva always follow their seniors. I goaded you so that they did not suffer from hunger and lassitude. This buxom and dark one is beautiful, with large eyes. She was unnecessarily oppressed in the assembly hall. Then, while all of you looked on, she trembled like a plantain tree. The one with the unblemished limbs was in her season then and was won over in the gambling match. I goaded you so that she didn’t have to go through with these difficulties again. The foolish Duhshasana dragged her along, like a servant girl. I knew all this, about the defeat of our lineage. The Kurus, my father-in-law and the others, were distressed then. She desired a protector, but was like a she-osprey in the grasp of a predator. The wicked one, whose intelligence had been destroyed, seized her by the hair. O king! When Duhshasana did that, I lost my senses. To increase your energy, I goaded you then. O sons! I recounted the words of Vidula. How could a royal lineage that included my sons be destroyed? O sons! You were born from Pandu and me. That is the reason I goaded you then. If a king destroys his own lineage, how can his sons and grandsons obtain the worlds that are meant for the performers of good deeds? O son! Earlier, thanks to my husband, I had enjoyed the great fruits of the kingdom. I had given away large quantities of gifts. Following the rites, I had drunk soma. I didn’t urge Vasudeva to obtain any fruits for my own self. It was for your sakes that I flooded you with Vidula’s words. O sons! I did not desire the fruits of the kingdom, conquered by my sons. O lords! Through austerities, I desire the sacred worlds obtained by my husband. I will serve my father-in-law and mother-in-law, who will dwell in the forest. O Yudhishtira! I will dry myself up through austerities. O best among the Kurus! With Bhimasena and the others, return. Turn your intelligence towards dharma and may your mind be great.”’

Chapter 1955(24)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O supreme among kings! Hearing Kunti’s words, the Pandavas were ashamed.⁷² With Panchali, the unblemished ones returned. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing Kunti go away, a great uproar of lamentation arose from the women of the inner quarters. Having been unable to persuade Pritha to return, the Pandavas circumambulated the king⁷³ and withdrew. The great king, Dhritarashtra, Ambika’s son, supported himself on Gandhari and Vidura and spoke. “It is better for the queen who is Yudhishtira’s mother to return. Everything that Yudhishtira has said is the truth. The prosperity of her sons is great and there are great fruits there. Why should one foolishly abandon one’s sons and proceed to the forest along impassable ways? She can

perform austerities in the kingdom. She can perform austerities, give gifts and observe vows. She is capable of doing this and not doing it would be bad policy. Let her listen to my words. O Gandhari! I am satisfied with the service of my daughter-in-law. O one who knows about dharma! Therefore, you should give her permission to return.” Thus addressed by the king, Subala’s daughter spoke to Kunti. She repeated everything that the king had said and also added her own words. However, the queen⁷⁴ had made up her mind to reside in the forest. Kunti was virtuous and devoted to dharma and it was impossible to dissuade her. The women of the Kuru lineage discerned that she was firm in her resolution. On seeing that the best of the Kuru lineage⁷⁵ had withdrawn, they began to weep. The Parthas and all the women from the inner quarters returned. The immensely wise king, Dhritarashtra, proceeded to the forest.

‘The Pandavas were distressed and overcome by sorrow and grief. With the women, all of them used their vehicles to return to the city. The city of Hastinapura, with its women, aged and young, was completely silent and there were no festivities. All the Pandavas were angry and also disinterested. Without Kunti, they were extremely miserable, like calves separated from their mother.

‘The same day, Dhritarashtra reached a place that was some distance away. The lord resided there, on the banks of the Bhagirathi. The best of brahmanas, accomplished in the Vedas, followed the prescribed rites and kindled a sacrificial fire, in a spot that had ascetics. A sacrificial fire was also lit for the aged king. Following the ordinances, the king offered oblations into the fire. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! With evening having arrived, he worshipped the one with the one thousand rays. Vidura and Sanjaya used kusha grass to prepare a bed for the king, the brave one among the Kurus. Not very far from that, they prepared another one for Gandhari. Yudhishtira’s mother, Kunti, was devoted to virtuous vows. She lay down on a bed of kusha grass, not far from Gandhari. Vidura and the others slept within a hearing distance. As instructed, the brahmanas and the officiating priests also followed suit. The foremost among the brahmanas kindled a fire and chanted. That night was as pleasurable as a *brahmi* night.⁷⁶ When night was over, they performed their morning ablutions. Following the rites, all of them offered oblations into the fire and proceeded again. Still fasting, they glanced towards the northern direction. That first day’s residence had been miserable. They had sorrowed. The inhabitants of the city and the countryside had also grieved.’

Chapter 1956(25)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Following Vidura’s advice, the king dwelt on the banks of the Bhagirathi, amidst the dwelling places of many sacred people. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Large numbers of brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras, residents of the kingdom, came to visit the king there. They surrounded the king and he delighted them by conversing with them. Following the prescribed rites, he honoured them⁷⁷ and their disciples and took their leave. When it was evening, the king and Gandhari immersed themselves in the Ganga and purified themselves in the appropriate manner. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Separately, all the others also bathed in that tirtha. Vidura and the others performed all the rites there. O king! When he had performed his ablutions, Pritha, Kuntibhoja’s daughter, brought her aged father-in-law and Gandhari to the banks of the Ganga. For the king, the officiating priests erected a sacrificial altar there. The king, devoted to the truth, offered oblations to the fire there. From the banks of the Bhagirathi, the king then proceeded to Kurukshetra, with his followers. He was learned, self-restrained and in control of his senses. The king, the rajarshi, arrived at the hermitage of the learned and intelligent Shatayupa and met him. That scorcher of enemies used to be the great king of Kekaya. The lord of men had handed over his wealth to his son and had entered the forest. O king! Following the prescribed rites, he welcomed the extender of the Kuru lineage. With the king, he then went to Vyasa’s hermitage. The king who was the descendant of the Kourava lineage⁷⁸ was initiated there. After this, he began to reside in Shatayupa’s hermitage. O king! On Vyasa’s instructions, the immensely intelligent one instructed the king in all the rites pertaining to dwelling in the forest.⁷⁹ O great king! The high-minded King Dhritarashtra engaged himself in austerities and so did his followers. Queen Gandhari attired herself in bark and hides. O great king! In an identical way, with Kunti, she observed similar vows. O king! In deeds, mind, words and sight, they controlled their senses and resorted to

supreme austerities. The king's flesh was dried up and he was reduced to bones. His hair was matted and he was attired in hides and bark. Devoid of taints, he performed fierce austerities, like a maharshi. Kshatta was supreme in his intelligence about dharma and artha. With Sanjaya, he served the king and his wife and both of them also cleansed their souls and engaged in supreme austerities. They were attired in bark and rags and became emaciated.'

Chapter 1957(26)

Vaishampayana said, 'The best of sages, Narada, Parvata and the immensely ascetic Devala came there to see the king. So did Dvaipayana and his disciples, other learned siddhas and the aged rajarshi, Shatayupa, supremely devoted to dharma. O great king! Following the prescribed rites, Kunti worshipped them. Those ascetics were satisfied with this service. O son! Those supreme rishis engaged in conversations about dharma. This delighted the great-souled king, Dhritarashtra. Narada could see everything directly. On one such occasion, at the end of the conversation, the devarshi told all of them this account. "In ancient times, there was a fearless king who was Prajapati's equal. He was known as Sahasrachitya and he was Shatayupa's grandfather. His eldest son was supremely devoted to dharma. Handing over the kingdom to him, King Sahasrachitya, with dharma in his soul, entered the forest. Having transcended all the supreme austerities, the resplendent and great-minded king obtained Purandara's region. O king! On many occasions, on my visits there, I have seen the king engaged in austerities in the great Indra's abode, having burnt down his sins. In that way, King Shailalaya, King Bhagadatta's grandfather, went to the great Indra's abode through the strength of his austerities. There was also a king named Prishaghna, equal to the wielder of the vajra himself. Through his austerities, that king obtained the vault of heaven. O king! It was in this forest that King Purukutsa,⁸⁰ Mandhata's son, obtained great success. Narmada, supreme among rivers, became his wife. It was in this forest that the king tormented himself through austerities and went to heaven. There was a king named Shashaloma and he was supremely devoted to dharma. It was in this forest that he tormented himself through austerities and obtained heaven. O king! You have come to this hermitage. Through Dvaipayana's favours, you will obtain the best of success, which is extremely difficult to obtain. O tiger among kings! You will also be surrounded by the prosperity of austerities. With Gandhari, you will reach the end obtained by those great-souled ones. Residing with the slayer of Bala, Pandu always remembers you. O great king! He will always engage you in what is best for you. The illustrious Gandhari, engaged in serving you, will obtain the worlds with her husband and your daughter-in-law, Kunti, will also go there. She is Yudhishtira's mother and he is eternal dharma. O king! We can see this with our divine sight. Vidura can be seen in the great-souled Yudhishtira. Having purified himself through meditation, Sanjaya will obtain heaven." On hearing this, the great-souled Indra among the Kouravas and his wife were delighted and welcomed these words. They praised Narada's learned words. They worshipped Narada in an unmatched way. O king! All the large number of brahmanas also repeatedly worshipped Narada a lot. They were delighted and this also cheered King Dhritarashtra up.'

