

## Adi Parva

### Chapter One

#### Maharaja Shantanu Marries the Celestial Ganga

According to the historical records of this earth, there once lived a King named Maharaja Shantanu, the son of Pratipa, who took his birth in the solar dynasty and was considered naradeva, the manifest representative of the Supreme Lord on earth. His fame and rule extended to all parts of the world. The qualities of self-control, liberality, forgiveness, intelligence, modesty, patience and power always resided in this exalted emperor. His neck was marked with three lines like a conchshell, and his shoulders were broad. In prowess he resembled a maddened elephant. Above all these qualities, he was a devoted servant of Lord Vishnu, and therefore he was given the title, "King of kings".

Once when Maharaja Shantanu, that bull among men, was wandering in the forest, he came upon a place frequented by the Siddhas and Charanas (a class of heavenly demigods). There he saw an angelic woman who appeared like the goddess of fortune herself. In truth, she was the personification of the river Ganges. She was glancing at the monarch with her youthful longing eyes, and Maharaja Shantanu became attracted to her. He then approached her inquiring, "O beautiful woman, are you from the race of the Gandharvas, Apsaras, Yakshas, Nagas or the human race? As yet I have no queen, and your birth appears divine. Whatever your origin, O celestial beauty, I request you to become my wife."

The beautiful apsara (celestial maiden) then smilingly replied, "O King, I shall become your wife and obey your commands, but there are certain conditions. You should not interfere with my actions, whether agreeable or disagreeable. Also you should never chastise me with harsh words. If you assent to my request, I shall live with you. The King, infatuated with love, agreed to her proposals.

Having taken the lovely Ganga for his wife, Maharaja Shantanu passed many years in her association. She satisfied the King by her charm and affection, as well as by her music and dance; and thus the King passed many seasons unconscious of time. While enjoying himself in her company, he conceived eight children by her that were equal in quality to the heavenly gods. However, on the birth of each child, Ganga threw them into the river, exclaiming, "This is for your good! The King was not pleased with his wife's conduct, but he dared not speak a chastising word, lest she leave his company. However, when the eighth child was born, the King could not tolerate the killing of another child and he spoke harshly, "Do not kill this child! Why do you kill your own children? O murderess of your sons, the reaction to such sin is very great!

When reproached in these words, the celestial beauty replied, "I shall not cast this child into the river, but according to our marriage agreement, our relationship has ended. I am Ganga, the personification of the River Ganges, and I am ever-worshipped by the great sages and common people. My origin is the divine feet of Lord Vishnu. I have lived with you only to accomplish the purpose of the demigods. The eight Vasus were cursed by Vashistha Muni, and thus they have appeared on earth as a reaction to that curse. They have pleaded with me to free them from this bondage immediately after their birth. I have lived with you long enough to fulfill my promise to the Vasus. This last child is destined to live on earth for some time. His name will be Devavrata, and he shall be famous as a lion among men.

Maharaja Shantanu then inquired from his wife, "What offense did the Vasus commit for which they were born on earth as human beings? Why, also, is this last child destined to live on earth longer than the others? O Ganga, my wife, please clarify this.

Being thus questioned by the King of the earth, Ganga replied to the Monarch, "O best of the Bharata race, on Mount Meru there are many picturesque forests. In one such wooded region lives a renowned sage named Vashistha Muni. He is adept in the practice of austerity and meditation. With the help of his Kamadhenu cow, he performs sacrifices to please the Supreme Being. One day, the eight Vasus headed by Prithu came to that forest. Roaming about with their wives, the Vasus entered the hermitage of Vashistha Muni. At that time they spotted the celestial cow named Nandini. One of the Vasus, whose name was Dyu, then informed his wife, 'This cow belongs to the eminent sage Vashistha, and it is said that the mortal who drinks the milk of this cow remains unchanged for ten thousand years.' Turning to her husband she replied, 'I have a very dear friend named Jitavati who is the daughter of the sage Usinara. I wish to take this cow and calf as a present for her.' When repeatedly petitioned by his beautiful wife, Dyu, along with his brothers, abducted the Kamadhenu cow, forgetting who was the actual owner.

That evening, when Vashistha returned to his hermitage, he could not find his Kamadhenu cow or its calf. He began to search the forest, but nowhere could they be found. By his mystic power, obtained by long years of austerity, he then understood that the cow and its calf had been taken away by the Vasus. When the sage's wrath was kindled, he cursed the Vasus, 'Because the Vasus have stolen my Kamadhenu cow, I curse them to be born on earth as ordinary mortals.' The sage then returned to his practice of ascetic meditation.

"When the Vasus heard of Vashistha's curse, they came to his hermitage to pacify him. They praised him with amiable words and offered to return the cow. However, they failed to obtain clemency from the great sage. The great brahmana Vashistha, who is naturally kind to everyone, then compassionately said, 'This curse is the suitable punishment to rectify your enjoying mentality. You will be freed from it shortly after your earthly birth. However, your brother Dyu, who actually stole my cow, shall have to domicile on earth for a long period of time. Dyu, though living on earth, shall not marry and have children. He will, however, be a man of kingly virtue

and will know the essence of the holy scriptures. He will be an obedient servitor to his father, but will have to live without female companionship.'

"The Vasus Ganga continued, "then came to me and begged a benediction. They asked that I cast them into the waters of the Ganges immediately upon taking their birth. O best among kings, I have fulfilled their desire, but this last child, Dyumatsya, will have to reside on earth for some time to fulfill the curse of Vashistha Muni. Having related the Vasus' history, Ganga disappeared with the child, and the King returned to his palace with a sorrowful heart.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the First Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, Maharaja Shantanu Obtains the Celestial Ganga for His Wife.

### Chapter Commentary

Maharaja Shantanu lived in the age of the Dvapara yuga, more than five thousand years ago. He was a saintly King who cared about his citizens and sought their welfare. Time passes through four ages; the first being the Satya yuga which is compared to spring time. In this age persons have long lives and are very much inclined toward meditation and austerity. The Treta yuga is compared to the summer time. In this age people are very pious and there are hardly any stringent miseries. The Dvapara age is like autumn time. Material miseries become apparent and the principles of religion decline. The age we are living in now is the age of Kali, which is compared to the winter season. Most people are not inclined toward spiritual life, and because of this they suffer stringent material miseries. They commit grossly sinful acts for which they suffer life after life. The history of the earth, before the Kali age, is recorded in such Vedic literatures as the Puranas, Mahabharata, and Ramayana. These divinely inspired literatures are filled with histories of saintly emperors who protected their citizens, endeavoring to elevate them to the platform of God realization. This Mahabharata is a factual historical account of what happened on earth thousands of years ago.

In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Vishnu, and blessed them by saying, Be thou happy by this yajna [sacrifice] because its performance will bestow upon you all desirable things.' (Bg.3.10) Advanced human society centered on God realization has been existing since the beginning of creation. In fact, the Puranas are historical records of civilizations more advanced than the one today. The people and civilizations of this present age, Kali yuga, have actually diminished in good qualities as confirmed in the Shrimad Bhagavatam, "O learned one, in this iron age of Kali men have but short lives. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky and, above all, always

disturbed. (S.B. 1.1.10) This is a quotation by Saunaka rishi to the sages of Naimisharanya. We learn from Vedic history that thousands of years ago men were more advanced in moral qualities and that civilizations were more prosperous, materially and spiritually. This point will be discussed in greater detail as this narration proceeds.

Since the historical past cannot be perceived by the gross senses, we have to accept authorities who have knowledge of the past, present and future. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna states, "From Me comes knowledge, remembrance and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas am I to be known. I am the compiler of Vedanta and, indeed, I am the knower of the Vedas. (B.g. 15.15) Lord Krishna is the Supreme Godhead and the Supreme Authority. Because He is God, He knows everything about the past, present and future. What is written in the Puranas is His account of the past. Therefore, if we accept His statements as they are handed down in disciplic succession and understood by the spiritual master, then we can have perfect knowledge of the past without having to waste billions of dollars on mental speculation. This Mahabharata is an emanation from that Supreme Being, and was compiled by Shrila Vyasadeva who was empowered for this exact purpose.

The disciplic succession is maintained by Lord Krishna so that perfect knowledge is available at all times. The skeptics will say that it is impossible not to make a mistake in handing down disciplic knowledge, because of man's imperfection. However, a bona fide spiritual master does not have the imperfection of mortal senses. How is this? Because a pure devotee of God is being directed by the Lord in the heart, his senses become as good as the Lord's. Pure devotees of God may differ in implementing God's will according to time, place and circumstance, but the conclusion of the teachings is the same. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna states, "The Supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings received it in that way. But in the course of time the succession was broken, and, therefore, the science as it appears to be lost. (B.g. 4.2) The disciplic succession was broken when Duryodhana became king, and therefore Lord Krishna had to reestablish it by removing Duryodhana and establishing Maharaja Yudhisthira as a saintly king, able to carry on the disciplic succession. The Supreme Lord fulfills all desires. If one wants perfect knowledge of God, the Lord will send his authorized representative to teach him.

Sometimes we fantasize that we are more materially advanced than previous civilizations, considering our archeological findings. We will learn from the Mahabharata that human beings had superior intelligence and stronger bodies in bygone ages. A man could capture knowledge just by hearing it once and could recall it anytime during his life, verbatim. He didn't need computers, printing presses or books, for just by hearing from teachers and authorities once, he would remember it for the rest of his life. However, today, we are not so fortunate. The brain cannot retain knowledge just by hearing once. The knowledge needs to be repeated again and again. We need computers and books to help us for we lack that power of remembrance. Oral tradition is actually superior if the brain is superior.

In this first chapter of the Adi Parva, Ganga, the goddess of the river Ganges, was married to Maharaja Shantanu to fulfill the curse of Vashistha Muni. The children born of their marriage were destined to die after birth, due to a sin that was performed in a previous life. Today, children are killed in the womb for the same reason. If we kill, we will be killed. That is the law of nature or karma. For sins committed in a previous life, we suffer in this life. If a child is aborted in this life, that child killed in a previous life. How do we stop abortion? We have to stop killing in this life for which we will suffer in the next. For good works done in a previous life, we prosper in this life. God is not so cruel as to allow some to enjoy and others to suffer. The living being is the cause of his or her own happiness and distress. This is confirmed by Lord Krishna in the thirteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita, "Nature is said to be the cause of all material activities and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world. (B.g. 13.21) When suffering comes to us, we should understand that it is for our sins. We should not blame others, but we should blame ourselves.

## Chapter Two

### Maharaja Shantanu and Devavrata

Many, many years passed, and Maharaja Shantanu had to learn to live in separation from his wife and son. One day while chasing a deer along the bank of the Ganges, the King noticed that the river had become shallow. He had never seen this before, and he sought the cause. While searching along the river bank, he spotted a handsome, powerful, and heroic youth. The boy was releasing celestial weapons impeding the flow of the Ganges. This young boy was Maharaja Shantanu's son, whom he had not seen since the boy was born. However, the King could not recognize him as such because he had only seen his son for a few moments after his birth. The youth, upon seeing his father, knew him to be so and out of shyness disappeared from sight.

King Shantanu was struck with wonder and imagined that the youth might be his own son. He then continued down the river bank, and there he saw Ganga whom he had not seen in years. As he approached her, he saw the same boy standing at her side. She then informed the king, "O best among kings, our eighth child is standing next to me. His name is Devavrata. He has been trained in the heavenly planets and has knowledge of all the celestial weapons of warfare. Devavrata has been the student of Vashistha Muni, who has taught our son the Vedas and their branches. O descendent of Bharata, both the demigods and the demons look upon him with favor. Whatever knowledge the sage Brihaspati has learned, this child has also learned, and whatever weapons the powerful and great Parashurama possess, this boy also possesses. Now that his training is complete, you may take Devavrata and

raise him as your own. Thus commanded by Ganga, Devavrata accompanied Maharaja Shantanu to his capital city.

Maharaja Shantanu became attached to the boy who was endowed with all good qualities. Devavrata also became attached to his father, and it was seen that the two were always together. They talked together, walked together, ate together, slept together, and hunted together. Indeed, they were almost inseparable. Four years passed in this way.

One day, the King entered the forest along the bank of the Yamuna. While roaming in that region, he perceived a sweet aroma coming from an unknown direction. He followed the scent, and while wandering here and there, he came across a woman of heavenly beauty. Her name was Satyavati, and she was the daughter of a fisherman. He was pierced by the arrows of Cupid, and desiring her for his wife, he inquired, "Who are you, and who is your father? Also, please tell me what you are doing here. Replying to the King she said, "My name is Satyavati, and I am the daughter of the fishermen King. My father has engaged me in the pious activity of rowing passengers across the river Yamuna.

Bewildered by the beauty and charm of this girl, the King approached the fisherman and spoke to him of a proposed marriage. The fisherman replied, "My daughter certainly could not find a more suitable husband than yourself. However, you must fulfill my one desire. I wish that the son born of my daughter be the next king of the world, and no one else can become your successor.

When that great descendant of Bharata heard the terms for gaining Satyavati, he felt no desire to grant such a benediction, and thus he returned to his capital. While riding on his chariot, he constantly thought of the beautiful fisherman's daughter. With a sorrowful heart, he entered his palace and did not say a word to anyone, not even Devavrata. Upon seeing his father's unhappiness, Devavrata approached him inquiring, "Please tell me father why you are so unhappy? You have not spoken a word to me, nor have you performed your daily duties. Please reveal the cause of your distress, and I will find a cure for it.