Chapter 1958(27)

Vaishampayana said, 'The best among brahmanas applauded Narada's words. Rajarshi Shatayupa spoke these words to Narada. "O illustrious one! O immensely radiant one! You have increased the Kuru king's faith and all these people's and mine. O devarshi! But there is something I wish to tell you. Please listen attentively. O one who is revered by the worlds! It concerns Dhritarashtra. You possess divine sight and know the truth about everything. O devarshi! You can see the destinations of different kinds of men. You have spoken about the kings who are in the great Indra's abode. O great sage! But you have not spoken about the worlds this king will obtain. O lord! I wish to hear about the regions that will be obtained by this lord of the earth. When will he obtain them? I am asking you. Tell me the truth about that." Thus addressed, Narada spoke words that were pleasant for everyone

to hear. The great ascetic with the divine sight was in the midst of all those virtuous ones. “I can always go to Shakra, whenever I wish. Having gone there, I saw Shakra, Shachi’s consort. There, I also saw the rajarshi, King Pandu. O king! There was a conversation about Dhritarashtra there, about the extremely difficult austerities that the king was tormenting himself with. O king! I heard what Shakra said. There are three years left in this king’s lifespan. After that, with Gandhari, the king will go to Kubera’s abode. Dhritarashtra will find pleasure there and will be honoured by the king of the yakshas. He will be adorned in divine ornaments and will travel as he wishes, in a celestial vehicle. He is a rishi’s son⁸¹ and has burnt his sins through austerities. The one with dharma in his soul will roam around in the worlds of the gods, the gandharvas and the rakshasas at ease. What you have asked me is a great mystery, even to the gods. However, since I am pleased with you, I have told you. You are also learned about the sacred texts and have burnt your sins through austerities.” They heard these sweet words of the devarshi. All of them were extremely happy in their minds and so was the king. Those learned brahmanas conversed in this way with Dhritarashtra and then went away as they desired, along paths meant for those who are successful.’

Chapter 1959(28)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O king! When the Indra among the Kouravas left for the forest, the Pandavas were overwhelmed by sorrow and grief and were also miserable on account of their mother. All the citizens grieved about the king. The brahmanas conversed about the king. “How will the aged king dwell in that desolate forest? What about the immensely fortunate Gandhari and Pritha Kunti? The rajarshi deserved happiness. How will he find joy in that great forest? With his sons killed, what will be the state of the one who has wisdom for his sight? On being separated from her sons, Kunti has done something that is extremely difficult. She has abandoned the prosperity of the kingdom, cherishing life in the forest instead. What is the state of Vidura, who devotes himself to serving his brother? Gargyana’s intelligent son is the one who protects the legacy of his lord.” The citizens, even the young, were afflicted by thoughts and sorrow. Here and there, they conversed in this way with each other. All the Pandavas were severely afflicted by grief. For a long time, they sorrowed over their mother, just as they had done so earlier. They also grieved over their father, the aged king who had lost his sons, the immensely fortunate Gandhari and the immensely intelligent Vidura. As they thought in this way, they could find no pleasure, not in the kingdom, not in women and not in studying the Vedas. Thinking about the king, they were overcome with supreme disregard for everything material. They repeatedly remembered the terrible slaughter of the kin, the destruction of the young Abhimanyu in the forefront of the battle and that of the mighty-armed Karna, who did not retreat from an encounter. There were the sons of Droupadi and other well-wishers. Remembering the slaughter of those brave ones, they were cheerless. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The brave ones on earth had been killed, the jewels had been destroyed. They always thought about this and could not sleep. The sons of the queens, Droupadi and the beautiful Subhadra, had been killed. They were also cheerless and miserable. But they saw the son of Virata’s daughter, your father, Parikshit. That is the way your forefathers sustained their lives.’

Chapter 1960(29)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Those brave tigers among men, the Pandavas, the delight of their mother, remembered their mother and were afflicted by terrible grief. Unlike what they had always done earlier, they no longer devoted themselves to the royal duties. Before this, all of them had performed those tasks of the kingdom. But they no longer did this. They were permeated by sorrow and could find nothing to delight them. Even if they were addressed by someone, they did not honour that person back in reply. Those brave ones were impossible to assail and were like the ocean in gravity. However, because of being afflicted by grief, they seemed to be ignorant. It was as if they had lost their senses. The descendants of the Kuru lineage remembered their mother. “How will the emaci-

ated Pritha be able to bear the burden of the aged couple? How is the king? He has lost his sons and is without a refuge too. With his wife, how will he dwell in a forest that is infested with carnivorous beasts? The relatives of the queen, the immensely fortunate Gandhari, have been slain. How will she follow her aged and blind husband in that desolate forest?” Extremely anxious, this is the way they conversed.

‘They then made up their minds to go and see Dhritarashtra. Sahadeva bowed down before the king and said, “I can see that you have made up your mind to go there. Out of respect for you, I was unable to say that I also desired that. O Indra among kings! It is time for us to go. Through good fortune, I will be able to see how the ascetic Kunti is faring. The aged ascetic will have matted hair. Her limbs will have been wounded from kusha and *kasha*.⁸² She has been reared in palaces and mansions and has enjoyed great happiness. She is now exhausted and extremely miserable. When will I see my mother? O bull among the Bharata lineage! The progress of mortals is indeed temporary. The princess Kunti, who enjoyed happiness, is now in a forest.” Hearing Sahadeva’s words, the queen Droupadi, supreme among women, honoured the king and said, “If the queen Pritha is alive, when will I see her? O lord of men! If she is still alive, all of us will be delighted. In this way, may your mind and intelligence always find pleasure in dharma. O Indra among kings! You should now do what is best for us. O king! Know that all the daughters-in-law are ready, with their feet poised. They desire to see Kunti, Gandhari and their father-in-law.” O bull among the Bharata lineage! The queen Panchali addressed the king in this way. He accordingly summoned the commander of the soldiers and instructed him about everything. “Make the soldiers advance, with a large number of chariots and elephants. I wish to see how King Dhritarashtra is in the forest. Let the superintendents of the women be asked to ready many vehicles. Let all the thousands of palanquins be prepared. We need carts, stores, tents, treasuries and artisans. Let the supervisors of the treasuries also advance towards the hermitage in Kurukshetra. Let there not be any restrictions for any of the citizens who wish to see the king and let them be protected well. Let there be cooks and all the overseers of the kitchen. Let many kinds of food and edible items be loaded onto the carts. Let it immediately be announced that we will depart tomorrow. Let diverse kinds of dwelling houses be constructed along the way.” With his brothers, the Pandava king issued these kinds of instructions. Next day, with the women and children in front, the king left. Once outside, the king waited for five days, protecting and waiting for the large number of people who wanted to go. After this, he left for the forest.’

Chapter 1961(30)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The supreme among the Bharata lineage instructed the soldiers. Those men were like guardians of the worlds and protected everyone, with Arjuna at the front. In delight, a loud roar arose, “Yoke the vehicles. Get ready.” The riders shouted, “Yoke the mounts.” Some men advanced on vehicles, others on horses as swift as thought. There were chariots that were like cities, blazing like the fire. O lord of men! Others were on Indras among elephants or camels. Some advanced on foot. There were warriors who fought with nails and spikes.⁸³ The residents of the city and the countryside were there, in many kinds of vehicles. Wishing to see Dhritarashtra, they followed the king of the Kurus. On the king’s instructions, the preceptor, Goutama Kripa, assembled all the soldiers and the commanders and advanced towards the hermitage. Yudhishtira, the prosperous king of the Kurus, was surrounded by brahmanas. He was praised by many bards, raconteurs and minstrels. A white umbrella was held aloft his head. The descendant of the Kuru lineage advanced with a large number of chariots. Vrikodara, the performer of terrible deeds, was on an elephant that was as large as a mountain. The son of the wind god advanced, equipped with machines and implements of war. Madri’s sons were astride well-prepared horses. They were cheerful at the prospect of seeing their mother. They were clad in armour and had standards. The immensely energetic Arjuna was on a chariot that was as radiant as the sun. This was yoked to divine and white horses and he followed the king on this. For the large number of women who were on palanquins, Droupadi led the way. The superintendents of the women advanced, showering around large quantities of riches. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The Pandava soldiers were beautiful, with many men and elephants, accompanied by the sounds of flutes and veenas. O lord of the earth! As they advanced, the bulls among the Kurus progressively dwelt along the banks of rivers and beautiful lakes. On Yudhishtira’s instructions, the immensely energetic Yuyutsu and Dhoumya, the

priest, were left with the task of protecting the city. Progressively, King Yudhishtira reached Kurukshetra. He crossed the extremely sacred river, Yamuna. From a distance, the intelligent rajarshi saw the hermitage of Shatayupa and Kouravya Dhritarashtra. All the people were delighted and entered the forest. O bull among the Bharata lineage! They filled everything with a loud uproar.'

Chapter 1962(31)

Vaishampayana said, 'When they were some distance away, the Pandavas descended and proceeded on foot. They bowed down in humility and advanced towards the king's hermitage. All the citizens, the residents of the kingdom, the women and the foremost among the Kurus followed them on foot. The Pandavas reached Dhritarashtra's lonely hermitage, only frequented by a large number of deer and beautiful with groves of plantain trees. There were ascetics there, engaged in different kinds of vows. When the Pandavas arrived, they were curious and came forward to see them. His voice choking with tears, the king asked them, "Where is the upholder of the Kourava lineage? Where has our elder father gone?" They replied, "The lord has gone to bathe in the Yamuna and to collect flowers and water." On foot, all of them swiftly proceeded along the path that was indicated to them and saw him from a distance. Wishing to see their father, they advanced swiftly. Sahadeva quickly dashed towards Pritha. Weeping aloud, the intelligent one touched his mother's feet. On seeing her beloved son, tears also flowed down her cheeks. She raised her son and embraced him with her arms, informing Gandhari that Sahadeva had come. Then Pritha saw the king, Bhimasena, Arjuna and Nakula and swiftly came towards them. She was ahead of the couple whose sons had been killed and was dragging them along. Seeing her, they⁸⁴ fell down at her feet. The great-minded and intelligent lord, the king,⁸⁵ recognized them through their voices and touch. Showering down tears and following the prescribed rites, the great-souled ones greeted the king, Gandhari and their mother. They took away the water pots and carried those themselves. The Pandavas were again comforted by their mother and regained their senses. The women, whose husbands were lions among men, the warriors and the inhabitants of the city and the countryside saw the king. King Yudhishtira presented each of them, announcing their names and their families and they were honoured back in return. Surrounded by them, the king's⁸⁶ eyes were filled with tears of joy and he thought himself to be back in his house in the city of Gajasahvya. With Gandhari and the intelligent Kunti, the king greeted his daughters-in-law, Krishna and the others and was delighted. He went to the hermitage, populated by siddhas and charanas. He wished to see it, since it was populated by the visitors, like the firmament by large numbers of stars.'

Chapter 1963(32)

Vaishampayana said, 'O bull among the Bharata lineage! With his brothers, whose beautiful eyes were like lotus petals and who were tigers among men, the king resided in that hermitage. There were immensely fortunate ascetics who had assembled from many countries. They wished to see the sons of the king of the Kurus, the broad-chested Pandavas. They said, "We wish to know this. Which one among these is Yudhishtira? Where are Bhima, Arjuna and the illustrious Droupadi?" The suta recounted all their names. Sanjaya also introduced them to Droupadi and all the other Kuru women. "This one is fair, with a complexion that is like that of pure gold. His body is like that of a grown and large lion. His nose is sharp and his eyes are long and large. His complexion is coppery. This is the king of the Kurus. This one's gait is like of a mad king among elephants. He is fair and his complexion is like that of pure and heated gold. He is large and his arms are long and thick. Look. This is Vrikodara. Behold him. Next to him, there is the one with the large bow. He is young and dark, with a complexion like that of the leader of a herd of elephants. His shoulders are like that of a lion and his gait is like that of an elephant that is sporting. His eyes are like lotus petals. This is the brave Arjuna. The supreme men who are near Kunti are the twins, equal to Vishnu and the great Indra. Among all the men in this world, there is no one who is their equal in beauty, strength

or good conduct. This one has eyes like lotus petals. She is middle-aged and is like one from heaven. Her complexion is like that of a blue lotus. This is Krishna, like Lakshmi personified, like the deity of a city. Next to her there is one with a golden complexion. Her complexion is like that of Gouri⁸⁷ personified. O foremost among brahmanas! This unmatched one in the middle is the sister of the one who has the chakra as a weapon.⁸⁸ There was a prosperous king who was the leader of an army. That king always challenged Krishna and this one, with a complexion like that of a blue lotus, is his sister.⁸⁹ This is the one who is Vrikodara's chief wife. This is the daughter of the famous king of Magadha, Jarasandha. Her complexion is like that of a *champaka* flower and she is the wife of Madravati's younger son.⁹⁰ This one has a body that is like a blue lotus and there is no one who is her equal on earth. Her eyes are like lotus petals and she is the wife of Madravati's older son.⁹¹ This fair one has a complexion like that of heated gold. She is the daughter of King Virata and this is her son.⁹² She is the wife of Abhimanyu, the one who was slain in the battle when he was without a chariot, though Drona and the others were on their chariots. These ones are attired in white upper garments and do not have the partings in their hair.⁹³ They are the wives of the king of men.⁹⁴ They are also the daughters-in-law of the aged king, who lost one hundred of his brave sons. They are thus without protectors. O brahmanas! O upright ones! O those who are spirited and intelligent! I have recounted the names of the foremost ones. These are the ones you have asked me about. O ones who are pure in intelligence! These are the wives of lords of men." The aged king of the Kurus was like a god among men and he thus met his sons. When all the ascetics had gone, he asked all of them about their welfare. The warriors seated themselves around the hermitage, in a clear area that was free of fallen leaves. As is proper, the women, the aged and the young seated themselves and he asked them about their welfare.'

Chapter 1964(33)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Yudhishtira! O mighty-armed one! O son! Are you well? What about your sons and all the residents of the city and the countryside? What about those who depend on you? Are they well? O lord! What about your advisers, large number of servants and seniors? Are the citizens served by the rajarshi so that they can obtain their subsistence? Is the treasury filled through revenue that does not violate any norms? Do you behave in the proper way towards enemies, neutrals and friends? Do you look after brahmanas properly and show them favours? O bull among the Bharata lineage! Are they satisfied with your good conduct? What about enemies, seniors, citizens, servants and relatives? O Indra among kings! Are you devoted towards ancestors and gods? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Do you worship guests with food and drink? Are the brahmanas in your dominion engaged in their own tasks? What about kshatriyas, large numbers of vaishyas, shudras and householders? Do the women, the young and the aged have to grieve or beg for anything? O bull among men! Are women honoured in your household? This lineage of rajarshis has obtained you as a king. O great king! I hope you are acting in the proper way and its fame is not diminishing.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus addressed, he⁹⁵ replied in the proper way. Those questions were about his welfare and deeds and he also asked questions about welfare. “O king! Are your austerities prospering? I hope exhaustion is not slowing you down. Without getting tired, is my mother able to serve you? O king! I hope her sojourn in the forest becomes successful. This is my elder mother⁹⁶ and she is afflicted and worn out through excessive exposure to the wind. She has been engaged in fierce austerities. I hope the queen is not suffering on account of this. Her immensely valorous sons have followed the dharma of kshatriyas and have been slain. I hope she does not censure us or regard us as sinners. O king! How is Vidura? We do not see him here. Is Sanjaya well and is he established in austerities?”’

‘Thus addressed, King Dhritarashtra replied. “O son! Vidura is well. He has resorted to fierce austerities. He does not eat anything and subsists only on air. He is emaciated and consists only of veins. Sometimes, brahmanas catch sight of him, alone in this forest.” While he was speaking in this way, Kshatta was seen from a distance. His hair was matted and there were small pieces of wood in his mouth. He was emaciated and naked. He was covered in filth and smeared with pollen from wild flowers. The lord of the earth called out to him. However, on seeing such a large number of people in the hermitage, he suddenly began to run away. Alone, King Yudhishtira fol-

lowed him. He entered that terrible forest, sometimes seeing him and sometimes unable to see him. The king pursued him carefully and called out, “Listen. O Vidura! I am your beloved King Yudhishthira.” Vidura, supreme among intelligent ones, entered another solitary part of the forest and stood there alone, clinging to a tree. The king saw that he was extremely emaciated and his form alone could be discerned. That is the way the immensely intelligent Yudhishthira could make out the immensely wise one. Standing before him, he said, “I am Yudhishthira.” The king said this in Vidura’s hearing and he received them only with his consciousness. He glanced at the king with unblinking eyes. Vidura fixed his gaze on his eyes. The intelligent Vidura penetrated his body with his body, his breath of life with his breath of life and his senses with his senses. Thus, using the strength of yoga, he entered the king’s body. Vidura ignited Dharmaraja’s energy. Vidura’s body still remained there, with unmoving eyes and clinging to the tree. The king saw that he had lost his senses. But he also realized that his many qualities had become more powerful. Pandava Dharmaraja remembered his own great energy.⁹⁷ O lord of the earth! He thus got to know everything about his earlier self. Vyasa had told him about the great energy that comes from the dharma of yoga. The learned Dharmaraja wished to perform the rites and perform the acts of cremation there. But an invisible voice was heard. “O king! What was known as Vidura should not be cremated. Your body is also in him and he is nothing but eternal Dharma. O king! He will obtain the worlds known as Santanaka.⁹⁸ O scorcher of enemies! He followed the dharma of mendicants and you should not grieve about him.” Having been thus addressed, Dharmaraja returned from that spot. He told the king who was Vichitravirya’s son everything that had happened. The radiant king, all the people and Bhimasena and the others were filled with great wonder. Hearing this, the king was delighted and spoke to Dharma’s son. “Accept this water, roots and fruits from me. O king! It has been said that a guest should be offered whatever one partakes oneself.” The king who was Dharma’s son agreed to this. They ate under trees. All of them accepted the fruits, the roots and the water. They spent the night under trees.’