When requested in these words, Maharaja Shantanu replied, "My dear son, I am thinking of the instability of human life. If sudden death were to overcome you, I would be without a son. You are like a hundred sons to me, and I do not desire to marry again. I only desire that our dynasty be perpetuated. The wise say that he who has one son has no son at all. It is quite possible that you will be slain on the battle field, and if that happens, what will be the state of the Bharata dynasty? It is these thoughts that have made me so unhappy.

Devavrata was intelligent and reflected on his father's words. He felt there was something more than his father had revealed. He then went to the King's chariot driver and questioned him about the cause of the monarch's sullen mood. The charioteer told Devavrata about the fisherman's daughter and the benediction sought by her father. Understanding the situation, Devavrata, accompanied by some of the family elders, went to the fisherman's cottage. The chief of the fishermen

greeted Devavrata, offering him a seat. He then informed him in sweet words, "O son of Shantanu, I welcome you for you are the pride of the kshatriya race. You are certainly invincible, but I have something to tell you. Even if the future husband of my daughter were to be Indra himself, he would have to lament, for the requirements for marrying Satyawati apply to all. Many sages have told me that your father is the only suitable husband for Satyawati. I have even rejected the requests of the great rishis in the matter of her marriage. The one great obstacle to this marriage is that you will be crowned King and not the son born of Satyawati and Shantanu. This is all I have to say in the matter.

Understanding the fisherman's desire, Devavrata meditated on the situation, and wanting to benefit his father, he informed the fisherman, "O fisherman, listen to my vow. There has not been, nor will there ever be born a man who can make this vow. I shall fulfill your request. I take the vow that the son born from Satyawati and my father shall be king, and I shall relinquish my claim to the throne.

Upon hearing Devavrata's promise, the fisherman, who sought sole sovereignty for Satyawati's son, said, "This vow that you have taken will certainly come to pass, but I have one doubt that is still in my mind. What will happen to your children? They may also claim the throne. Devavrata replied, "O chief among fishermen, listen to the vow I shall make in the presence of these assembled elders. I have already relinquished my claim to the throne, and now I shall settle the matter of my descendants. I shall adopt the vow of brahmacharya and agree never to marry.

Hearing the oath spoken by Devavrata, the hair on the fisherman's body stood on end, and he promised, "I shall hand over my daughter to Shantanu. When Devavrata made this vow, the heavenly denizens showered flowers, and the firmament was filled with the sounds, "This one shall be known as Bhishma [one who has taken a difficult vow]. The only sounds heard were "Bhishma!, Bhishma!, This one shall be called Bhishma!

Ganga's son then took Satyawati on the chariot and returned to Hastinapura. When Maharaja Shantanu heard about the oath his son had taken, he was pleased and gave him a benediction, "You shall never experience death as long as you wish to live. Indeed, you will die only when you desire it. Thus Satyawati was married to Maharaja Shantanu, and that glorious King accepted her into his palace and maintained her as she desired.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Second Chapter of the Adi Parva, Maharaja Shantanu and Devavrata.

## Chapter Commentary

Devavrata had taken a life-long vow of celibacy, and this was a rare occurrence amongst the ksatriyas. Ksatriyas usually have many wives and sometimes hundreds of children. This was not uncommon in the previous ages. Because ksatriyas are in the mode of passion, it was almost impossible for them to control sex desire, which is the cause of all bondage to this world. They, therefore, took many wives and maintained them in great opulence. Bhishma was a great devotee of the Lord and because of his devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord, he was able to make a life-long celibacy vow, rejecting the feminine beauty of this world. By keeping the seminal fluid within, a man increases in strength, memory, intelligence and duration of life. This is one reason why Bhishma was destined to become the most powerful of the great warriors. Even in his old age during the battle of the Bharatas at Kurukshetra, he was considered to have been the most powerful warrior.

Another point to be learned from this chapter is position of young women in Vedic society. Young girls were never allowed to walk the streets searching for a husband. It was the duty of a father to get his daughter married at a young age. The sex desire becomes very prominent when a young girl reaches puberty. If she is married at that time, this will save her from becoming a prostitute. In Vedic times, if a girl was even touched by another man, no one would marry her. Wives were chosen on the basis of chastity and purity. It has become a social custom in the western world for young girls to mingle freely with young boys and often lose their virginity before marriage. Sometimes these girls become pregnant and give birth to unwanted children. The young girl, bereft of a husband, has to fend for herself, which may lead her to further sinful activities. The child born out of such lust generally turns out to be a useless member of society, and no one can understand why our youth are becoming degraded. This is all due to ignorance of God's law concerning the social organization of human society.

In the western societies, abortions and contraceptives have become the standard. Aborting a child in the womb means suffering a future sinful reaction. The mother, the father, the doctor and anyone else involved will suffer the karmic reaction of killing another living being. In their next lives they will be forced to enter the womb of a woman and be aborted themselves. The pain that they inflicted by aborting the innocent child in the womb will come back to them in a future birth. Due to ignorance of material nature's laws, people suffer greatly; and even when they are told of sinful activities and their consequences, they say they don't believe in such things. In this dark Kali age we seem to have to learn things the hard way.

Another important point in this chapter is Maharaja Bhishma's vow. Generally, great devotees take vows to please Lord Krishna; they never take vows for fruitive gain. Bhishma took this vow of celibacy so his father could enjoy material sense gratification. One may say that this has nothing to do with pure devotional service, and in fact it doesn't. However, we learned from the previous chapter that Bhishma, as the Vasu, Dyu, was cursed by Vashistha Muni to not have female companionship

while living as an ordinary mortal. His vow was simply a fulfillment of that curse, and had nothing to do with any fruitive desire of his own. Also, Bhishma was a great devotee and was under the influence of Krishna's Yogamaya potency. In other words, this situation set the scene for the Lord's forthcoming appearance and would play a role for instructing the whole world.

## Chapter Three

### Bhishma Abducts Three Princesses

In due course, Maharaja Shantanu's Queen, Satyawati, bore a highly qualified son named Chitrangada. He was blessed with invincible power and was destined to become a renowned archer. Later, another son was born to Satyawati, named Vichitravirya. He developed into a natural leader and heroic warrior. As the two sons grew to maturity, they brought joy to the King and Queen. Soon Maharaja Shantanu found himself growing old, and seeing the influence of inevitable time, he decided to retire to the forest to practice austerities for realizing the kingdom of God. Before entering the forest, Maharaja Shantanu enthroned Chitrangada as the world's king under Bhishma's protection. He then departed to the forest alone to perform penances and austerities. Maharaja Shantanu soon became absorbed in trance and realized his original relationship with the Lord in the kingdom of God. When his meditation upon the Lord's transcendental form was unbroken, he ascended to the spiritual world.

When Chitrangada became King, he soon challenged and eliminated all opponents on the planet earth. Indeed, all the earthly kings considered that there was no kshatriya equal to him. Nevertheless, in the heavenly planets there lived a Gandharva King whose name was also Chitrangada. Upon hearing that an earthly being bore his name and was considered invincible, he challenged the son of Satyawati. There then took place on the field of Kurukshetra a battle that endured for a full three years. Both Chitrangadas were powerful, and the battle was fierce, but in the end the Kuru prince was slain. The King of the Gandharvas then ascended to the heavenly planets satisfied at heart. After the death of his step brother, Bhishma performed the last funeral rites and then enthroned Vichitravirya as the world's emperor, although he was only a small boy. Until Vichitravirya matured in age, Bhishma ruled the kingdom. Maharaja Bhishma took care of Vichitravirya like a father, arranging for the education and military training of the future king.

When Maharaja Bhishma saw that Vichitravirya was of marriageable age, he thought of obtaining a queen for him. At this time he heard that in the kingdom of Kashi three daughters were being offered in marriage. These princesses had heavenly beauty, and it was known that they were to select their own husbands. Bhishma went alone in his chariot to the city of Varanasi, and there he saw countless monarchs who had assembled hoping to wed one of the princesses. The names of those beautiful girls were Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. While the daughters of the King were being introduced to the assembled heroic princes, Bhishma stood up in the assembly and commanded, "The wise have declared that when a qualified person has been invited to a svayamvara, a maiden may be bestowed upon him. There are eight kinds of marriage ceremonies, but the wise highly applaud that a princess taken by force in the presence of competitors is the foremost svayamvara. Therefore, strive to your best ability to defeat me or be defeated.

After challenging the assembled kings and princes, Bhishma put the three princesses on his chariot and proceeded to leave the Kashi kingdom. The kshatriya princes then stood up and, in great fury, challenged Bhishma to a fight. They put on their armour and pursued him in great haste. Attacking Ganga's son with full force, they poured a thick deluge of arrows upon him. Maharaja Bhishma, however, nullified those arrows with his own, and then pierced each prince with three shafts. The princes in turn pierced Bhishma with many arrows, and then released javelins and darts hoping to encompass his death. The battle was fought with such intense fury that even those who were courageous became struck with fear. Keeping his bow drawn in a constant circle, Bhishma severed arrows, bows, flagstaves, coats of armor and human heads by the hundreds. The son of Ganga defeated the supporting armies that opposed him, and those who were heroes applauded the prowess of such a great warrior. When Shantanu's son had crushed all opponents, he proceeded to the Kuru kingdom, taking with him the three heavenly princesses.

While Maharaja Bhishma was proceeding toward Hastinapura, King Salwa, whose prowess was famed, suddenly appeared from behind. He challenged Bhishma, "Wait!, Wait! Bhishma flamed up in anger and turned to meet the challenge of the oncoming monarch. All the princes, who had been defeated, assembled to see the battle between those two bulls among men. King Salwa first covered Bhishma with many golden arrows. All the assembled princes applauded Salwa's prowess, but Bhishma was furious and told his charioteer, "Take me closer to Salwa's chariot, so I may kill him in the way Garuda kills a serpent. The Kuru chief then fixed the varuna weapon to his bow, and releasing it put Salwa's horses into confusion. This weapon caused a tidal wave to appear. Showing his supremacy with the bow, Bhishma released a flaming arrow which killed Salwa's charioteer. The powerful son of Shantanu then released the aindra weapon which killed Salwa's horses. (This weapon is similar to a modern day machine gun, but is more powerful and more accurate.) As the battle continued, Bhishma shattered all the weapons of Salwa, but left him with his life. After defeating all opponents, Bhishma proceeded to Hastinapura and offered the beautiful princesses to his younger brother.

After performing this uncommon exploit, Bhishma arranged the marriage ceremony for Vichitravirya. At that time the eldest daughter of the Kashi King, whose name was Amba, approached Bhishma appealing to him, "At heart I had chosen King Salwa as my husband. He had in his heart chosen me for his wife. This was also approved by my father. At the svayamvara in Kashi I would have garlanded him and accepted him as my lord if you had not forcibly taken me away. You are aware of moral principles, so please decide whether I am free to go. Bhishma deliberated for some time, and after consulting with qualified brahmanas, he decided that Amba could return to the kingdom of Kashi and marry the lord of her heart.

The other two princesses, Ambika and Ambalika, who were as beautiful as the heavenly denizens, accepted Vichitravirya as their husband and considered themselves very fortunate. They considered him a worthy husband, and loved and respected him in every way. Vichitravirya was endowed with the prowess of the devas and could steal away the heart of any woman. Thus King Vichitravirya was duly married to the princesses of Kashi, and he passed seven years happily in their company. However, while he was still in his youth, he was attacked by tuberculosis, and although everyone tried to effect a cure, the Kuru prince died, setting like the evening sun. Bhishma lamented the death of his younger brother, and finally performed the last funeral rites.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the third Chapter of the Adi Parva, Bhishma Obtains Three Queens for Vichitravirya.

### Chapter Commentary

Maharaja Shantanu wanted to be enlightened in self realization and factually know the difference between the body and the soul. The soul takes one body after another according to the sinful or pious activities of this life. Emperor Shantanu wanted to stop the repetition of birth and death by becoming fully absorbed in God consciousness. Not only did he himself take spiritual realization seriously, but he also instructed his citizens about the life's ultimate aspiration. In Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "O scion of Bharata, you should understand that I am also the knower in all bodies, and to understand this body and its owner is called knowledge. That is my opinion. (B.g. 13.3) Because spiritual knowledge is the zenith of wisdom, Vedic civilization centered on this point, and therefore was considered more progressive than the present civilizations in which knowledge of the external body is given primary importance. Any civilization that doesn't teach the difference between the body and the soul is an animal civilization, no matter how materially advanced. The animals simply eat, sleep, mate and defend, and any civilization that teaches

these animalistic propensities as life's prime goal cannot obtain spiritual perfection. As Lord Jesus Christ states, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all things will follow.

Kings in Vedic culture were called naradeva, because they were representatives of the Supreme Lord. They never thought themselves to be the highest authority, but acted on the advice of highly qualified priests and sages. Any head of state who does not act as the representative of the Lord will surely guide himself and his citizens down to hellish life. They become like blind men who lead their citizens into the ditch of repeated birth and death. King Shantanu set the example for his citizens, and upon seeing that his body was aging, went to the forest to attain liberation in complete Krishna consciousness.

When both Chitrangada and Vichitravirya died, there was lamentation by all the family members. Happiness in this material world is temporary. Everyone wants an eternal lover, father, mother, friend, son or daughter. We are eager to have a lover eternally, but the lover grows old and is no longer appealing to the mind. We are always eager to have a parent-child relationship, but the son grows up, or as in this case the son dies. We are very eager to have a friend, but we find that the friend moves to a distant country or we are cheated in personal dealings. And the relationship of master and servant is broken by mistrust. The temporary relationships in this world are like drinking sweet rice mixed with sand. The nice taste of the sweet rice is there, but the sand particles make it unpalatable. Similarly, the relationships of this material world are only temporarily pleasing, because the sand particles of birth, death, old age and disease make it unpalatable. In the spiritual world, however, one can have Krishna as a lover eternally, as in the case of the Gopis of Vrindavana. Mother Yashoda and Nanda Maharaja enjoy having Krishna as their son eternally. In the spiritual world one can play with Krishna as a cowherd boyfriend eternally. One can have God as his master eternally and never feel cheated. Therefore this material world is only a mirror reflection of the spiritual world. If you place a banana in front of a mirror and try to eat the mirror reflection, you will be frustrated. Similarly if we try to enjoy the temporary relationships of this world, we will be frustrated. We have to reestablish our loving relationship with the Supreme Lord, and then we will be happy and never have to lament as did the queens of Vichitravirya.