Chapter 1965(34)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The night was spent in that hermitage, performing auspicious deeds. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The conjunction of the nakshatras was auspicious and the night passed. Here and there, there were conversations, with the attributes of dharma and artha. There were citations from many sacred texts, with colourful words and syllables. O lord among men! Having cast aside their extremely expensive beds, the Pandavas slept on the ground, near their mother. Whatever the great-minded King Dhritarashtra ate, that is what those brave ones among men ate, spending the night there. When night was over, with his brothers, Kounteya performed the morning ablutions and took a look at the area around the hermitage. With Dhritarashtra’s permission, he roamed around wherever he wished, with the women from the inner quarters, the servants and the priests. He saw the sacrificial altars, with fires blazing. Many sages had consecrated themselves there and were offering oblations into the fires. There were wild flowers from the region and the smoke rose upwards. There were handsome brahmanas and large numbers of sages. There were herds of deer there and these were completely at ease. O lords! Large numbers of birds were without any fear and were singing. There were peacocks, blue jays, warbling gallinules and melodious cuckoos. These auspicious notes were pleasant to hear. Some places echoed with the sounds of brahmanas studying. In other spots, there were huge piles of fruits and roots that had been gathered. The king gave the ascetics riches, golden and silver pots and the wood of fig trees. The king gave them hides, woolen cloth, ladles and spoons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The king also gave them water pots, plates, pots for boiling, iron containers and many other kinds of vessels. Everyone accepted as much as he desired. The king, with dharma in his soul, toured the entire area of the hermitage. Having given away many kinds of riches to everyone, the king returned again.

‘He went and met the learned King Dhritarashtra, who had performed his ablutions and was seated at ease, together with Gandhari. His mother stood not very far away, bowing down like a disciple. The one with dharma in his soul saw Kunti, who had always followed dharma. He worshipped the king and announced himself to the king. Having been asked to sit, he then seated himself on a mat made out of grass. Bhimasena and the other Pandavas, bulls among the Kouravas, also honoured the king and commanded by him, sat down. Surrounded by them, the

Kourava king was radiant. He blazed in the prosperity of the brahman, like Brihaspati amidst the gods. When they were seated, the maharshis approached. There were also Shatayupa and the others, the residents of Kurukshetra. The illustrious and extremely energetic brahmana, Vyasa, worshipped by large numbers of devarshis and surrounded by his disciples, showed himself before the king. King Kouravya, Kunti's valiant son, and Bhimasena and the others arose and worshipped him. Vyasa, surrounded by Shatayupa and the others, approached and addressed King Dhritarashtra. There was an extensive mat made out of kusha grass and it was covered with black antelope skin and kusha grass on top. This had been prepared for Vyasa and it was offered to him. When he was seated, they took Dvaipayana's permission and seated themselves on mats around the immensely energetic one.'

Chapter 1966(35)

Vaishampayana said, 'When the great-souled Pandavas were seated, Satyawati's son, Vyasa, invited the king to speak. "O Dhritarashtra! O mighty-armed one! Are your austerities progressing? O lord of men! Is your mind pleased with residing in the forest? O king! Has the sorrow on account of the destruction of your sons diminished? O unblemished one! Are all your senses of knowledge clear? Is your intelligence firmly fixed on observing the rites of the forest? I hope my daughter-in-law, Gandhari, is not overcome by grief. The queen is immensely wise and intelligent and has knowledge of dharma and artha. She knows the truth about prosperity and adversity. I hope she is not sorrowing. O king! I hope Kunti is serving you without any sense of ego. She has given up the kingdom and devoted herself to serving her seniors. Did the king who is Dharma's son, Bhima, Arjuna and the twins greet you happily? Have they been comforted? Were you happy at seeing them? Has your mind been cleansed of sin? O lord of men! Do you possess pure sentiments and has knowledge been generated in you? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O great king! In all creatures, there are three things that are superior—lack of enmity, truth and lack of violence. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I hope you are not suffering from residing in the forest. O lord! What about eating forest fare and wearing the garments of sages? O king! I know about the departure, following the proper rites, of the great-souled Vidura. He was born from Dharma and was extremely great-souled. It was because of Mandavya's curse that Dharma was born as Vidura.⁹⁹ He was immensely intelligent. He was a great yogi. He was great-souled and extremely great-minded. Brihaspati among the gods and Sukra among the asuras did not possess as much of intelligence as that bull among men did. Over a long period of time, the rishi Mandavya accumulated the strength of his austerities and used this to overwhelm eternal Dharma. Through his strength, Brahma's command and my employment, that extremely intelligent one was born in Vichitravirya's field.¹⁰⁰ O great king! He was your brother. But he was also the eternal god of the gods. Through the techniques of dharana and dhyana, the wise and the learned known him now as Dharma. The eternal one prospers through truth, self-control, rituals, non-violence, generosity and austerities. Yudhishtira, king of the Kurus, was born through the strength of his yoga. O king! That is the reason that wise and extremely intelligent one is also known as Dharma. Both here and in the hereafter, Dharma exists, like the fire, like the wind, like the water, like the earth and like the sky. O Kouravya! He can go everywhere. He pervades everything, mobile and immobile. That god of the gods can be seen by the siddhas, those who have cleansed their sins. Dharma is Vidura. Vidura is the Pandava.¹⁰¹ O king! You can see Pandava, who is standing before you and is obedient to you. Your brother, the supremely intelligent one, has entered him with his soul. It is good fortune that the great-souled one, immensely strong in yoga, now pervades Kounteya. O bull among the Bharata lineage! You will also be united with the greatest benefit. O son! Know that I have come here to dispel your doubts. There is a deed that none of the maharshis in this world have ever accomplished earlier. It is marvelous. Through the fruits of my austerities, I will show it to you. O lord of the earth! What do you desire? What do you seek to obtain from me? Tell me clearly what you wish to see or hear. I will act in accordance with that.'"

This ends Ashrama-Vasa Parva.



Section Ninety-One

PUTRA DARSHANA PARVA

This section has 234 shlokas and 9 chapters.

Chapter 1967(36): 33 shlokas

Chapter 1968(37): 18 shlokas

Chapter 1969(38): 23 shlokas

Chapter 1970(39): 24 shlokas

Chapter 1971(40): 21 shlokas

Chapter 1972(41): 28 shlokas

Chapter 1973(42): 17 shlokas

Chapter 1974(43): 18 shlokas

Chapter 1975(44): 52 shlokas

Putra means son and darshana means sight. Vyasa uses the power of his austerities to show everyone the dead warriors, including the sons of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. That explains the name of this parva. After visiting Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti, the Pandavas return to Hastinapura.

Chapter 1967(36)

Janamejaya asked, ‘O brahmana! King Dhritarashtra, tiger among men, went to the forest with his wife and his daughter-in-law, Kunti. Vidura obtained success and merged himself into Dharmaraja. All the sons of Pandu were then residing in the circle of the hermitage. What wonderful deed did the supremely energetic maharshi, Vyasa, accomplish? What did he speak of doing? O brahmana! For how long did the undecaying Kouravya king, Yudhishtira, reside in the forest with his people? O lord! While he dwelt there, what did he and his soldiers eat? What about the great-souled ones and the women of the inner quarters? O unblemished one! Tell me that.’

Vaishampayana replied, ‘O king! With the permission of the king of the Kurus, the Pandavas prepared many kinds of food and drink and felt refreshed. With the soldiers and the women of the inner quarters, they resided there for one month. O unblemished one! After this, as I have told you, Vyasa arrived there. In the presence of the king, all of them began to converse. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When Vyasa had come, other sages also arrived there—Narada, Parvata, Devala, great in austerities, Vishvasu, Tumburu and Chitrakuta.¹ With Dhritarashtra’s permission, Yudhishtira, the great-minded king of the Kurus, followed the proper rites and worshipped them. Having been worshipped by Yudhishtira, all of them sat down on sacred and excellent seats covered with grass. When they were seated, the immensely intelligent king who was the extender of the Kuru lineage² also sat down, surrounded by the sons of Pandu. Gandhari, Kunti, Draupadi, Satvati³ and the other women also seated themselves. O king! The conversation that ensued was divine, full of dharma and concerned accounts of the ancient rishis, the gods and the asuras.