## Chapter four

### Bhishma Battles Parashurama

After receiving consent from Maharaja Bhishma, Princess Amba left the city of Hastinapura, and traveled to the province where King Salwa ruled. She was granted an interview and bowing before him she pleaded, "I have come to take shelter of your mighty arms, O brave King. Please accept me as your queen. King Salwa laughed to hear Amba's request and informed her, "I no longer desire you for my queen, for you have been touched by another. It is Bhishma only who can marry you. When Bhishma abducted you, you followed him willingly enough. How can a king like myself, who is acquainted with Vedic knowledge and is supposed to guide others accordingly, accept into his palace a woman who is intended to marry another? O princess of Kashi, you may go wherever you like, but I cannot accept you as my queen.

Amba was aggrieved by King Salwa's rejection. She pleaded again, "O lord of the earth, it is not as you say. Bhishma took me away by force. I did not go with him willingly. I am attached to you, and I beg you to accept me. The scriptures declare that a king should not abandon one who is dependent on him. I swear, O tiger among men, that I have never thought of any other man except you. Bhishma will not marry anyone, and my two sisters have been married to Vichitravirya. Therefore, O King, accept me as your wife for I have no other shelter. Although she repeatedly solicited King Salwa, he would not accept her and ordered her to leave his kingdom. Thus Amba left the kingdom of Salwa, lamenting her destiny.

Amba decided to inhabit the forest and practice austerities and penances for the rest of her life. In her wanderings, she came upon the ashrama of some great rishis, and she informed them of her plight. It so happened that among those great sages was her maternal grandfather, Hotravahana. The royal sage felt despondent for what had befallen her and told her that on the following day, Parashurama, the martial teacher of Bhishma, would come to the ashrama. He was sure Parashurama would influence Bhishma to accept her hand in marriage.

The next day Parashurama arrived at the ashrama and Amba related to him the events of her abduction by Bhishma and her rejection by King Salwa. She requested the great sage to kill Bhishma. Parashurama felt sorry for the girl and gave her hope by saying, "O daughter of Kashi, I will not take up weapons except to protect those that follow the Vedas. Tell me, therefore, what I can do for you. Both Bhishma and Salwa are obedient to me. Do not lament. I will fulfill your desire.

Parashurama, the annihilator of the ksatriyas, then went to Hastinapura, and when Bhishma learned that his preceptor had arrived, he went out of the city to greet him. Bhishma worshipped him according to his position and then waited for him to speak. Rama inquired from Bhishma, "After taking a vow of celibacy, in what mood did you abduct the princess of Kashi and then send her away? Contaminated by the touch of

your hands, no one will marry her. Salwa has rejected her because you have forcibly placed her on your chariot. O King, it is not proper for her to be humiliated in this way. Therefore, at my command take her yourself and marry her according to Vedic rites.

"O brahmana, Maharaja Bhishma replied, "I could not bestow this maiden upon my brother because of her desire to accept Salwa as her lord. As for myself, I have taken a vow of perpetual celibacy, and I will not break that vow under any circumstances. Upon hearing the disobedient words of his disciple, Parashurama was outraged and rolling his eyes in anger, he said, "If you do not follow my commands, then I shall kill you this very day, along with your counsellors! Bhishma tried to placate his preceptor by sweet words, but Parashurama could not be pacified. He told Bhishma, "You accepted me as your preceptor, yet, O Kaurava, you will not follow my instructions. If you want to please me then accept this maiden as your wife.

"I cannot follow this instruction, O best of the rishis, Maharaja Bhishma replied. "O son of Jamadagni, all your attempts to secure this marriage will be in vain. What warrior would accept into his abode a woman whose heart was wedded to another. O brahmana, I will not forsake justice even from fear of Indra. One can reject the order of the preceptor if he is filled with vanity, destitute of knowledge concerning right and wrong, and who follows a devious path. You are my preceptor, and I have tried to pacify you as far as possible. However, this instruction is not according to religious principles, and therefore, I will fight with you. I would never slay my preceptor in battle. However, it is a well known truth that one is not guilty of slaying a brahmana who takes up arms like a kshatriya. Because you are acting unrighteously, I will fight with you. O Rama, equip yourself with proper weapons and position yourself on the Kurukshetra field. Subdued by my arrows, you will obtain the higher regions. The brahmanas have spoken of the power which you exhibited against the kingly dynasties long ago. However, in those days there was no Bhishma, nor were there any warrior kings like Bhishma. Kshatriyas endowed with power took their births later on. The person who will quell your pride has now taken birth, and this is none other than myself.

Bhishma and Parashurama then made their way to Kurukshetra. Maharaja Bhishma was stationed on a chariot drawn by white horses. Parashurama had created by his mystic power a beautiful chariot drawn by horses that could travel at the speed of the mind. The fighting began when Parashurama struck his disciple with hundreds of arrows. Bhishma countered with many more arrows, and the fighting went on till the end of the day. However, it was seen that neither was the victor.

After the battle had ceased, Bhishma's charioteer plucked out Parashurama's arrows from his own body. He also withdrew the arrows from the horses and those of his master, Bhishma. The son of Ganga then went to his tent for his nightly rest. When the sun had risen the following day, the battle resumed. Bhishma offered his obeisances unto his preceptor and again fought with him. On this day all the celestial weapons were used. Rama released the vayavaya weapon (tornado weapon), but Bhishma countered it with the guhyaka weapon. Bhishma then

released the agneya weapon which brought about great fire. However Parashurama released the varuna weapon (water weapon) causing the fire to abate. The preceptor neutralized all the weapons released by his disciple. Parashurama then released a flaming arrow that struck Bhishma in the chest, causing him to fall unconscious on the floor of his chariot. The charioteer then took Bhishma away from the battlefield. All the followers of Parashurama, including the princess of Kashi, were pleased with that action. However, Bhishma regained consciousness and came back to fight with his martial teacher. He struck Parashurama with a powerful arrow, causing him to fall unconscious on the battlefield. The princess of Kashi and others came to his side, reviving him with cold water and sweet words. Parashurama then rose up like lightning, and again engaged in furious combat with his disciple. In this way the duel went on for twenty three days.

On the night of the twenty third day, Maharaja Bhishma retired to his tent and, lying down on his bed, began to reason, "This fighting has been going on for many days, and still I have not defeated him. I am unable to vanquish the son of Jamadagni. If I am to succeed in subduing this foremost brahmana, then the gods must assist me. Thinking like this, Bhishma fell asleep. In a dream, eight brahmanas appeared before him encouraging, "Rise up, O son of Ganga. Do not fear. We will protect you from Parashurama. We will help you conquer Rama in battle. During tomorrows encounter, the mantras for the praswapa weapon will come to your mind. Neither Parashurama nor any other person is acquainted with it. With this weapon you will defeat your preceptor. O King, it will not slay Parashurama outright, and, therefore, there will be no sin incurred in using it. After he has been defeated, you will be able to awaken him with the samvodhana weapon. Having said this much, the eight effulgent brahmanas disappeared.

When dawn appeared the next day, Maharaja Bhishma joyfully equipped himself for battle. Parashurama also ascended his chariot and prepared to fight his disobedient disciple. Parashurama first hurled a dart that was as relentless as Indra's thunderbolt. It was thrown with such lightning force that it appeared like a blazing meteor. That dart descended upon the Bhishma's shoulder, causing severe pain to the great hero. Angered by the weapon, Bhishma released an arrow that struck his martial teacher in the forehead. Rama paid no attention to the pain and invoked the brahmastra weapon. This weapon is similar to a modern day atomic bomb. Bhishma also released the same weapon, and when the two weapons met, there was an expansion of light similar to that at the time of dissolution. When the two weapons were neutralized, Bhishma thought of releasing the praswapa weapon. When he was thinking in this way, the mantras for the weapon appeared in his mind. While Bhishma was fixing the weapon to his bowstring, he heard many voices in the sky loudly exclaiming, "O son of the Kuru race, do not release the praswapa weapon! Bhishma paid no attention and drew back the string of his bow. At that time Narada appeared on the scene imploring Bhishma, "O descendent of Kuru, do not release this weapon. Even the demigods are forbidding you. Rama is a brahmana who has performed great austerities, and he is also your teacher. O Bhishma, never humiliate him.

Upon hearing Narada's order, Bhishma withdrew the praswapa weapon. Parashurama's father, Jamadagni and grandfather, Richika, then appeared before Parashurama ordering, "O son, never again engage in battle with Bhishma or any other kshatriya. Heroism and courage in battle are the qualities of a warrior, and study of the Vedas and the practice of austerities are the wealth of the brahmanas. Previously you took up weapons to protect the brahmanas, but this is not the case now. Let this battle with Bhishma be your last.

Parashurama then replied to his forefathers, "I cannot give up this combat. I have vowed that I will never leave the battlefield without defeating my enemy. This battle can only cease if Ganga's son desists from fighting.

Those great sages then went to Bhishma requesting, "O son of Shantanu, you should not fight any longer with your preceptor. You should now worship that esteemed brahmana.

"I have taken a vow that I will never lay down my weapons without defeating my enemy, Bhishma replied. "I cannot abandon my kshatriya oath.

The sages once again spoke to Rama, "O son of the Bhrigu race, it is not possible to defeat Bhishma, nor is it possible for Bhishma to defeat you. It has been ordained by providence that the son of Indra, Arjuna, will be the slayer of Bhishma. While the forefathers of Rama were speaking to him, the pitris (a class of demigods) appeared on the scene and obstructed the chariot of Rama. They forbade him to fight any longer.

Just at this time, the eight effulgent brahmanas that Maharaja Bhishma had seen in his dream appeared before him requesting, "O powerful warrior, go to your preceptor and worship him. Without his benediction, you cannot obtain happiness.

Bhishma, upon seeing that his mentor had laid aside his weapons, bowed before him and offered respectful worship. Rama then praised his disciple, "There is no kshatriya equal to you on earth. You have pleased me with your prowess and your humility. Bhishma then offered respects to his teacher and returned to Hastinapura.

Parashurama then called for Amba and remorsefully said to her, "O princess of Kashi, I have fought to my best ability, but I could not defeat Bhishma. I have fought with the weapons of the heavenly gods, but still I could not slay him. O beautiful lady, fate seems to have you in her strong grip. It will not be possible for me to change what providence has destined for you.

Amba was determined that Bhishma should die. She again inhabited the forest and practiced very severe austerities. She gave up all food and water and lived only on air. She stood immovable like a tree for six months. After this she increased her austerities by entering the waters of the Yamuna for one whole year. She then stood on her toes for twelve years, scorching the heavens by her austerities. Soon Lord Shiva became pleased and appeared before her. He asked her to take a benediction. With joined palms, she solicited Bhishma's death. He granted the benediction saying,

"It will be you who will cause his death. Amba then inquired, "How will it come to pass that I, a woman, will defeat Bhishma? Lord Shiva replied, "My boons will never go in vain. You will be born in your next life as a female in the family of King Drupada, changing to manhood in that very life. You will become a great maharathi (chariot fighter), and remembering your former hatred for Bhishma and the incidents in this life, you will cause his death in battle. After granting this benediction, Lord Shiva disappeared from that place.

Amba was joyous to receive Lord Shiva's boon. Wanting to take her next birth as soon as possible, she gathered logs for a funeral pyre. When the fire was blazing, she entered it uttering the words, "I pray for Bhishma's death. Amba then took her birth in the family of King Drupada, and she was known as Shikhandi. She was born to fulfill Lord Shiva's benediction.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the fourth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, Bhishma battles Parashurama.

#### Chapter Commentary

Parashurama was the martial teacher of Bhishma, and, therefore, it was expected that Bhishma would submit to the demands of his preceptor. That is how one advances in spiritual life. Both Bhishma and Parashurama are in the category of liberated associates of the Lord. Parashurama is an shaktavesha avatara [an empowered living entity], and Bhishma was a pure devotee of the Lord, one of the twelve mahajanas. This pastime was arranged by the internal potency of the Lord and therefore cannot be imitated. The four Kumaras were liberated devotees, and they disobeyed the order of their father, Brahma, when he requested them to get married and beget progeny. The conditioned soul cannot imitate these pastimes and disobey the order of the spiritual master. It is stated by Vishvanatha Chakravarty Thakur that by pleasing the spiritual master one pleases God, and by displeasing the spiritual master one displeases God. We have personally seen during the life of our spiritual master that certain disciples fell down from the path of devotional service by displeasing the spiritual master. For the conditioned soul it is imperative that he follow the order of Guru so that he can come to the transcendental platform of self realization.

All the spiritual masters and acharyas in the disciplic line of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu have set the example of strictly following the order of the spiritual master. Even Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Lord Krishna Himself, accepted a spiritual master, Isvara Puri, and strictly followed his instructions. Isvara Puri instructed Chaitanya

Mahaprabhu to only chant the Hare Krishna maha mantra and not to read Vedanta Sutra. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Lord Krishna Himself, is the author of Vedanta Sutra, but to show the conditioned souls in this age of Kali how to follow the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master, he never studied Vedanta Sutra again. When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu defeated Prakashananda Saraswati, a mayavadi sannyasin, in debate, he did so on the basis of Shrimad Bhagavatam. He did this to show humility before the order of the bona fide spiritual master.