‘When this conversation was over, Vyasa, foremost among eloquent ones and supreme among those who knew about all Vedas, was pleased. The immensely energetic one again spoke these words to the lord whose sight was his wisdom. “O Indra among kings! I know the desire that is there in your heart. You are burning with grief on account of your sons. O king! That grief is also there in Gandhari’s heart. O great king! It is also there in the hearts of Kunti and Draupadi. Subhadra, Krishna’s sister, is also holding up a fierce sorrow on account of her son being killed. That is also known to me. O king! I heard that all of them had come here and were residing here. O descendant of the Kourava lineage! I have accordingly come here to dispel doubts. Over a long period of time, I have accumulated the valour of austerities. All of these gods, gandharvas and maharshis will witness that today. Therefore, tell me. O mighty-armed one! I will grant you whatever you wish. I am lofty and can grant you a boon. Behold the strength of my austerities.” The Indra among kings was thus addressed by the infinitely intelligent Vyasa. He thought for a short while and then spoke. “I am blessed that you are showing me your favours. Since you have come here today, with all these virtuous ones, my life has become successful. Today, I understand the destinations obtained by great-souled ones. All of you are Brahma’s equal. You are stores of austerities and have come here to meet me. There is no doubt that I have become purified through the act of seeing you. O unblemished ones! I no longer entertain any fears about the world hereafter. However, I loved my son and always remember him. My mind is distressed. He was evil-minded and extremely wicked. What has happened to him? He was evil in his intelligence and oppressed the innocent Pandavas. He violently destroyed the earth, with its men and elephants. There were great-souled kings, the lords of many countries. They assembled for my son’s sake and all of them came under the subjugation of death. Those brave ones gave up their sons and wives, dearer to them than their own lives. They went to the abode of the lord of the dead. What has happened to them? O brahmana! What has happened to those who were slain in the battle for the sake of their friends? What about my sons and grandsons who were killed in the encounter? My heart is pained at the immensely strong and aged Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, being brought down, as it is for Drona, supreme among brahmanas. My son was foolish and wicked. He hated his well-wishers. Desiring the kingdom of the earth, he conveyed his blazing lineage to its destruction. I remember all this and am burnt night and day. Overwhelmed by sorrow and grief, I cannot obtain any peace. O father! This is what I think about. There is no tranquility for me.”’

Chapter 1968(37)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O Janamejaya! Hearing these piteous words of the rajarshi, Gandhari began to sorrow again. So did Kunti, Drupada’s daughter, Subhadra and the excellent women and daughters-in-law of the Kourava lineage. Queen Gandhari was overwhelmed with grief. Her eyes were bound. Joining her hands in salutation, she spoke to her father-in-law. “O bull among sages! Sixteen years have elapsed since this king’s sons were slain. O lord! He sorrows over his sons and can find no peace. Overcome with grief on account of his sons, the lord of the earth sighs. O great sage! Dhritarashtra has never been able to sleep or sit. Through the strength of your austerities, you are capable of creating all the worlds. Why can you not show the king the worlds to which his sons have gone? Krishna Droupadi sorrows grievously because her relatives and sons have been slain. She is virtuous and you love this daughter-in-law the most among all your daughters-in-law. Krishna’s sister, Subhadra, is gentle in speech. The beautiful one sorrows grievously because Subhadra’s son was killed. This is the wife of Bhurishrava and she is extremely miserable. O lord! Because of the grief at the hardship her husband confronted, she cannot lie down or sit. Her father-in-law was the intelligent Bahlika, the extender of the Kuru lineage. With his father, Somadatta was slain in the great battle.⁴ O immensely intelligent one! Your son had one hundred handsome sons who did not retreat from battle. They were slain in the forefront of the battle. These are those one hundred wives, also grieving on account of their sons. The king and I think repeatedly about this and sorrow. O great sage! They surround me in their sorrow. Those were brave and great-souled maharathas, my fathers-in-law, Somadatta and the others. O lord! What has happened to them? O illustrious one! Through your favours, the king’s sorrow can be banished. The time is right for this to be done for me too, and for Kunti, your daughter-in-law.” Kunti’s face was emaciated because of her vows. When Gandhari had spoken, she remembered her son, who had been secretly born from the sun god. Rishi Vyasa was the granter of boons and could hear and see from a distance. He saw that the queen, Savyasachi’s mother, was miserable. Vyasa told her, “O immensely wise one! Tell me what you wish to be done. What is in your mind?” Kunti bowed her head down before her father-in-law. In shame, she told him these words, explaining what had happened earlier.’

Chapter 1969(38)

‘Kunti said, “O illustrious one! You are my father-in-law. Therefore, you are like a god of the gods to me. Since you are like a god of the gods, listen to my truthful words. An ascetic and wrathful brahmana named Durvasa came to my father, soliciting alms. I gratified him by offering him food and through my purity, renunciation and cleanliness of mind. Even when there was reason for great anger, I did not exhibit any rage. He was pleased with me and said that he would grant me a boon. ‘You must accept a boon.’ That is what he told me. I was scared of being cursed by the brahmana and agreed. The brahmana spoke to me again. ‘O fortunate one! O one with the beautiful face! You will be Dharma’s mother. Whichever god you desire will obey your summons and present himself.’ Having said this, the brahmana disappeared and I was astounded. But in no situation, did it disappear from my mind.⁵ Once I was seated in a floor of the palace and saw the rising sun. I remembered the rishi’s words and remembered the sun god. I was still a child and did not comprehend the sin associated with this. The god, the one with the one thousand rays, appeared before me. He divided his body into two parts, one for the sky and one for earth. One of these continued to heat the worlds and the other presented itself before me. I was trembling and he said, ‘Accept a boon from me.’ I bowed my head down before him and replied, ‘Please go.’ The one with the fierce rays told me, ‘A summons cannot be futile and I will not pardon you. I will burn down the brahmana who gave you the boon and will also burn you down.’ I wished to protect the brahmana. He had not committed any crime that deserved a curse. So I told him, ‘O god! Give me a son who will be like you.’ At this, the sun god penetrated me with his energy and confounded me. He told me that I would have a son and returned to the firmament. I was in the inner quarters and wished to hide what had happened from my father. The son, Karna, was secretly born and I cast the child into the waters. O brahmana! There is no doubt that through the god’s favours, I once again became a

virgin, just as the rishi had said I would. I was foolish. Though I knew him as my son, I ignored him. O brahmana rishi! This continues to consume me and you know it well. Whether this was a sin, or whether it was not a sin, I have now told you about it. O illustrious one! You should free me from the fear that I suffer from.⁶ O unblemished one! Let the king also know what is in his heart. O supreme among sages! Through you, those wishes can be satisfied.”

Vaishampayana continued, ‘Having been addressed thus, Vyasa, supreme among those who knew about the Vedas, said, “You are praiseworthy. Everything will happen exactly as you have told me. There was no crime attached to you. You became a virgin again. The gods possess the power to enter human bodies. Since they are gods, they can have offspring through resolution, words, sight, touch and intercourse. These are the five methods they use. The dharma of humans must not be confused with the dharma of gods. O Kunti! Now that you know this, let your mental fever be extinguished. For all those who are strong, there is medication. For all those who are strong, there is purification. For all those who are strong, there is dharma. For all those who are strong, everything can be owned.”’

Chapter 1970(39)

‘Vyasa said, “O fortunate one! O Gandhari! You will see your sons, brothers, friends and the husbands of these daughters-in-law. They will seem to have woken up from sleep. Kunti will see Karna and Yadavi will see Subhadra’s son. Droupadi will see her five sons and her father and brothers. In my heart, I had thought of this means, even before you, the king and Pritha urged me. You should not grieve for all those great-souled bulls among men. They were virtuous and resorted to the dharma of kshatriyas. That is how they were slain. O unblemished one! This was certainly destiny, to accomplish the tasks of the gods. All of them were born on earth as incarnations, as parts of the gods. There were also gandharvas, apsaras, pishachas, guhyakas, rakshasas and other sacred ones, the siddhas and the devarshis. There were also gods, danavas and unblemished brahmana rishis. In the forefront of the battle, those were the ones who were slain in Kurukshetra. It has been heard that Dhritarashtra was an intelligent king of the gandharvas. He was born in the world of humans as Dhritarashtra, your husband. Know that the undecaying Pandu was a superior one from the large number of Maruts. Kshatta and King Yudhishtira were born as parts of Dharma. Know Duryodhana to be Kali and Shakuni to be Dvapara. O one who is beautiful to see! Know that Duhshasana and the others were rakshasas. Know that Bhimasena, the powerful scorcher of enemies, came from the Maruts and Partha Dhananjaya was the rishi Nara. Hrishiksha was Narayana and the twins are the Ashvins. O beautiful one! Know that Aditya, supreme among those who heat, divided himself into two parts, one for heating the worlds and the other as Karna. Since the objective was to foster enmity, he was generated through this friction. Subhadra’s son was the heir of the Pandavas. He was slain by the six maharathas. He was born from the god Soma, who used yoga to divide himself into two. With Droupadi, Dhritadyumna was born from the fire, as parts of the auspicious fire god. Know that Shikhandi was a rakshasa. Know that Drona was a part of Brihaspati and Drona’s son of Rudra. Know that Gangeya Bhishma was a Vasu born as a human. O immensely wise one! In this way, the gods were born as humans. O beautiful one! Having accomplished their tasks, they have returned to heaven again. All of you have borne sorrow in your hearts for a long time, resulting from a fear about what has happened in the world hereafter. I will dispel that now. All of you should proceed towards the river Bhagirathi. There, you will see all those who have been slain in the field of battle.”’

Vaishampayana continued, ‘Hearing Vyasa’s words, all the people roared loudly, like lions, and proceeded towards the Ganga. Dhritarashtra and his advisers proceeded with the Pandavas, together with the tigers among sages and gandharvas who had assembled. That ocean of people gradually reached the Ganga. Cheerfully, as they wished, all of them began to dwell there. The intelligent Pandava resided in a spot there, with his followers, with the women from the inner quarters and the aged. They spent that day, as if it was one hundred years. They waited for the night, desiring to see the slain kings. The sun set over the sacred Asta mountain.⁷ They bathed and completed the evening rites.’