In this chapter the revengeful attitude shown by Amba is not the nature of a Vaishnava (devotee). Due to sinful activities performed in many millions of births, the living entity has caused his own suffering. In the thirteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna told Arjuna purusah sukha-duhkhanam, "The living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world. From this we understand who is the actual cause of Amba's suffering. Due to some impious deed performed in a previous life, she is suffering for want of a husband. Therefore, she should not blame a respected person like Bhishma, but herself.

When a person comes to Krishna consciousness, the Supreme Lord minimizes the karma of the living entity, karmani nirdhahati kintu ca bhakti bhajan (Bs.5.54) What ever karmic reactions the living entity would have received under the modes of material nature are now minimized and given directly by Lord Krishna. Therefore, a devotee should see everything as God sent and take the humble position as mentioned by Lord Chaitanya in His shikshastaka, "One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than a tree and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.(Shikshastaka 3)

Unfortunately, Amba had not conquered the real enemy of hatred within. She had not achieved the platform of a Vaishnavi. If she had, she would have tolerated the situation, taking it as the mercy of the Lord. In Lord Brahma's prayers to Lord Krishna the ideal mentality is revealed, "My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances with his heart, words and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim. [Bhag. 10.14.8] Our sufferings are due to our own misdeeds, and others are simply instruments to receive our punishment. We should learn, not to see the immediate cause, but the remote cause of our suffering, our own sins. Therefore, Jesus Christ told the stone throwers, "Let he who is free from sin cast the first stone. We cannot blame anyone else for our own sufferings.

## Chapter Five

### The Birth of Dhritarastra, Pandu and Vidura

After the last funeral rites were performed for Vichitravirya, Satyawati wept and lamented for her deceased son. Ambika and Ambalika were also greatly overwhelmed at the untimely death of their husband. Upon realizing the possible extinction of the dynasty, Satyawati approached Bhishma requesting him, "The perpetuation of the Kuru dynasty now depends on you. The wives of your brother, Ambalika and Ambika, desire progeny, and under my order you should procreate children by them to continue this dynasty. You should duly marry a wife of good character and enthrone yourself as king. Do not plunge our ancestors into hell.

Upon hearing Satyawati's request, the relatives and friends of the Kuru family agreed. However, Bhishma replied to his stepmother, "O mother, what you have said is certainly sanctioned according to the code of virtue, but you forget my vow regarding marriage and children. I have taken a vow of lifelong celibacy. I may have to renounce kingship of the three worlds, the kingdom of heaven, and anything greater that exists, but this vow I will never renounce. The earth may lose its scent, water may lose its moisture, the sun may lose its glory, and fire, its heat. The moon may lose its cooling rays, or Indra his prowess, but I will not renounce this vow.

Hearing Bhishma's determination, Satyawati replied, "I know the vow that you have taken is on my account, but considering the present emergency you should accept this order as duty to the ancestors. Bhishma again emphasized his duty to truth, "O Queen, do not sway from the path of virtue. Renunciation of a vow is never acclaimed in the shastras (holy scriptures). Listen to this narration and then decide the right course of action. In a former millennium, Parashurama, killed Kartavirya Arjuna in battle for the sin of slaying his father. Not only did he kill the followers of Kartavirya Arjuna, but he destroyed the entire kshatriya race twenty-one times. When the earth was devoid of great warriors, the queens approached the great rishis and procreated children by them and thus the kshatriya race was revived. Therefore, a purified brahmana should be invited with an offer of wealth, and let him raise children by the wives of Vicitravirya.

Smiling brightly, Satyawati agreed with Bhishma and informed him, "O descendant of Bharata, I agree with this proposal. I now understand what is to be done in this connection. My father was an honest man, and to maintain pious activities, he kept a boat for rowing passengers across the river Yamuna. One day the great sage Parashara came and requested me to take him across the river. While I was rowing the boat, the sage became attracted to my beauty and requested fulfillment of his passionate desire. However, I was afraid of my father's wrath, but I was also afraid that the rishi might curse me. The sage brought me under his control, and in the middle of the river Yamuna, he created a dense fog. He satisfied his sensual desires and was very pleased with my submissiveness.

"Before that time, Satyavati continued, "a fishy odor emanated from my body, but after the rishi's touch, a celestial aroma radiates from my person. The sage assured me that by bringing forth a child in the middle of the river, I would still remain a virgin. The child born of our union was the eminent erudite sage, Vyasadeva. He has compiled the Vedic knowledge, and expounded the science of devotion to God. Because he was born in the middle of a river, he became known as Dwaipayana [the island born]. Because he compiled the Vedas, he is known as Vyasadeva, and because of his blackish complexion, he is known as Krishna. He is truthful in speech, sense controlled, and freed from all sins. If I ask him, then certainly he will generate good children by the wives of your brother. Previously, Vyasa had promised me, Mother, when you are in difficulty simply remember me, and I will come to you by the speed of the mind.' If you are willing, Bhishma, I will call him this very moment.

Upon hearing the name of Vyasa, Bhishma joined his palms in reverence saying, "This sage has true wisdom and sense control, and would be a fit person to continue the Kuru dynasty. Therefore, you have my full approval."

When Bhishma had given his consent, Satyavati immediately thought of her son, Vyasa, and within moments, the great sage appeared before her. Satyavati duly welcomed her son and taking him in her arms, bathed him with affectionate tears. Vyasa offered obeisances to his mother saying, "O mother, I have come to fulfill your desire. Command me at once, and I shall carry out your order.

"O my son, Satyavati replied, "recently Vichitravirya, the King of this world, expired leaving no descendant, and thus the Kuru dynasty is in danger of extinction. Here is Bhishma, Shantanu's son, but he has taken a vow of celibacy and will not beget children. The two wives of Vichitravirya, Ambika and Ambalika, are still living, and I request you to conceive children by them to continue the Kuru dynasty.

Vyasadeva, hearing the appeals of his mother, replied, "Since Vichitravirya is my brother, born of your womb, I shall give birth to children who will equal the heavenly gods. Let the queens observe the vows I indicate for one full year.

Satyavati expressed her urgency, "There is very little time for vows. The earth is without a king, and the citizens, being without a protector, will certainly perish.

"If conception must take place this month, Vyasadeva replied, "then the queens of Kashi must be willing to bear my ugliness, strong odor and matted locks. If they can perform these austerities, then they will give birth to noble children. Let one of the queens, dressed in clean clothes and bedecked with ornaments, wait for me in her bed chamber.

Satyavati then approached Ambika, explaining to her the situation. With great effort Ambika was convinced that it was for the good of the world. When the right time came for conceiving a child, Satyavati took Ambika to the bed chamber and told her, "Vichitravirya had an older brother who has been, until this time, unknown to you. He will soon come here and conceive a child by you that will perpetuate our dynasty. Wait for him here without dropping off to sleep.

Ambika then waited in her room contemplating the person to be Bhishma or one of the other Kuru elders. Suddenly Vyasadeva entered the room, and Ambika, seeing his matted locks, ugly features and grim visage, closed her eyes in fear and did not open them once during the time of conception. When Vyasa came out of the chambers, he met his mother who inquired, "Will this princess have a worthy son? Hearing her, he replied, "The child born shall have the power of ten thousand elephants. He will be equal to a royal sage, and will possess learning, intelligence and prowess. However, because the princess has closed her eyes during conception, the child shall be born blind. Upon hearing this prediction from her son, Satyavati wondered, "How can a blind king rule this earth? How will he protect his family and the people of this world? You must again conceive another child that can act as a King. Vyasadeva agreed and went away. In due course of time, Ambika gave birth to a male child who was blind. After the child's birth, he was given the name Dhritarastra.

Satyavati was anxious to beget another male child who could rule the world, and after receiving Ambalika's consent, she called for Vyasadeva. Vyasadeva came as promised and approached the chambers of Ambalika. Ambalika, seeing the repulsive features of Vyasa, turned pale with fear. After conception, the sage left the chambers and told his mother, "Because this queen has paled upon seeing my austere features, the child born will be white in color. His name, therefore, will be Pandu, or one with a white complexion. In due course of time, Ambalika gave birth to a child endowed with auspicious marks. He was pale in complexion, but was handsome in all respects. Indeed, it was this child who would become the future father of the Pandavas.

Sometime after this child was born, Satyavati approached the beautiful Ambalika, again asking her to conceive a child by Vyasadeva. The princess felt she could not bear again to see the ugly features of the sage, and thus she sent to her chambers one of her maid servants who had heavenly beauty. When Vyasa entered the chambers, the maid servant offered respects to the sage, treating him kindly. She took her seat near him when asked. Vyasadeva was well pleased with her, and upon leaving told her, "You shall be a slave no longer. Your child will be justice personified and esteemed among intelligent men on earth.

After leaving the queen's chambers, Vyasa met his mother and informed her of Ambalika's deception, and how he had begotten a son by a shudra woman. After speaking with his mother, Vyasa disappeared. The child born of the maid servant was named Vidura. He was an incarnation of Yamaraja, the great vaishnava mahajana and the lord of death. Due to the curse of Mandavya Muni, Yamaraja had to be born on earth as a shudra. Thus from the wives of Vichitravirya, Vyasadeva begot two sons, Dhritarastra and Pandu, who would save the Kuru race from extinction.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to the Fifth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Birth of Dhritarastra, Pandu and Vidura.

## Chapter Commentary

After Vichitravirya's death, the mother and wives lamented greatly. Attachment is found even in the families of great dynasties. Maya is so strong that one thinks that his family members will live eternally and that he or she will never die. Queen Kunti was born in a royal dynasty descending from the moon god. Her sons were all born of great demigods and were highly qualified. She understood her attachment was not proper, and therefore she prayed in the presence of Lord Krishna, "O Lord of the universe, soul of the universe, O personality of the form of the universe, please sever my tie of affection for my kinsmen, the Pandavas and the Vrishnis. (Bhag. 1.8.41) There is nothing wrong with affection and attachment, but we must owe our greatest affection to God first. Queen Kunti concluded her prayers to Lord Krishna, "O Lord of Madhu, as the Ganges forever flows to the sea without hindrance, let my attraction be constantly drawn unto You without being diverted to anyone else. (Bhag. 1.8.42) Or as Lord Jesus Christ put it, "I have not come to this earth to bring peace, but a sword, I will turn the father against the son and the mother against the daughter. Those of his own household will be his enemy. He, who loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me.

It is not that emotional feelings can be suddenly cut off. Feelings of affection have to be transferred to Lord Krishna, and then one not only has affection for his family members, but for all living entities, because one comes to the realization that everyone is part of the family of the Supreme father, Lord Krishna. The process for becoming attached to Krishna has been given to us by Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Yuga Avatara for the Kali age. He has requested us to chant the Hare Krishna maha mantra, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This will cleanse the heart of all material desires and attachments and fix the mind on the lotus feet of Lord Krishna.

Queen Satyawati was very anxious to get a qualified king to give protection to the citizens. In the age of Kali powerful warrior kings no longer exist nor do qualified brahmanas. Previously the kings were heroic men who would face each other on the field of battle and fight till death. They knew that if they died on the field of battle facing the enemy, they would attain a higher destination after this life. Therefore, they were fearless in battle. As the iron age of Kali progressed, the warrior kings lost their strength and heroism. Today armies no longer face each other in battle, but hide in trenches and behind trees, fearful of death. They are not convinced that there is another life after this one. Gone are the days of these chivalrous warriors, because everyone in this Kali age is fastly becoming a shudra. The modern leaders of the world do not have a heroic fighting spirit, and thus they do not come out on the field of battle to lead their forces. They sit in their offices thousands of miles away from the battlefield. Even the modern day generals do not lead their forces into battle, but direct them miles away from the front line. Great generals such as Bhishma and Arjuna commanded the respect of all the citizens by being fearless in battle.

In the Kali-yuga, the act of begetting a child in a brother's wife is forbidden. In the Brahma Vaivarta Purana, there is the following verse, asvamedham gavalambham, sannyasam pala-paitrikam, devarena sutopattim, kalau panca vivarjayet, "In the age of Kali, five acts are forbidden: the offering of a horse in sacrifice, the offering of a cow in sacrifice, the acceptance of the order of sannyasa, the offerings of flesh to the forefathers, and a man's begetting children in his brother's wife. [Brahma-vaivarta Purana, Krishna-janma-khanda 185.180] In the Kali-yuga the offering of a cow or horse in sacrifice is forbidden because the brahmanas are no longer qualified. The brahmanas would first kill a cow or horse by mantra, and then by another mantra bring it back to life with a new body. This power of mantra has been lost in the Kali-yuga, and therefore the act is forbidden. When the brahmanas could not bring the animal back to life, they continued with the sacrifices, considering the animal meat as the prasada or mercy of the Lord. In this way meat eating began in Vedic culture. It was for this reason that the Lord incarnated as Buddha, saving the poor animals from slaughter. He stopped all Vedic sacrifice by preaching the philosophy of ahimsa or nonviolence.

The only sacrifice recommended in the age of Kali is the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. After all, sacrifices are meant to please God, and in this age the Lord is satisfied by such a simple process. In the age of Kali, the Supreme Lord in His form of Shree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu should be worshiped with his associates by performance of sankirtan yajna, the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. This process is accepted by intelligent men. yajnah sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi sumedhasah [Bhag. 11.5.32]. The word sumedhasah refers to intelligent men who possess sufficient brain substance.

Sannyasa is also forbidden in the age of Kali because it is difficult to find a person qualified for complete renunciation. In the Kali-yuga people are very fallen. In the Shrimad Bhagavatam Shрила Saunaka Rishi addressed Suta Goswami thus, "O learned one, in this iron age of Kali persons have but short lives. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky and above all always disturbed. [Bhag. 1.1.10] In India it has become popular to accept the renounced order of life simply to fill one's belly. This has given a very bad name to the sannyasa order, and people no longer have respect for that ashrama. These so-called renunciates have sex with many women and are more like monkeys than sannyasis. Because people are generally in the modes of passion and ignorance, it is not possible for them to accept the renounced order of life and follow the strict rules and regulations of that order. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the renounced order of life at the age of twenty-four. He did so to deliver the fallen condition souls. Only a person who has transcended the modes of passion and ignorance, and is firmly established in goodness can become a sannyasi, strictly following the regulative principle of no sex.

It is also forbidden to beget children in the womb of a brother's wife. In previous yugas if a man was sterile or the husband had died, then the brother was called upon to propagate children as in the case of Vicitravirya and Vyasadeva. However in the Kali-yuga unscrupulous people will take advantage of this Vedic principle simply to have illicit sex. This leads to further incest which degrades the quality of the population. Thus this is a forbidden act in this age.

## Chapter Six

### The Pandavas are Born

Upon the birth of Dhritarastra, Pandu, and Vidura, the earth prospered. There was an abundant harvest of crops, and all the trees were laden with fruits and flowers. The seasons arrived and passed on time, and there was ample rainfall in the land of Bharatvarsha. The people became learned, brave and honest, and guided by Maharaja Bhishma, performed devotional sacrifices for the pleasure of Lord Vishnu. The people of Hastinapura were so contented with the rule of Maharaja Bhishma that they thought they were living in the Vaikuntha planets. Hearing of the Kuru's prosperity, people came to take shelter in that kingdom. Thus under the influence of a godly King the earth prospered.

Maharaja Bhishma raised the three children, Dhritarastra, Pandu and Vidura, as if they were his own. As Pandu grew, he excelled all men in archery, whereas Dhritarastra excelled in personal strength, and it was soon known to everyone that there was no one equal to Vidura in devotion to Vishnu and knowledge of the dictates of morality. In due course of time Pandu became King, for Dhritarastra was blind, and Vidura was born of a maid servant. Therefore, neither of them could accept the throne.

As Dhritarastra and Pandu matured in age, the time came to marry them to proper wives. Considering the situation, Bhishma decided that three princesses were worthy of being married to the Kuru princes. They were Gandhari, the daughter of the Gandhara King, Pritha, the daughter of King Surasena, and Madri, the daughter of the King of Madras. Bhishma had heard that Gandhari, the daughter of King Subala, was granted a benediction by Lord Shiva that she could have one hundred sons. Attracted to the idea of marrying Dhritarastra to Gandhari, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, sent messengers to the father of Gandhari. King Subala at first hesitated, hearing that Dhritarastra was blind, but taking into consideration the blood line of the Kurus, he consented to marry her to Dhritarastra. When the chaste Gandhari heard that her future husband was blind, she voluntarily blindfolded herself and took a vow to remain so for the rest of her life. Shakuni, the son of Subala, then took Gandhari to the city of the Kurus, Hastinapura, and formally handed her over to

Dhritarastra. Gandhari became so chaste and devoted to Dhritarastra, that she never spoke of men other than her husband or her superiors.

The chief of the Yadu dynasty was Surasena. He was the father of the magnanimous Vasudeva. He also had a daughter named Pritha, who was unrivaled in beauty among earth women. She was adopted by King Kuntibhoja, who had no children. This was an agreement made previously by the two Kings. They agreed that if a girl was born to Surasena, she would be handed over to King Kuntibhoja who was childless. Thus Pritha, who later became known as Kunti, lived in the palace of King Kuntibhoja and looked after the duties of greeting important guests and brahmanas. Once, during her youthful years, she pleased, by menial service, the easily angered brahmana Durvasa Muni. The muni gave her a benediction that she could call any celestial being from the heavenly regions to produce children of the highest quality. Kunti, while still a virgin girl, once called, out of curiosity, Surya, the sun god. When she chanted the mantra, the sun god immediately appeared before her saying, "I have come before you, O lotus-eyed lady. Please fulfill the purpose of the mantra. Kunti was stunned and told the sun god, "I simply tested the mantra given to me by Durvasa Muni. O lord, please forgive my offense. Surya replied, "Once I have been called by this mantra, the result cannot go in vain; it must bear fruit. Although you will bear a son by me, you shall remain a virgin girl.

Thus succumbing to the desires of the deva, Kunti immediately conceived and bore a child that was equal to the sun god himself. The child was born with natural golden armor and glittering earrings. To keep her virginity intact, the sun god arranged that the child be born from Kunti's ear, and for this reason the child was named Karna. The sun god immediately ascended to heaven. Not knowing what to do, Kunti placed the child in a basket and set it afloat on the Ganges. She prayed to the sun god to protect the child. The child floated down the river for some time and was eventually picked up by a carpenter and chariot driver named Adiratha. In great happiness he took the newly found child to his wife Radha, who was childless. Together, both mother and father began to care for the child considering him a gift of providence. Unfortunately, Kunti had to give the child up out of fear of her relatives.

When it was time for Kunti to be married, her foster father, Kuntibhoja, invited princes and kings from other countries to be present. In this svayamvara (wedding) ceremony she was to pick her own husband. The budding youthful Kunti, upon entering the assembly hall, saw the handsome Pandu, proud as a lion, broad-chested and endowed with unsurpassable prowess. He was like the moon amidst its many luminaries. Advancing with modesty, she placed the wedding garland around Pandu's neck, and thus she accepted the Kuru prince as her beloved husband. King Kuntibhoja arranged for the wedding functions and bestowed upon Pandu a large dowry. Afterwards, Pandu took his new wife back to Hastinapura and gave her the opulence she deserved.

Sometime later, Bhishma set his heart upon getting Pandu married to a second wife. Accompanied by his army, Bhishma went to the kingdom of Madras. There he obtained Madri, the attractive sister of Salya, and, after receiving a sufficient dowry, brought her back to Hastinapura where she was united to Pandu in great pomp.

After some time, Pandu set his mind on conquering the world. With his vast army, consisting of many akshauhini divisions of soldiers, Pandu subjugated one country after another (A solid phalanx of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 109,650 infantry and 65,000 calvary is called an akshauhini). He first conquered the robber tribes of Asarna. He next headed toward the kingdom of Magadha, where there reigned a King named Dhirga. This King was proud of his strength and had made numerous offenses against other monarches. Pandu broke the strength of his army and killed him on the field of battle. Taking everything in the King's treasury, he marched into Mithila and subjugated the Videhas. He then conquered the kingdoms of Kashi, Sumbha, and Pundra. When all the kings of the world were thus defeated, they considered Pandu to be a demigod like Indra, the King of heaven. They paid tribute to him and offered all kinds of wealth to gain his favor. Thus the Kuru King returned to his capital, taking with him his acquired opulence.

After establishing his power over the earth, King Pandu retired to the forest along with his two wives, Kunti and Madri. There they lived in opulence and enjoyed the beautiful wooded areas at the base of the Himalayan mountains. One day, Pandu, while roaming about the forest, saw a large deer that seemed to be the leader of a herd. It was engaged in sex with its female companion. Pandu pierced them both with five sharp arrows. The animal was not actually a deer but a rishi's son of great ascetic merit, who was enjoying his mate in the form of a deer. When pierced in this way, the deer fell uttering cries like a human being.

In anger the deer chastised Maharaja Pandu, "O King, even men that are slaves to lust and anger and who are ever sinful never commit cruel acts such as this. Why have you pierced me with arrows while I was enjoying my wife?"

"Kings engage in the sport of killing deer in the same way as they kill opponents of religion," Pandu replied. "You should not reproach me for a sin done in ignorance. Animals of this species are killed in the open or hidden from view. Formerly, the sage Agastya, while engaged in the performance of sacrifice, killed every deer in the forest and offered it in sacrifice to the heavenly gods. I am presently killing deer in the forest for use in sacrifice. You have been killed for the same reason. Seeing that I am following in the footsteps of the great sages, why do you reproach me?"

"O King, the deer replied, "I do not blame you for slaying a deer. But instead of acting so cruelly, you should have waited till the act of intercourse was complete. I am a muni named Kindama, and I was engaged in sexual intercourse with my mate, because unrestricted sex life is not allowed in human society. You have slain me without knowing that I am a brahmana, and therefore, the reaction for killing a brahmana will not come upon you. However, because you have killed me while I was enjoying my wife, certainly your fate will be like mine. When you approach your wife for intercourse, premature death will overcome you and your wife. You have brought lamentation to me when I was seeking happiness, and now I say, grief will come to you when you seek pleasure with your wife. Pronouncing this curse, the sage, in the form of a deer, left his body and attained the heavenly regions due to his ascetic merits.

After the sage's death, King Pandu was momentarily bewildered by such a reversal in his life. "The wicked, Pandu exclaimed, "even if born in pious families, are deluded by their passions. Although I am the son of the great Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, I have engaged in the frivolous act of killing deer in the forest. O, how foolish I have been; the demigods have forsaken me. I now seek liberation. The great impediments to salvation are the desire to beget children and the other pleasures related to sex life. I shall live the life of an ascetic and bring my passions under control by severe austerities. I shall renounce my kingdom and, shaving my head, wander the earth begging my sustenance from the trees and the rivers. I will no longer find fault with others, but have a friendly attitude, devoted to the good of all creatures. I will take complete shelter of the Supreme Lord, who is the only savior from all miseries.

After this unforeseen calamity, King Pandu sent all his servants and wealth back to Hastinapura, and he also sent the news to Bhishma and his brothers of all that had taken place. The elders in the court at Hastinapura were sullen on hearing what had happened. Dhritarastra was especially affected by the turn of events.

While living in the forest, Pandu renounced sense gratification and became a distinguished sage, although born of the warrior race. The great rishis in the forest treated him like a brother or friend. While living in the forest, Pandu became fully satisfied in himself, but he understood that the world was now without protection. Also he knew that his debt to his forefathers could not be paid unless he had children who could perform sacrifices. When the rishis in the forest visited the heavenly realm, Pandu could not accompany them. With some anxiety in his heart, he requested Kunti, "For the world's protection and to preserve the Bharata dynasty, I want you to procreate children by a highly advanced brahmana. Without powerful children to maintain the Kuru dynasty, the whole world may fall into ruin. Also, one has a debt to pay to his ancestors by begetting good children. In the same manner that Vyasadeva conceived me, I want you to conceive children by the semen of some great rishi.

Kunti was ever agreeable to her husband's desires and advised him, "When I was a young girl, I used to wait upon guests and satisfy them to their hearts' content. One day a brahmana named Durvasa Muni came to my father's palace. By my menial services I satisfied the brahmana, and he desired to grant me a benediction. He bestowed upon me a mantra by which I could call any demigod from the heavenly realms. He benedicted me saying, 'With this mantra you may call any demigod, and they will abide by your will. Any demigod you summon will give you children.' On your order, I shall petition any celestial being you wish. O foremost of all truthful men, tell me which of the devas I should summon.

Kunti's words delighted Pandu, and he joyfully replied, "O most fortunate Kunti, invite the ruler of justice, Yamaraja. He is most pious and devoted to Lord Vishnu. Indeed, he is a mahajanas and will not pollute our dynasty with sin. Kunti abided by Pandu's order and prepared to call the demigod Yamaraja. (At this time Gandhari had been pregnant for one whole year.) Kunti repeated the incantation that Durvasa Muni had imparted to her, and Yamaraja appeared. By him she conceived a child

that was equal to the great Yamaraja himself. When the child was born, there was a celestial voice from the heavens that announced, "This child will possess divine consciousness, and he will be the foremost of virtuous. He will become famous as one who rules by the will of God. Endowed with invincibility and truthful speech, he will become the emperor of this earth. This first son of Pandu will be named Yudhisthira, and his fame shall be celebrated throughout the heavens.

Pandu was overjoyed by the birth of such a pious son, and he again ordered Kunti, "The wise have declared that a king must be endowed with physical strength, otherwise he is no warrior. Therefore, call for Vayu, the mighty demigod of the wind. Kunti then summoned the celestial being Vayu, and coming before her, the wind god inquired, "O Kunti, please tell me why you have called me. Smiling with modesty, she replied, "Please give me, O best of the celestials, a child endowed with super human strength and a robust body. Let him be capable of humbling the pride of everyone. Vayu then conceived a child by her who was destined to become the strongest human on earth. When the child was born, a voice from the heavens announced, "This child shall be known as Bhima, and by his physical prowess he will conquer all men. On this same day that Bhima took his birth, Duryodhana was also born from Gandhari.

One day, shortly after Bhima's birth, Kunti was holding him in her lap. The child had just fallen asleep, when suddenly a lion roared. Kunti rose, forgetful that the child was on her lap. The child fell down the mountain side and pulverized a large stone upon which he fell. The child was not hurt in the least, but Pandu was amazed at the sturdy body of his son.

After the birth of Bhima, Pandu desired more children. He told Kunti to practice austerities for one year, and he himself stood on one leg from morning till evening every day in rapt meditation, hoping to satisfy Indra, the King of heaven. Indra, being pleased with Pandu, appeared before him and said, "I will give you, O King, a child who will be celebrated for all time. He shall annihilate the impious and give joy to the virtuous. He will be a great devotee of the one Supreme Lord.

King Pandu then called for Kunti, and told her to summon Indra. Kunti, following the order of her husband, called Indra, and by him a child was born that was to be the intimate friend of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Upon the birth of this child, a celestial voice from the heavens announced, "This child shall be known as Arjuna. He will be equal in bowmanship to the great Kartavirya, and in prowess he will resemble Lord Shiva. Invincible in battle, he will propagate the fame of the Kuru dynasty far and wide. After acquiring all celestial weapons, he will retrieve the fortunes of your dynasty. After these prophetic words were heard, kettledrums rolled, and the heavenly gods and rishis showered flowers on the Earth.