Chapter 1971(40)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When night approached, they performed their evening ablutions. All those who had assembled approached Vyasa. Dhritarashtra, with dharma in his soul, purified his mind. He seated himself, with the Pandavas and the rishis. The women seated themselves with Gandhari. According to age, all the people, the residents of the city and the countryside, also sat down. Vyasa, the immensely energetic and great sage, bathed in the sacred waters of the Bhagirathi and summoned all the people⁸—all the warriors who had fought for the Pandavas and the Kouravas and the immensely fortunate kings who had resided in different countries. O Janamejaya! A tumultuous sound arose from inside the water, raised by those who had earlier been Kuru and Pandava soldiers. All the kings, with Bhishma and Drona leading the way, and all the soldiers arose from the water in their thousands. Virata and Drupada were there, with their sons and their soldiers. Droupadi’s sons, Subhadra’s son and the rakshasa Ghatotkacha were also there. There were Karna and Duryodhana, maharatha Shakuni, Duhshasana and the other maharatha sons of Dhritarashtra. There were Jarasandha’s son, Bhagadatta, King Jalasandha, Bhurishrava, Shala, Shalya, Vrishasena and his younger brother, Prince Lakshmana, Dhrishtadyumna and his son, all of Shikhandi’s sons, Dhrishtaketu and his younger brother, Achala, Vrishaka, the rakshasa Alayudha, Bahlika, Somadatta and King Chekitana. There were many others, several whom I have not mentioned now. With shining bodies, all of them arose from the water. The brave kings were seen to arise with the garments, standards and mounts that they had possessed. All of them were attired in celestial garments. All of them were adorned in dazzling earrings. They were beyond enmity, beyond ego, beyond rage and beyond intolerance. Gandharvas sang around them and bards chanted their praises. They sported divine garments and garlands and were surrounded by large numbers of apsaras. O lord of men! The sage who was Satyawati’s son was delighted. Through the strength of his austerities, he gave Dhritarashtra divine eyesight. The illustrious Gandhari also had the strength of this divine knowledge. She saw all her sons and all the others who had been slain in the battle. All the people watched with unblinking eyes. They thought that this was an extremely great wonder and it made their body hair stand up. The large numbers of cheerful men and women made it seem like a festival. They saw the soldiers who had arrived, as if they had been etched on a painting. With his divine sight, Dhritarashtra saw all of them. O best among the Bharata lineage! Through the sage’s favours, he was delighted.’

Chapter 1972(41)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The best among the Bharata lineage met each other. They were devoid of anger and jealousy. All of them had cleansed their sins. They resorted to the sacred rites that had been laid down by the brahmana rishis. All of them were cheerful in their minds, like immortals in the world of the gods. O king! Sons met fathers and mothers, wives met husbands, brothers met brothers and friends met friends. Happily, the Pandavas met the great archer, Karna, Subhadra’s son and all of Droupadi’s sons. Karna and the Pandavas were delighted to meet each other. All the kings met each other affectionately. Through the favours of the rishi, all rage in the other kshatriyas was destroyed. They abandoned enmity and resorted to affection. In this way, all of them, the tigers among the Kurus and the other men, met their seniors and their relatives and sons. Cheerful in their minds, they passed that entire night. The kings were content and thought that they were in heaven. There was no sorrow, no fear, no terror, no desire and no fame. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The warriors met each other. Having met their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, the women obtained great happiness and abandoned all their grief. The brave ones and their wives spent a night of pleasure together. They embraced each other and then returned to wherever they had come from. The bull among sages gave those people leave to depart. While everyone looked on, they disappeared in an instant.⁹ The great-souled ones were submerged in the sacred river that has three flows. With their chariots and their standards, they returned to their own abodes. Some went to the world of the gods, others to Brahma’s abode. Some went to Varuna’s world, others obtained Kubera’s abode. Some of those kings obtained the world of Vaivasvata. Some went to the worlds of the rakshasas and pishachas, others to Uttara Kuru. The progress

of all of them was wonderful, as some went with the immortals. The great-souled ones left with their mounts and their followers.

“The great sage was still standing in the water. He was devoted to dharma and immensely energetic, engaged in the welfare of the Kurus. When all of them had gone, he spoke to the kshatriya ladies who had lost their husbands. “Let the best among women who desire the worlds obtained by their husbands swiftly and faithfully immerse themselves in the waters of the Jahnavi.” Hearing those words, those beautiful women behaved faithfully. Obeying their father-in-law, they entered the waters of the Jahnavi. O lord of the earth! All those virtuous women were freed from their human bodies and departed with their husbands. In this way, all those virtuous women of the lineage entered the water, were freed and went to the worlds obtained by their husbands. They had divine forms. They were adorned in divine ornaments. There were divine garments and garlands. They went where their husbands were. They were spirited and possessed good conduct. All of them possessed all the good qualities. Freed from sin, they vanished and obtained their own respective abodes. Vyasa was the granter of boons and devoted to dharma. At that time, he satisfied the wishes of everyone.¹⁰ There were people who had assembled from many countries. On hearing of this encounter between those gods among men and the men who had returned, they were greatly delighted. A man who listens to this account of the encounter between those who loved each other, always obtains good things, in this world and in the next. He obtains benefits and is united with his relatives. His mind is at ease. A learned man who makes others listen to this obtains supreme success. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Men who observe rites and study this are united with the yoga of adhyatma and become intelligent men. Those who hear this parva recited always obtain supreme success.’

Chapter 1973(42)

‘Suta¹¹ said, “On hearing of the reappearance and departure of his forefathers, the learned King Janamejaya was delighted. Filled with joy, he again asked about the reappearance. ‘If one has cast aside the body, how can one be again seen in that same form?’ The best among brahmanas, Vyasa’s powerful disciple was addressed in this way and replied. ‘It is certain that the results of all deeds are never destroyed. O king! Bodies and forms are the outcome of deeds. The great elements are united with the lord of all elements and are permanent. They always exist with the eternal and are not destroyed when they are separated from the impermanent. The efforts of acts done easily bring fruits. However, if the atman is attached to the acts, one enjoys happiness and unhappiness.¹² It has been determined that the kshetrajna is never destroyed. Know that the atman in creatures is permanent. One’s own form exists as long as deeds have not been exhausted. Until the deeds are exhausted, a man is constrained by his own form. There are many attributes that come together and lead to the body. Those who know can distinguish these from the eternal. In a horse sacrifice, the sacred texts have spoken about what is meant by a horse. Even when the horse goes to another world, the breath of life is eternal and in that sense, the horse is eternal. O king! If it pleases you, I will tell you what is beneficial for you. When engaged in sacrifices, you have heard of the path of devayana. When good deeds are performed for a sacrifice, the gods are favourably inclined towards you. When gods are honoured through animals, they become lords of the passage. Though they are seen to have gone, there are other parts that are permanent.¹³ A man who sees this union of the five elements and various categories as permanent and confuses it with the eternal atman is futile in his intelligence. A person who sorrows because of separation is foolish. That is my view. A person who connects separation with taints should avoid all forms of association. If there is no attachment, there is no association. In this world, misery results from separation. A man who distinguishes the temporary from the permanent is not agitated by a sense of ego. A person who is touched by intelligence and can separate the temporary from the permanent is freed from confusion. Creatures arrive from a state of being invisible and return to being invisible again. I do not know him. He does not know me. Nor do I yet know detachment. If a man does not have control over his mind, whatever be the form of the body in which he undertakes acts, that is the form of the body in which he has to enjoy the fruits. Deeds of the mind are enjoyed in the mind. Deeds of the body are enjoyed in the body.’”

Chapter 1974(43)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O extender of the Kuru lineage! Through the favours of the rishi, the king obtained sight and saw his sons in their own forms, having never been able to see them earlier.¹⁴ The king knew about the dharma of kings, the brahman and the Upanishads.¹⁵ The best among men possessed the determination of intelligence. Through the strength of his austerities, the immensely wise Vidura advanced towards success. Having met the ascetic Vyasa, so did Dhritarashtra.’

Janamejaya said, ‘If Vyasa, the granter of boons, shows me my father in his former form, his former garments and his former age, I will then have faith in all this. Such a sight will be agreeable. I will then have accomplished success. I will be firm in my determination. Through the favours of that son of a rishi, let my desire be accomplished.

‘Suta said, “When the king spoke these words, the powerful and intelligent Vyasa wished to show him his favours and brought Parikshit there. King Janamejaya saw his handsome father. The king arrived from heaven in his former form and his former age. The great-souled Shamika and his son Shringi and the advisers also arrived and the king saw them.¹⁶ Having performed the final rites of the sacrifice, King Janamejaya was delighted. The king bathed and also bathed his father himself. Having bathed, the best among the Bharata lineage addressed Astika, who was Jaratkaru’s son and was born in a lineage of nomadic mendicants. ‘O Astika! This sacrifice of mine has witnessed various wonders. That is my view. I have even obtained my father, the dispeller of my sorrows, now.’