The celebrated Pandu was overjoyed and approached his wife aspiring for more children. However, before Pandu could speak, Kunti warned, "The wise do not sanction a fourth child even in case of emergency. The woman who has intercourse with four different men is called a prostitute, and with a fifth she is called a harlot.

Therefore, O great King, because you are learned in the scriptures, please do not ask me again to bear children.

After the birth of Kunti's first three sons and also the birth of one hundred sons to Gandhari, Madri, the daughter of the Madras King, approached Pandu requesting, "O great King, I have no objection if you do not favor me. O sinless one, I also have no complaint that although I am senior to Kunti, I am inferior to her in position. I do not grieve when I hear that Gandhari has obtained 100 sons. This, however, is my great grief that while Kunti and I are equal, I am childless. If Kunti could teach me to have children in the same way that she has conceived these children, then I would be satisfied. Please ask her on my account.

Pandu then lovingly requested Kunti to teach the mantra to Madri so that she could also have children. Kunti readily agreed, and told Madri, "Think of some demigod you favor and certainly by him you shall bear children. Madri thought of the twin Asvini-kumara demigods, and within a matter of seconds, they appeared before her. They gave her two children named Nakula and Sahadeva, who were unrivaled on earth for personal beauty. As soon as they were born, a voice from the heavens proclaimed, "In prowess and beauty these two children shall excel even the twin Asvins themselves. Thus five children were born to Pandu, and the great King felt fully satisfied to see the good quality of his children. As they grew, they were favored by the great sages in that region.

Gandhari also gave birth to children. She received a benediction from Vyasadeva that she could have one hundred sons. Sometime thereafter, Gandhari conceived, and she bore the pregnancy for two years without delivering. When she heard that Kunti had given birth to a child whose splendor was like the morning sun, she was angered and violently hit her womb. She then gave birth to a piece of flesh that was hard like an iron ball. When she was about to throw the ball of flesh away, Vyasadeva appeared. Without disguising her feelings, she angrily cried, "When I heard that Kunti gave birth to a child who was radiant like the sun, I struck my womb. You have promised me a hundred sons, but here is a ball of flesh.

"O daughter of Subala, Vyasadeva replied, "my boons will always bear fruit. I have never falsified a benediction even in jest. You should now arrange that a hundred pots full of clarified butter be brought instantly. In the meantime sprinkle cool water over this piece of flesh.

Gandhari was pacified and began sprinkling water on the ball of flesh. It separated into 100 pieces, each about the size of a thumb. Each piece of flesh was then placed in a pot of ghee and covered. Vyasadeva told Gandhari that a child would be born from each of the pots. He then left for the Himalayan Mountains.

The first child born from one of the hundred pots was Duryodhana. As soon as he could cry, he began to bray like an ass. And hearing that sound, the asses, vultures, jackals and crows uttered their respective cries. Violent winds began to blow, and there were fires in various directions. Duryodhana was born on the same day that Bhima was born.

After the birth of Duryodhana, Dhritarastra called for Bhishma, Vidura and all the senior brahmanas and members of the Kuru household. He questioned them, "The oldest of the princes is Yudhishthira, and he shall become King. By virtue of his being the first born, he has gained the kingdom. But what about this son born to me. Will he become king? While inquiring from the elders, jackals, crows and asses began to howl frightfully.

"O King, Vidura said, "when these frightful omens are noticeable at birth, it is evident that this child will destroy your dynasty. Your prosperity depends on forsaking him, and if you decide otherwise, misfortune will befall the Kurus. You already have 99 other sons, so let this one go. O King, favor the world by casting away this child.

When Vidura had wisely spoken, all the brahmanas agreed, but Dhritarastra had no heart to destroy a small baby. Within a month's time all the one hundred pots of ghee had produced a child, and in addition to these one hundred, Vyasadeva produced another pot in which a female child named Duhsala was born. There was also a vaishya woman who used to serve Dhritarastra very faithfully. By her the King conceived a child named Yuyutsu who later became renowned for sharp intelligence. Thus one hundred and one sons as well as one daughter were born to Dhritarastra. In order of birth, they were Duryodhana, Yuyutsu, Duhshasana, Duhshaha, Duhshala, etc. All the hundred and one sons became heroes and great chariot fighters.

One day after the birth of his five sons, King Pandu was wandering about the woods with his wife Madri. It was springtime and the forest flowers were in bloom, casting their scent in all directions. Birds like the parrot, the cuckoo, the crane, and the peacock were singing sweetly, and the bees were humming. Bewildered by the atmosphere, Pandu became attracted to his wife, and forgetting the curse of the rishi, forcibly embraced her. Madri tried to resist the advances of her husband, but it was no use. Impelled by fate, the great King, overwhelmed by passion, ended his life, trying to enjoy his beautiful wife.

Embracing the dead body of her husband and weeping aloud, Madri called out for Kunti. Kunti heard her cries and came to where Madri lay with Pandu. Viewing the dead body of Pandu, Kunti fell to the ground lamenting. She was overpowered by separation, and she chastised Madri repeatedly for not resisting the King. Madri related to her all that happened and how she tried to stop Pandu's advances. Kunti then decided, "I am the eldest wife, and therefore the religious rite of Sati belongs to me. You must now take care of the children and see that they are raised properly.

"Kunti, it is I who should enter fire with our lord, Madri replied. "He approached me for enjoyment, and his desires being unfulfilled, ascended to the heavens. Therefore, I shall accompany him to Yamaraja's abode to satisfy him. If I survive, I shall certainly not be able to raise your children as if they were my own. But you, O Kunti, shall be able to raise my sons as if they were your own. Therefore, let my body be burnt with his. Kunti reluctantly agreed to the proposal. With tearful eyes and sorrowful hearts, they built a funeral pyre and laid the dead body of Pandu upon it.

As the body burned, Madri entered the flames and attained the same destination as her husband.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Sixth Chapter of the Adi Parva, The Pandavas Divine Birth.

### Chapter Commentary

In the beginning of this chapter the glories of Maharaja Bhishma are extolled. He was a leader par excellence. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gita, "Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues. (Bg. 3.21) Because Maharaja Bhishma was a powerful devotee and saintly king, the citizens wanted to follow in his footsteps. By engaging in the Lord's devotional service, the citizens automatically became joyful and radiant. This process is like watering the root of a tree. If the water is applied to the root, then the whole tree prospers. Similarly, if a king engages his citizens in worshipping Lord Vishnu, the root of all creation, then automatically they become happy.

If a head of state engages his subjects in sense gratification, the citizens wither in good qualities, creating an environment of sinful life. Directing our life toward sense gratification is like trying to water the leaves of the tree individually. The whole tree dies from such a watering process. The citizens in Maharaja Bhishma's kingdom loved him as a father, and always extolled his qualities and activities. They knew that Maharaja Bhishma would not utilize them for his sense gratification; for they truly believed that he was God's representative on Earth, and he never let them down in that regard. In today's society, no one trusts the leaders. They now travel in bullet proof cars to protect themselves from the discontented citizens whom they have exploited. Such is the difference between a self motivated leader and a godly king like Maharaja Bhishma.

When Gandhari was married to Dhritarastra, she voluntarily blindfolded herself for the rest of her life. Gandhari was the ideal chaste woman of all time. She did not want to feel superior to her husband in any way. The ornament of a woman is her chastity or faithfulness to her husband. In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "Among women I am fame, fortune, speech, memory, intelligence, faithfulness (chastity) and patience. (Bg.10.34) A woman, who is chaste to her husband, is elevated in transcendental qualities. In the modern world, chastity is not emphasized. Women have been given independence in practically all matters. They can go to war, vote, head the household, or they can even lead a country. Because chastity is not in vogue, women are allowed to sample many men to find the right one according to their estimation. Many unwanted children are born out of such

sampling. The whole situation degenerates the quality of the population, but what is to be done? We can only encourage everyone to chant the holy names of God and try to lead a pure life. The holy name alone can change the course of this age.

King Pandu possessed all the good qualities of a heroic and powerful king. The qualities of a brave warrior are given in Bhagavad-gita, "Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity, and leadership are the qualities of work for the kshatriyas. (Bg.18.43) Maharaja Pandu was decorated with these qualities. He ruled the earth toward the end of the Dvapara Yuga more than five thousand years ago. At that time society was guided by the divine varnashrama system. As Lord Krishna states in Bhagavad-gita, "According to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me. And, although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable. (Bg.4.13) The four divisions of society are the brahmanas, the kshatriyas, the vaishyas and the shudras. The priestly class was meant to guide all other classes of men in spiritual knowledge. The warrior kings were meant to protect the citizens so that they could peacefully execute their prescribed duties. The mercantile and farming men were meant to till the land, take care of cows and do business. The worker class were meant to serve the other three sections of society. There was no exploitation of one class over another, because the common goal was to please Lord Vishnu. When God is placed in the center of civilization, everyone becomes happy and prosperous, and there is no artificial dominance of one section of society over another.

The varnashrama social system is compared to a human body. The priestly class was like the head that gives direction to the other parts of the body. The kings were like the arms that give protection. The vaishyas were like the stomach that gives nourishment to the head, arms and legs. And the workers were like the legs that give service to the rest of the body. In present day society there are no priestly intelligent men to guide society toward self realization, and thus the social body wanders aimlessly like a headless trunk.

The fall of the divine varnashrama system began when the brahmana boy Shringi cursed the powerful king Maharaja Parikshit. Because Shringi wrongly cursed the saintly King, the priests gradually lost their purity by which they controlled the kings. When the brahmanas lost their power, the kshatriyas became the leaders of society. This is like having a body without a head. The result of this was that the population in general forgot the aim of life+spiritual realization+and gradually became influenced by sensual monarches who simply engaged in the pursuit of material pleasure.

For the last five thousand years, the world has been ruled by monarchies, except in a few rare cases where a powerful ascetic priest directed the ruling kings. Chanakya Pandit directed Maharaja Chandragupta to conquer the major portion of India. Maharaja Patraparudra, the king of Orissa in the 1500's, took inspiration from Lord Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Krishna in this age of Kali. Within the last one hundred years, monarchies have been abolished for the most part. Why? Because the kings became corrupt. They were no longer saintly leaders,

but degraded rogues and thieves. Gradually the mercantile men threw out the powerless kings and instituted democracy, or government run by the people. The businessmen and the workers are now competing with one another for the supremacy of the world. There is no trust because the leaders are simply self motivated. Everyone has forgotten the goal of life, self realization, and as a result people are confused and bewildered. As the businessmen become more degraded, the worker class will take power. Modern communism is a government for the worker class. As Kali yuga progresses, all governments will be run by men with base qualities, leading to nothing but anarchy, or no government at all.

Maharaja Pandu went out to conquer the world, leading his powerful army. He was the first warrior to engage the enemy, and he would not have been considered a king unless he came back from the battle scarred by some weapon. Leaders, who are afraid of fighting and simply sit in their comfortable offices and order others to fight, are not of the warrior class, but businessmen or workers. They have none of the heroic qualities mentioned in Bhagavad-gita. They do not know how to protect the citizens properly, nor do they know how to respect saintly persons. They are like Kali, who dressed like a king, but was found beating a bull and cow. Maharaja Parikshit, a real king, appeared on the spot to kill the pretender. Unfortunately, today there are no pious and powerful kings like Pandu or Parikshit who can make the representatives of Kali tremble at their feet. The whole situation has become chaotic.

When Maharaja Pandu pierced the deer, he did not know that it was a disguised sage named Kindama. The sage had stated to Maharaja Pandu that unrestricted sex was not allowed in human society. At that time in Vedic culture it was understood that this one desire binds all persons to the material world. While Lord Rishabhadeva was instructing his one hundred sons, he told them, "The attraction between male and female is the basic principle of material existence. On the basis of this misconception, which ties together the hearts of the male and female, one becomes attracted to his body, home, property, children, relatives and wealth. In this way one increases life's illusions and thinks in terms of I and mine.' (Bhag. 5.5.8) Unrestricted sex life is simply animal life, and it is for this reason that the sage took the body of a deer so he could enjoy like an animal. When a person engages in too much sex, he considers himself to be this body and this life to be all in all. One comes to the human platform when sex life is regulated for producing saintly children. If one is serious about getting out of this material world, one must refrain from four sinful activities: unrestricted sex, meat eating, indulging in intoxication and gambling. After giving these up, one must engage in the devotional service of the Lord in nine different categories: Hearing, chanting and remembering the Supreme Lord, serving His lotus feet, offering prayers, serving Him, worshipping His deity form, making the Lord one's friend and surrendering everything to Him. If one is absorbed in this nine-fold process, he will realize his eternal nature and liberate himself from the path of birth and death.

Maharaja Pandu realized that although he was a powerful king, he had not conquered his real enemy, lust. He was therefore subject to the reactions of his fruitive activities. There is danger in this world at every step and therefore, one can

never know when some tragedy will strike. Therefore, one should take close shelter of the Lord. This is confirmed in the Shrimad Bhagavatam, "For one who has accepted the boat of the lotus feet of the Lord, who is the shelter of the cosmic manifestation and is famous as Mukunda or the giver of liberation, the ocean of the material world is like the water contained in a calf's hoofprint. The kingdom of God should be our goal, not this material world where there is danger at every step of life. (Bhag. 10.14.58) No matter how comfortable one may be in this world, at

## Chapter Seven

### The Poisoned Cake

After King Pandu's demise, the sages in the forest assembled and discussed the future of Kunti and her sons. The rishis decided that the Pandavas, along with their mother, should live in Hastinapura and take shelter of Grandfather Bhishma and the Kuru elders. The sages had great compassion upon the people of the world. They were not just interested in their own salvation, but in the protection and advancement of the people in general. Knowing these boys to be future Kings of the earth, the great sages made arrangements for them to be placed under proper guidance.

Accompanied by the sages and the Charanas [a species of celestial beings like the seraphim and cherubim], Kunti and her children appeared outside the city gates of Hastinapura. Upon hearing that Kunti was at the city gate, the members of the Kuru court, headed by Bhishma, Dhritarastra and Vidura, came forward to welcome them. The citizens of Hastinapura also came there to see the sons of Pandu. Everyone was wonder struck to behold the godlike sages accompanied by the celestial Charanas.

The sages then informed the Kuru elders, "As you well know the former king of this world, Pandu, had been living in the forest as an ascetic due to a muni's curse. The curse has now taken its toll and that great King has ascended to the heavenly planets. Here are his five children. The oldest is Yudhisthira, conceived by the controller of religion, Yamaraja himself. He is the future king. The second son, Bhima, conceived by the demigod Vayu, possesses infinite strength. The third son is Arjuna, conceived by the noble Indra himself. He will humble the pride of all archers on earth. The last two children are Nakula and Sahadeva, begotten by the Asvini-kumara demigods through Madri. The birth, growth and development of Pandu's children will give great pleasure to all. King Pandu and his wife Madri departed seventeen days ago. The last funeral rites need to be performed with honor befitting a king of this earth. After informing the Kuru elders of all matters, the sages and Charanas disappeared from sight.

Dhritarastra then requested Vidura, "O brother, we must perform the last rites for this King of kings and arrange charity to be given freely to whomever is in need.

The ashes of Pandu and Madri were then taken in state to the banks of the Ganges, where the last funeral rites were performed. The ashes were then cast into the Ganges. All the citizens, young and old, wept over the loss of their King, and thus passed twelve days in mourning.

One day after the shraddha ceremony (offering of Vishnu prasad to the forefathers) had been performed, Vyasadeva approached Satyavati and warned her, "Mother, the days of happiness in the Kuru house will set like the evening sun. The empire of the Kauravas will no longer endure. You should not be a witness to the annihilation of your dynasty. Therefore, enter the forest and fix your mind on the Supreme Lord Vishnu, the protector of all. Following the advice of Vyasa, Satyavati, along with Ambika and Ambalika, entered the forest. When their meditation attained perfection, they entered the spiritual world, Vaikuntha.

After the Pandavas settled in their father's palace, they accustomed themselves to the opulence that was due to them. Whenever Bhima was engaged in play with the sons of Dhritarastra, his strength became apparent. Bhima proved superior in speed, striking objects, consuming food and scattering dust. The son of the wind-god pulled the sons of Dhritarastra by the hair and made them fight with one another, laughing all the while. Bhima would seize them by the hair, throw them down, and drag them along the ground. In his playful mood, Bhima would accidentally break their knees, their heads and their shoulders. Sometimes while swimming together, the second son of Pandu would hold ten of them at a time under water until they were almost dead. When the sons of Dhritarastra would climb a tree to gather fruits, Bhima would shake the tree until the fruits as well as the one-hundred sons fell to the ground. He would play with them in childishness, but would never hurt them out of envy.

When it was obvious that Bhima could challenge all the one-hundred sons of Dhritarastra single-handedly, Duryodhana began to make deceitful plans to harm him. He thought, "There is no person who can compare with Bhima's strength. He does not think twice of challenging my one-hundred brothers to combat. I will exterminate him and confine Yudhisthira and Arjuna to imprisonment. Then I shall be the sole heir to the throne without hindrance.

Possessed with this mentality, the wicked Duryodhana built a palace on the banks of the Ganges that was just for sporting in the water. His plan was to invite the Pandavas to this house and feed Bhima a poisoned cake. When Bhima was unconscious from the poison, Duryodhana and his brothers would throw him in the Ganges. With this evil plan in mind, Duryodhana began construction. After the palace was completed, Duryodhana invited his cousins, "Let us go to Gange's bank and sport in the water. We shall have a picnic and enjoy the scenery.

Not understanding Duryodhana's evil intentions, the Pandavas accompanied Dhritarastra's sons to the banks of the Ganges and inspected the newly constructed palace by the water. They all sat down to a feast before swimming. Duryodhana brought Bhima a cake filled with enough poison to kill one hundred men. That wicked youth, who spoke sweetly, but whose heart was like a razor, continued to

feed Bhima different kinds of food that were filled with poison. After the feast the boys began playing in the water. Bhima became fatigued from the poison, and rising from the water, lay down on the ground. Seizing this opportunity, Duryodhana and some of his brothers bound him with ropes and threw him into the Ganges. He sank down to the bottom of the river where the Naga (snake) kingdom is situated. Thousands of Nagas began to bite him, and the poison from the cake was neutralized by the serpents' venom.

On regaining consciousness, the son of Kunti broke his bonds and began killing the snakes that were biting him. The rest of the snakes fled and went to their leader Vasuki, telling him the events that had taken place. Vasuki happened to be related to Bhima through the wind god Vayu, and upon hearing that Bhima was present, he went to the spot and embraced him. Bhima then related to Vasuki the sinister plan of the poisoned cake. Vasuki, wanting to protect him from future attacks, offered Vayu's son eight bowls of nectar which empowered a person with the strength of ten thousand elephants. Bhima drank one bowl in one breath, and after drinking all eight, he lay down on a bed prepared by the serpents.

After Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva and Dhritarashtra's sons were satiated in their swimming play, they set out for Hastinapura anticipating that Bhima had already gone there. The wicked Duryodhana was elated thinking that Bhima was dead, and he appeared very happy on the way back to Hastinapura. Yudhisthira, who was unacquainted with vice and wickedness, thought nothing of the matter. Upon entering the palace chambers of his mother, he inquired, "O mother, have you seen Bhima? I cannot find him anywhere. While swimming in the Ganges, he became tired and slept on the shore. After finishing our water sports, he had disappeared. Has he come here early because of exhaustion from swimming?"

Kunti became alarmed when she heard that Bhima was missing. "My dear Yudhisthira, she said, "I have not seen Bhima. He has not come here. Return in haste with your brothers and try to find him. After dismissing her sons, Kunti summoned Vidura and anxiously spoke to him, "O illustrious Vidura, Bhima is missing. Today the boys went swimming in the Ganges, and they returned without him. I know that Duryodhana is envious of him. This first son of Dhritarashtra is crooked, malicious, low-minded and cruel. His only desire is to obtain the throne. I am afraid he might have killed Bhima and this is saddening my heart.

"Blessed lady, Vidura replied, "do not grieve. Protect your sons with care. If Duryodhana is accused, he might slay the other sons. The great sage Vyasadeva has foretold that your sons will be long-lived. Therefore, Bhima will surely return and gladden your heart. Vidura then left for his residence and Kunti, unable to shake her anxiety, stayed in her quarters.

Meanwhile, Bhimasena awoke from his deep sleep after eight days. The Nagas extolled him and tended to his needs. "O greatly powerful Bhima, they said, "you are filled with the nectar of the heavenly gods. This will give you the vitality of ten thousand elephants. No one will be able to defeat you in battle. You must now

return home, for your mother is in deep anxiety over your absence. The Nagas then dressed him in fine silks and ornaments and returned him to the palace by the river.

Bhima sprinted to Hastinapura with great haste. He entered the palace of his mother and bowed at her feet and at the feet of his elder brother. Queen Kunti took her son on her lap, and as she affectionately embraced him, tears glided down her face. The other brothers gathered round and welcomed him warmly. Bhima then briefed them on everything that had happened. He explained how Duryodhana had tried to poison him, and how the wicked son of Dhritarastra and his brothers had tied him up and thrown him in the Ganges. Bhima also explained how the Nagas had bitten him, countering the poison in the cake. He told how he had been given eight bowls of immortal elixir, and how his strength had increased thousands of times. "Do not speak of this to anyone, Yudhishthira said. "From this day on we should protect one another with care. Under Vidura's guidance, no harm can come to us.

Thus Ends the Seven Chapter of the Adi Parva to the Summary Study of the Mahabharata, Entitled, The Poisoned Cake.

#### Chapter Commentary

After the advice of Vyasa, Queen Satyawati and her daughters-in-law went to the forest for austerities and meditation. Meditation is meant for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As stated in the Shrimad-Bhagavatam (Bhag. 12.13.1), *dhyana-vasthita-tad-gatena manasa pasyanti yam yoginah--Yoga or meditation is meant to focus on the transcendental form of the Lord. In previous ages persons were so pious that they could go to the forest and meditate on the eternal form of Lord Krishna. However, in this age of Kali people are not so advanced. Therefore, the incarnation of Lord Krishna in this age, Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has advised us to fix our minds on the Holy Name by chanting Hare Krishna mahamantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.*

Duryodhana's only desire was to gain the throne and become king. He was possessed by greed. This mentality is typical of the demoniac person. Lord Krishna speaks to Arjuna in the sixteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita about this state of mind. Lord Krishna says, "The demoniac person thinks, So much wealth do I have today, and I will gain more according to my schemes. So much is mine now, and it will increase in the future, more and more. He is my enemy, and I have killed him; and my other enemy will also be killed. I am the richest man, surrounded by aristocratic relatives. There is none so powerful and happy as I am. I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give some charity, and thus I shall rejoice.' In this way, such persons are deluded by ignorance. (Bg.13.13-15) Because Duryodhana was puffed up and

arrogant, he had no appreciation for the spiritual qualities of the Pandavas. He offences against the Pandavas would soon fructify in the form of annihilation of the entire dynasty.

This was the beginning of many transgressions committed against the Pandavas by the sinister Duryodhana. The Pandavas and their mother Kunti were completely helpless; therefore they had to take close shelter of the Lord's lotus feet. In Queen Kunti's prayers to Lord Krishna, she states, "My dear Krishna, Your Lordship has protected us from a poisoned cake, from a great fire, from cannibals, from the vicious assembly, from sufferings during our exile in the forest and from the battle where great generals fought. And now You have saved us from the weapon of Ashvatthama. (Bhag. 1.8.24) The Pandavas and their mother were destined for political intrigues, but because they took shelter of Lord Krishna, they were protected in all circumstances. We can also follow in the footsteps of Queen Kunti and her sons by taking shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord whenever difficulties arise.

## Chapter Eight

### The Preceptor Drona

Seeing the princes enter adolescence, Maharaja Bhishma began searching for a suitable teacher to tutor them in the science of warfare. One day the heroic princes came out of Hastinapura. to play ball, and they roamed the forest areas absorbed in the ecstasy of young boys. When the ball fell into a well, they all tried their best to retrieve it, but found it impossible.

As they were looking in the well, a brahmana appeared who had just finished his daily performance of agnihotra (fire sacrifice). Seeing the princes unsuccessful in retrieving the ball, the brahmana, whose name was Dronacharya, approached them. He was dressed in white robes and looked thin and effulgent due to his performance of austerity and sacrifice. "Shame on your kshatriya strength! Drona chided the boys, "You are born in the dynasty of Bharata and you cannot recover this ball from the well? Witness the power of my weapons!

Drona slipped off his ring and dropped it into the dry well. The ring landed on the ball. Taking a handful of grass, he chanted some Vedic mantras, turning the blades of grass into arrows. He then pierced the ring and the ball simultaneously. Piercing one arrow after another, he made a chain of arrows that came up to the top of the well. He then pulled the ball out of the well as the boys stood watching, struck with wonder. The boys offered their obeisances to the brahmana and inquired from him, "O great brahmana, no one possesses such skill. Please reveal your identity and how we may render service to you.

"Go to Bhishma, the brahmana replied, "and describe my likeness and what you have just seen. He will tell you who I am. The boys ran to Bhishma and explained to him everything that had happened. Bhishma smiled and exclaimed, "This is Drona! He then went out of the city to receive the elevated brahmana. Maharaja Bhishma brought him into the palace, and in private inquired from him, "Dear brahmana, please let us know the reason for your arrival in Hastinapura.

"In my younger years, Drona replied, "I lived in the ashrama of my teacher along with the Panchala prince, Drupada. We made a close friendship, and were always looking after each other. He always told me that he was the favorite of his father, and that one day he would inherit the kingdom. Because we were close friends, he promised me that some day half his kingdom would be mine. After he finished his studies, he left for his own country.

"In time, Drona continued, "I married Krpi, the daughter of the sage Gautama, and begot a son named Ashvatthama. Because of poverty I could not even feed my son milk, and therefore, I went to the kingdom of the Panchalas to see my old friend, Drupada. When I entered the royal court, I greeted him joyfully, O tiger among men, It is Drona, your old friend.' Drupada was angered and derided me saying, You are certainly senseless, because you, a poor brahmana, are addressing me as your friend. My former friendship with you was for a particular reason. One of impure birth can never be a friend to one who is born of a high caste. Friendships can only exist between persons of equal rank. There cannot be friendship between the rich and the poor, or between a coward and a hero. O simpleton, great kings can never have friendships with poor and luckless fellows. I do not remember ever promising half my kingdom. I will, however, give you food and shelter for one night.' Unable to tolerate his abusive words, I quickly left his kingdom with a vow to win half his possessions. I have now desire to train competent students who can conquer the pride of this vain King. I have received all the celestial weapons from Parashurama, the annihilator of the kshatriyas. Because I am a brahmana, he taught me the complete science of warfare.