“Astika replied, ‘Rishi Dvaipayana is an ancient store of austerities. O best among those of the Kuru lineage! If he is present at any person’s sacrifice, that person conquers both the worlds. O descendant of the Pandava lineage! You have heard many colourful accounts. The snakes have been reduced to ashes and have followed the footsteps of your father. O king! Because of your devotion to the truth, Takshaka has also been freed. All the rishis have been worshipped and you have seen the great-souled one’s end.¹⁷ On hearing about this destruction of sin, you have accumulated a great deal of dharma. On seeing this generous person,¹⁸ the strands of your heart have been loosened. There are those who are on the side of dharma, with good deeds and inclinations. On seeing them, sins are diminished. One should bow down before such people.’”

‘Suta continued, “King Janamejaya heard this from the best among brahmanas. He worshipped the rishi and honoured him repeatedly. O one who knows about dharma! He then asked the undecaying and excellent rishi Vaishampayana about the remaining part of the account about residence in the forest.”’

Chapter 1975(44)

Janamejaya asked, ‘The king saw his sons and grandsons, with their friends and followers. After this, what did Dhritarashtra and King Yudhishtira do?’

Vaishampayana replied, ‘Being able to see his sons again was a great and extraordinary wonder. After having seen this, the rajarshi was freed from his grief and returned to his hermitage. Taking Dhritarashtra’s permission, all the ordinary people and the supreme rishis went away, as they desired. The great-souled Pandavas, with the superior and the inferior soldiers, followed the great-souled king and his wife. The intelligent sage who was Satyawati’s son, worshipped by brahmana rishis and the worlds, also went to the hermitage and addressed Dhritarashtra. “O Dhritarashtra! O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Kourava lineage! Listen. You have obtained knowledge from the ancient rishis, the performers of auspicious deeds. They are senior, prosperous in knowledge and born in noble lineages. They know about the Vedas and the Vedangas. They know about dharma and about the ancient texts. They have told you about various accounts. Do not have any sorrow in your mind. A learned person is not distressed because of ill fortune. You have also heard about the secrets of the gods from Narada, who knows about what the gods intend. Your sons died after following the dharma of kshatriyas. They were sanctified by weapons and obtained an auspicious end. You have seen your sons, happily roaming around as they will. With all his broth-

ers, their wives and well-wishers, the intelligent Yudhishtira is awaiting your instructions. Let him go, so that he can rule his own kingdom. He has dwelt in this forest for more than a month. O scorcher of enemies! The kingdom must always be protected carefully. O lord of men! There are many who hope to seize the kingdom.” The extremely intelligent Vyasa addressed the Kourava king in this way.

‘Hence, the eloquent one summoned Yudhishtira and spoke these words. “O Ajatashatru! O fortunate one! With your brothers, listen to me. O lord of the earth! Through your favours, grief does not constrain me any longer. O son! I am happy, just as I used to be with you earlier in Gajasahvya. O learned one! With you as my protector, I am surrounded by everything agreeable. I have obtained the fruits of obtaining a son through you. I am extremely happy with you. O mighty-armed one! I no longer suffer from rancour. O son! Leave quickly. Since I have met you, my austerities have suffered. My body has suffered from austerities. But on meeting you, I am able to hold it up again. Like me, your mothers¹⁹ are also emaciated at having subsisted only on leaves. They are engaged in vows like mine. O son! They will not live for a long time. We have seen Duryodhana and the others, who have gone to the other world. That became possible because of the valour of Vyasa’s austerities and you coming here. O unblemished one! The purpose behind my long life has been met. You should grant me permission to engage in severe austerities. The ancestral rites and fame of the lineage are now vested in you. O mighty-armed one! O son! Today or tomorrow, without any delay, leave. O bull among the Bharata lineage! You have heard a lot about the policy to be followed by kings. O lord! I do not see what else I can instruct you. You are accomplished.” O son! These are the words the king spoke to the king.²⁰ “O one who knows about dharma! You should not abandon me in this way. I do not deserve it. If they so wish, let all my brothers and followers leave. I will carefully serve you and the two mothers in the vows.” Gandhari replied, “O son! It shouldn’t be that way. Listen to my words. The Kuru lineage and the ancestral rites of your father-in-law vest with you. O son! You should depart. You have worshipped us enough. O son! The king has spoken to you about what you should do and you listen to your father’s words.” Thus addressed, he wiped his eyes, which were overflowing with tears of affection. Weeping, he spoke these words to Kunti. “The king has cast me away and so has the illustrious Gandhari. However, I have always been bound to you. How can I miserably go away? O one who follows dharma! But I do not also wish to be an impediment in the path of your austerities. There is nothing superior to austerities. Greatness is obtained through austerities. O queen! My mind no longer turns towards the kingdom, as it used to do in earlier times. My entire mind and soul are now attracted towards austerities. This entire world is now empty. O fortunate one! The relatives are fewer. Our forces are no longer as strong as they used to be. The Panchalas have been severely diminished and only the maidens remain. O fortunate one! I do not see anyone who can establish their lineage again. In the encounter, all of them have been reduced to ashes by Drona alone. Those who were left were slain by Drona’s son in the night. We can see that the Chedis and the Matsyas are no longer what they used to be. The Vrishnis alone are left, protected by Vasudeva’s chakra. But I also see that dharma and artha must be established. There is no other reason. Therefore, cast your auspicious glances on all of us. It will be extremely difficult for us to see you. O mother! The king will engage in fierce austerities.” When he heard these words, the mighty-armed Sahadeva, the lord of any battle, spoke these words to Yudhishtira, tears flowing down from his eyes. “O bull among kings! I am not interested in leaving my mother. You should quickly go. But I will observe austerities in this forest. I will use austerities to dry up my body here. I will serve at the feet of the king and my mothers.” When he spoke in this way, Kunti embraced the mighty-armed one in her arms and said, “O son! You should not speak in this way. Act in accordance with my words. May everything be auspicious and well with you. May my sons be well. If you remain here, our austerities will be obstructed. I am bound by the noose of affection to you and my supreme austerities will suffer. O son! Therefore, depart. That is best for you. O lord! There is little time left for us.” O Indra among kings! In this way, through this and many other words spoken by Kunti, their minds were calmed, especially those of Sahadeva and the king.

‘The bulls among the Kuru lineage took permission from their mothers and from the king. They greeted the best among the Kuru lineage and the mothers and said, “O king! We will return. We have been honoured through these auspicious words. O king! With your permission, we will leave, cleansed of sin.” This is what the great-souled Dharmaraja said. The rajarshi granted him permission, honoured Yudhishtira and pronounced benedictions of victory over him. The king comforted Bhima, best among strong ones. The intelligent and valiant one honoured him

back in return. Kouravya embraced Arjuna and the twins, bulls among men. He honoured them and granted them permission to leave. They grasped Gandhari's feet and sought her permission. The king's mother²¹ inhaled the fragrance of his head and embraced him. All of them circumambulated her, like calves who were being separated.²² As they circumambulated, they kept on glancing towards her repeatedly. So did the virtuous Droupadi and all the other Kourava women. They followed the prescribed conduct and took leave of their father-in-law. The unblemished ones took leave from their mothers-in-law and were embraced by them. Having been instructed about their duties, they left with their husbands. The charioteers shouted, "Yoke. Arrange for the yoking." There was the grunting of camels and the neighing of horses. King Yudhishtira left for the city of Hastinapura, with his wives, soldiers and his relatives.'

This ends Putra Darshana Parva.



Section Ninety-Two

NARADAGAMANA PARVA

This section has 91 shlokas and 3 chapters.

Chapter 1976(45): 44 shlokas

Chapter 1977(46): 20 shlokas

Chapter 1978(47): 27 shlokas

Agamana means arrival and this parva is about Narada's arrival. Narada arrives and tells the Pandavas that Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti have been killed in a forest fire and Sanjaya has gone off to the Himalayas.

Chapter 1977(45)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O king! Two years passed since the return of the Pandavas. As he wished, devarshi Narada came to meet Yudhishtira. Mighty-armed Yudhishtira, king of the Kurus, worshipped him. When he was seated and rested, the supreme among eloquent ones asked, “O illustrious one! It has been a long time since you last came. O brahmana! Since you have arrived, is everything well and auspicious? Which countries have you seen? What can I do for you? O foremost among brahmanas! Tell me that. You are our beloved guest.” Narada replied, “O king! I have not seen you for a long time and that is the reason I have come from my hermitage. O king! I have seen the tirthas and the Ganga.” Yudhishtira asked, “People who reside along the banks of the Ganga say that the great-souled Dhritarashtra is resorting to supreme austerities now. Have you seen if the extender of the Kuru lineage is well? What about Gandhari, Pritha and Sanjaya, the son of a suta? How is the king, my father, now? O illustrious one! If you have seen the king, I wish to hear about this.”

‘Narada replied, “O great king! Be calm and listen. I will tell you everything about what I heard and what I saw in that hermitage. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! O king! When you returned from residing in the forest, your father left Kurukshetra and left for Gangadvara.¹ The intelligent one went with Gandhari, the daughter-in-law, Kunti, the suta Sanjaya, the sacrificial fire and the officiating priests. Your father is a store of austerities and resorted to fierce austerities. He placed pebbles in his mouth. He subsisted only on air. He became like a sage. In that forest, the great ascetic was worshipped by all the sages. In six months, the king was reduced to skin and bones. Gandhari subsisted only on water. Kunti ate only once a month. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Sanjaya ate every sixth day. The lord and the officiating priests offered many kinds of oblations into the sacrificial fire. In that forest, the king was sometimes seen and sometimes not seen.² The king roamed around in that forest, without a fixed abode. He was followed by the two queens and by Sanjaya. Sanjaya guided the king over plain and uneven terrain. In a similar way, the unblemished Pritha became Gandhari’s eyes. Once, the supreme among kings went to a marshy tract near the Ganga. The intelligent one bathed in the Ganga and then headed for the hermitage. A wind arose and there was a large forest conflagration. In every direction, it grasped everything and burnt down the entire forest. In every direction, herds of deer and flocks of birds were burnt down. Herds of boar sought refuge in water-bodies. The forest thus confronted a great hardship. The king had not eaten. Because he was weak, he couldn’t move around. Your mothers were also extremely emaciated and incapable of moving. The king saw that the fire was approaching near. Therefore, the lord of the earth anxiously spoke these words to the suta, Sanjaya. ‘O Sanjaya! Go to a spot so that the fire does not burn you down. We will be burnt down by the fire and obtain the supreme objective.’ Sanjaya, supreme among eloquent ones, replied, ‘O king! This destruction and death from a fire is futile. However, I do not see any means of escaping from the fire. Therefore, you should tell me what needs to be done now.’ Thus addressed by Sanjaya, the king spoke again. ‘Since we have left our house ourselves, this death can cause us no harm. Water, fire, wind and emaciation of the body are praised for ascetics.’³ O Sanjaya! Leave without delay.’ Having told Sanjaya this, the king concentrated his mind. He sat down with Gandhari and Kunti, facing an eastern direction. On seeing this, Sanjaya circumambulated them. The intelligent one replied, ‘O lord! Focus yourself.’ The king, the learned son of a rishi, acted in accordance with these words. He restrained all his senses and became like a piece of wood. So did the immensely fortunate Gandhari and your mother, Pritha. Your father, the king, was burnt down in the forest conflagration. But Sanjaya, the great adviser, escaped from the conflagration. I saw him on the banks of the Ganga, surrounded by ascetics. When I asked him, the energetic one told me everything. The suta, Sanjaya, next left for the Himalaya mountains. In this way, the great-minded king of the Kurus was killed. O lord of men! So were Gandhari and your mother, Pritha. O bull among the Bharata lineage! When I was wandering around as I wished, I saw the bodies of the king and the two queens. On hearing about the king, many ascetics assembled in that hermitage. He was devoted and you should not grieve about him. O supreme among men! O Pandava! That is where I heard everything about the king and the queens and about how they were burnt down. O Indra among kings! You should not grieve about this. The lord of the earth, Gandhari and your mother desired that death by the fire voluntarily.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘On hearing this about Dhritarashtra’s departure, all the Pandavas were overcome by great grief. O great king! On hearing that the king had obtained his end, great sounds of lamentation arose from the inner quarters and from the citizens. Extremely miserable, the king exclaimed, “Alas!” Remembering his mother, Yudhishtira raised his arms upwards and wept. So did all his brothers, with Bhimasena at the forefront. O great king! On hearing that Pritha had departed, great sounds of weeping arose from the inner quarters. All of them sorrowed over the aged king who had lost his sons and had now been burnt down and about the ascetic Gandhari. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After some time, those sounds stopped. Controlling his tears through his fortitude, Dharmaraja spoke these words.’

Chapter 1977(46)

‘Yudhishtira said, “The great-souled one was engaged in fierce austerities. Though we, his relatives, are here, he died without a protector. Since Vichitravirya’s son has been burnt down in a forest conflagration, it is my view that the fortune of men is extremely difficult to decipher. He had one hundred handsome sons, with strength in their arms. The king himself possessed the strength of ten thousand elephants. Yet, he has been burnt down in a forest conflagration. Earlier, the best of women used to fan him with fans made out of palm leaves. Since he has been consumed in a forest conflagration, vultures are fanning him now. Large numbers of bards and minstrels used to wake him from sleep earlier. Because of my wicked deeds, the king is lying down on the ground now. I am not grieving over the illustrious Gandhari, whose sons have been slain. Devoted to her husband’s vows, she has got the world obtained by her husband. But I sorrow over Pritha. She abandoned the extremely great and blazing prosperity of her sons and chose to reside in the forest instead. Shame on our kingdom. Shame on our strength. Shame on our valour. Shame on the dharma of kshatriyas and on the fact that we are alive while she is dead. O supreme among the best of brahmanas! The progress of time is indeed exceedingly subtle, since she abandoned the kingdom and desired to reside in the forest. She is the mother of Yudhishtira, Bhima and Vijaya. Without a protector, how could she have been burnt down? When I think of this, I am stupefied. Savyasachi pacified the fire god in Khandava and that was pointless.⁴ It is my view that he⁵ ignored that good deed and was ungrateful. The illustrious one burnt down Savyasachi’s mother. He assumed the disguise of a brahmana and arrived, seeking alms. Shame on Agni. Shame on Partha’s fame and unwavering aim. O illustrious one! There is something else that brings me greater grief. How could the lord of the earth suffer from a futile death from the fire? Rajarshi Kourava decided to become an ascetic. He ruled the earth. How can this kind of death be praised for him? In the great forest, there are also fires that have been sanctified by mantras. Since my father was so devoted, how could he have been consumed by a futile fire? Pritha was emaciated and reduced to veins alone. I think that in great fear, she must have trembled and shrieked, ‘O son! O Dharmaraja! O Bhima! Save me from the fear that has surrounded me from all sides.’ Anxious because of the fire, my mother must have run around in every direction. She loved Sahadeva more than her own sons. But that brave son of Madravati did not save her.’”

Vaishampayana continued, ‘Hearing this, all of them clung to each other and wept. The five Pandavas were afflicted by grief, like creatures at the time of the destruction of a yuga. The sounds of those Indras among men weeping filled the rooms of the palace and seemed to rise up to the space between heaven and earth.’

Chapter 1978(47)

‘Narada said, “The king did not suffer a futile death from the fire. That is what I heard there. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! This is what happened to the king who was Vichitravirya’s son. The intelligent one entered the forest and subsisted on air. He kindled the sacrificial fires. In that desolate forest, the officiating priests then cast those sacrificial fires away and the supreme among Bharatas left, as he wished. That fire began to rage in the forest.⁶ It is this fire that blazed in the forest. That is what the ascetics told me. O bull among the Bharata lin-

eage! As I have told you earlier, the king voluntarily allowed himself to be burnt down in a marshy area around the Jahnavi. O unblemished one! O Yudhishtira! This is what I got to know from the sages whom I met on the banks of the Bhagirathi. O lord of the earth! The king was thus consumed by his own fire.⁷ Since the king has gone to the supreme objective, you should not sorrow. O Pandava! There is no doubt that your mother was devoted to serving her seniors and has obtained an extremely great success. O Kouravya! You should perform the water rites for them. With your brothers, arrange for all the prescribed rites.”

Vaishampayana continued, ‘O bull among the Bharata lineage! The lord of the earth, the bearer of the burden of the Pandava lineage, departed with his brothers and his wives. Because of their devotion towards the king, so did the inhabitants of the city and the countryside. Clad in a single piece of garment, they went towards the Ganga. All the bulls among the Kurus immersed themselves in the waters there. With Yuyutsu at the forefront,⁸ they offered water to the great-souled one. They also did this for Gandhari and Pritha in the prescribed way, pronouncing their names and their gotras. Having performed the rites of purification, they returned, but remained outside the city.⁹ They sent men who knew the ordinances about the funeral rites. O best among the Kuru lineage! They went to Gangadvara, where the king had been consumed. The lord of the earth¹⁰ had given those men riches to perform the cremation rites in Gangadvara. On the twelfth day, the lord of men purified himself. For the funeral ceremony, Pandava gave away many types of dakshina. In Dhritarashtra’s name, the lord of the earth gave away gold, silver, cattle and extremely expensive beds. Naming them separately, the king also gave away different gifts in the names of the energetic Gandhari and Pritha. Every brahmana received whatever he wanted and as much as he wanted. There were beds, food, vehicles, gems, jewels and riches. In the names of the lord of the earth and his mothers, the king gave away vehicles, spreads, objects of pleasure, female slaves and female servants. Having given away large quantities at the funeral ceremony, the intelligent lord of the earth again entered Varanasahvya.¹¹ The men who had gone, following the king’s commands, also completed the cremation rites and returned with the remains. As is prescribed, these remains were worshipped with many kinds of garlands and fragrances. The king placed these remains in the proper places and performed the rites. O king! Narada comforted King Yudhishtira, the one with dharma in his soul. The supreme rishi then took his leave and went away wherever he wished. In this way, the intelligent Dhritarashtra spent fifteen years in the city and three years in the forest. He always gave away gifts in the names of his sons, kin, matrimonial allies, friends, brothers and relatives who had been slain in the war. With his kin and relatives dead, King Yudhishtira was distressed in his mind, but bore the burden of the kingdom.’

This ends Naradagamana Parva and also ends Ashrama-Vasika Parva.