After Dronacharya had detailed his purpose, Maharaja Bhishma humbly implored him, "String your bow, O great brahmana, and take the sons of Pandu and Dhritarastra as your disciples. When Drona had been appointed the martial preceptor of his brother's children, Maharaja Bhishma gave him a suitable home that was furnished with all opulences.

After Drona had been properly situated, he soon began to train the young princes. Drona taught the sons of Pandu and the sons of Dhritarastra the use of many weapons, both human and celestial. Although the instruction given to them was the same, still Arjuna, the third son of Pandu, excelled all students. His lightness of hand and skill were beyond compare. Arjuna became very faithful to Drona and always stayed by his side. One day, Drona gave to each of his students a narrow mouthed vessel to fill with water. However, he gave to his own son, Ashvatthama, a wide mouthed vessel so by filling it quickly, he could return to his father and receive special instructions. Arjuna came to know of this, and filling his vessel by means of the varuna astra (a celestial mantra that could produce water on the battlefield), he

would come to the preceptor at the same time as Ashvatthama. Arjuna's allegiance and his strong appetite to learn won the heart of Drona. It soon became evident to everyone that Arjuna was the preceptor's favorite student.

One day Dronacharya told his cook, "Never serve Arjuna food in the dark, nor tell him that I have given this order. However, one night Arjuna was taking food in his tent by candlelight and suddenly a turbulent wind rose blowing out the candle. Arjuna continued to eat, although it was dark, and while he was eating, he thought, "If I can eat in the dark, why can't I practice archery in the dark? Thus he began training at night, and hearing the twang of Arjuna's bow, Drona came to him and embraced him lovingly, "You are my foremost student, and I give you the benediction that there will not be an archer your equal in the world.

Thereafter, Drona began to teach Arjuna the art of fighting from a horse, from the back of an elephant, on a chariot and on the ground. He instructed him how to fight with the mace, sword, javelin and the dart. He trained him how to use many weapons at one time and how to fight with many men at one time.

Hearing reports of Drona's teachings, princes flocked to him by the thousands. Amongst them came a prince of the Nishadas, named Ekalavya. By caste he was lower than shudra, and fearing that because he was a Nishada, who in time might excel his high born students, Drona refused to accept him. After bowing at Drona's feet, Ekalavya went back to the forest, made a clay image of Drona and began to worship it. He practiced with great zeal in front of this deity of Drona, and in due course all the science of weaponry became known to him.

One day the Pandavas and the Kurus set out for the forest on a hunting excursion. They brought along a dog who could help them search for certain animals. When the dog was wandering in the forest, it saw Ekalavya, the prince of the Nishadas, releasing arrows in all directions. The prince wore black garments and was filthy due to not bathing, as was common among the lower classes. His hair was matted. Seeing this frightful sight, the dog began to bark. The Nishada prince, wanting to exhibit his prowess with the bow and arrow, shut the dog's mouth with seven arrows. The dog then ran back to the Pandavas. When the princes saw the dog, they were struck with wonder and immediately began searching the forest for the archer who had performed such a feat. They soon came upon the unknown bowman and seeing his grim appearance, questioned him, "Who are you and who is your father?

"I am Ekalavya, he replied, "the son of Hiranyadhanus, the king of the Nishadas. Please know that I am a disciple of Dronacharya.

After questioning Ekalavya further, the Pandavas went back to Drona and informed him of what had happened. Arjuna thought that the Nishada prince had come to Drona in secret and learned the art of weapons. He humbly questioned Drona, "You have embraced me and told me that I would have no equal in archery. How then has this Ekalavya surpassed me?

After reflecting on a proper course of action, Drona took Arjuna to the forest. In the woods they soon came upon Ekalavya. Drona saw his matted hair, ragged clothes and filthy appearance. When Ekalavya saw Drona, he approached him and offered his prostrated obeisances, touching his preceptor's feet. He then stood before his teacher waiting for his command.

"If you are really my disciple, Drona said, "then give me my dakshina (payment for tutorship). Ekalavya was gladdened to hear the words of his preceptor and replied, "O my teacher, what shall I give you? Command me, for there is nothing I will not sacrifice.

"If you are really intent on making me a gift, Drona said, "then please give me your right thumb. Ekalavya was devoted to obedience, and with an unflinching mind, cut off his right thumb and gave it to his teacher. When the prince tried to shoot again with the use of his right hand, he found that he did not have the same accuracy as before.

One day Drona, the foremost martial teacher, called his disciples together to test their comparative excellence in the use of arms. He had placed an artificial bird on a tree top as the proposed target. He then commanded his students, "Take up your bows, aiming at the bird in the tree. Release your arrow and cut off the bird's head as I give the order.

Drona then called for Yudhisthira and inquired, "Do you see the bird at the top of the tree? Yudhisthira replied to his preceptor, "Yes, I do. Drona then asked him, "Do you see anything else? Yudhisthira replied, "I see the tree, myself, my brothers and the bird. Drona was not pleased and ordered, "Stand aside! You are not fit to strike the target.

Drona then repeated the experiment with Duryodhana and the other sons of Dhritarastra, and the result was the same. He ordered them all to stand aside. When everyone had failed, Dronacharya called for Arjuna. He commanded him, "Fix your arrow to your bow and await my order. When I say so, cut off the bird's head. He then asked him, "Do you see the bird in the tree. Arjuna replied, "I only see the neck of the bird. Dronacharya again inquired, "What else do you see? Do you see the tree, your brothers or me? Arjuna replied, "I only see the neck of the bird! With his hairs standing on end out of ecstasy, Drona ordered, "Release your arrow! Instantly Partha released his arrow and severed the head of the false bird. Drona immediately embraced Arjuna to his chest, considering Drupada already defeated in battle.

On another day Drona called for Yudhisthira and Duryodhana, and ordered them, "My dear Yudhisthira, please follow my instructions. Go among the citizens and find someone who has some faults. When you have found that person, bring him to me. Drona then requested Duryodhana, "Go among the citizens and find someone who is superior in quality to you. When you find that person, bring him to me. Both the students then left, and Drona returned to his quarters.

At the end of the day Duryodhana returned to his teacher and informed him, "O my teacher, I have searched the kingdom for a person who is superior in quality to me, but I have not found anyone. Having concluded my inspection, I have returned to your presence. Drona then dismissed Duryodhana.

When the sun had set on the horizon, Yudhishthira arrived and offered obeisances to his martial teacher. Drona then inquired, "Have you found someone of inferior quality? Yudhishthira replied, "I have searched all day, but I could not find anyone. However, toward the end of the day, I saw a vaishya man drawing water from a well, and since it was ekadashi (fasting day), I thought to bring him to you. Just as I was about to arrest him, I saw that he fed the water to his animals. Therefore, I have not found anyone with inferior qualities, but I have brought myself for fault finding with others. Drona then dismissed Yudhishthira and reflected on the qualities of the two princes. He concluded that Yudhishthira was the personification of humility and fit to rule the people, whereas Duryodhana was too proud to be a pious king and would ultimately ruin the Kuru dynasty.

On another day, Drona and his pupils went to the Ganges to bathe in the sacred waters. When Drona had entered the river, an alligator seized him by the thigh. Although capable of killing the alligator, he called to his students, "Please kill this animal and rescue me! Instantly Arjuna released five arrows that struck the alligator and killed it. This happened so fast that the others stood looking dumbfounded. The alligator released Drona and died within the waters.

When Drona emerged from the river, he embraced Arjuna and said, "O best of all warriors, I award you the brahmastra weapon, which is the most powerful of all astras (celestial weapons). It can never be used against an inferior opponent, or it will destroy the whole universe. This weapon has no equal in the three worlds. Keep it with great care and use it only against an enemy who is equal to or greater than you. Drona then taught the mantras for this weapon to his disciple, and Arjuna received them with great respect. He then pronounced blessings upon Arjuna, "There will never be a archer greater than yourself. You will never be defeated by any enemy, and your achievements will be recorded in the history of the world.

Thus Drona continued to instruct the sons of Pandu and the sons of Dhritarastra. When Drona felt he had given sufficient instructions to all the boys, he informed Bhishma that he would soon collect his dakshina (student payment) from all whom he had trained.

Thus Ends Mahabharata Summation to Chapter Eight of the Adi Parva, entitled, The Preceptor Drona.

## Chapter Commentary

After Drona tested Yudhishthira, he saw that the prince possessed the qualities of an exalted personality. He was completely free from envy and was the well wisher of all. He saw only the good qualities in others. Yudhishthira considered all others worthy of respect and himself worthy of no respect. This is the most emphasized teaching of Lord Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, *trnad api sunicena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaniyah sada harih*, "One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street. One should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name constantly. (Shikshastaka 3)

In the material world the predominant mentality is to think oneself better than others. However, if one is desiring to become a citizen of the spiritual world, he has to develop the vision to see all others as more worthy of respect than himself. This mentality is pleasing to Lord Krishna. Maharaja Yudhishthira possessed this divine vision and therefore had great love for the citizens. Because of Yudhishthira's humility, Drona considered him to be a fit ruler. On the other hand, Duryodhana possessed the materialistic mentality of thinking oneself better than all others. It is unfortunate that in the Kali-yuga, the Duryodhana mentality has become prominent.

Historians consider the bow and arrow a primitive weapon. However, when seen in the light of the Mahabharata, it more effective than the gross weapons of modern times. It is possible to release an arrow faster than a bullet if the archer is very powerful. The kshatriyas during Drona's time had the strength to release arrows with tremendous velocity. By the power of mantra, Arjuna was able to release hundreds of arrows from his bow at a time, and they were so accurate that each arrow would pierce a warrior or stop an oncoming weapon.

In this chapter we have read how Drona imparted the brahmastra weapon to Arjuna. This mantra weapon was more powerful than the combined atomic weapons of the world. It could be directed to a single person or it could destroy the whole universe. There were many weapons invoked by the power of Vedic mantras; they were called astras. These astras manipulated the material energy in a subtle way and were much more powerful than the atomic weapons of our times. There were astras such as the *vayavya astra*, which created a hurricane on the battlefield; the *varuna astra*, which created tidal waves; and the *agneya astra*, which created intense fire capable of burning large numbers of warriors. There were weapons capable of putting men to sleep and weapons that could bind the enemy soldiers and stop their movement. There were weapons that could release thousands of arrows at a time and not one arrow would miss a target. There were these and many more. This was all possible by the use of Vedic mantras. These mantras were able to manipulate the material energy by the use of sound vibration as opposed to the gross manipulation used today. Any of the great maharathis in the days of yore would be a suitable match for crude tanks, howitzers, submarines, battleships and atomic weapons.

As Kali yuga progressed, the warrior kings gradually diminished in strength to the point where they were unable to draw the strings of powerful bows. The knowledge of different astras became lost, and a warrior was reduced to releasing one arrow at a time and with not much accuracy or force. Finally, a few centuries back, the cross bow was invented, which allowed an archer to mechanically draw back the string. However, this was not very useful because a Bowman could not release many arrows quickly. The bow and the arrow became obsolete with the invention of gunpowder. To compensate the loss of strength, the rifle was invented, which, by the use of gun powder, released a bullet with great velocity.

## Chapter Nine

### The Curse of Parashurama

As stated in chapter six of the Adi Parva, Kunti, before her marriage to Pandu, had conceived a child by the Surya, the sun god. Due to fear of her relatives, she placed the child in a basket and set it afloat on the river Ganges. The child was picked up by Adhiratha, a well known carpenter and chariot driver, and his wife Radha. They were attracted by the beautiful features of the child, especially his kavacha [natural golden armor] and kundala [golden earrings]. He was given the name Karna. They raised the child very carefully for sixteen years.

On Karna's sixteenth birthday, his father offered him a new chariot and horses. Not feeling a desire to drive the chariot, he addressed his mother, "Today, father has brought me a chariot and horses, but I do not feel the desire to drive a chariot; I feel the desire to hold a bow and arrow. I cannot think of anything else. Waking or sleeping, my thoughts are ever fixed on this desire. I want to be an archer and fight.

Radha then explained to her foster son Karna all that had happened; how she had found him at the bank of the Ganges wrapped in precious silk and floating in a basket. Hearing about his mysterious past, he was struck with wonder. After consulting with his mother and father, he took permission from them and left for the city of Hastinapura, desiring to find a martial guru.

Karna's goal was to learn archery. He approached the great Drona who was teaching the Pandavas in Hastinapura. After receiving an audience with him, he pleaded, "My lord, please accept me as your pupil. I want to learn the science of archery. I am the son of Adhiratha, a carpenter and chariot driver by caste. Drona did not like the idea of teaching archery to the son of a suta (chariot driver) and sent him away.

Karna was determined to learn archery. He decided to approach Parashurama, the chastiser of the kshatriyas. Previously Parashurama had annihilated the warrior race twenty-one times because of the death of his father. Knowing that the great sage hated warriors and kings, Karna decided to tell him that he was a brahmana, a priest. Actually Karna's foster father was born of a mixed caste, a brahmana and a

kshatriya; therefore he decided to request tutorship from the rishi despite the fact that he might be cursed or even killed.

With this plan in mind, Karna approached Parashurama's hermitage. When Karna first saw Parashurama, he was seated in meditation. Upon his head were matted locks of hair, and his eyes were burning like fire. Falling at the feet of this awesome personality, Karna requested, "I have come to you with a deep longing. Please do not send me away without granting me your mercy. Karna was weeping and his body was trembling. Parashurama picked up Karna, and asked him, "Are you a kshatriya? Karna replied, "No, my lord, I am a brahmana. Parashurama smiled at him and said, "I will certainly impart to you the military science. I am pleased with your humility, and because you are a brahmana, I have a natural affection for you.

Karna's education began, and he spent many months in the ashrama of the renowned sage. He forgot the pain in his heart of being a carpenter's son. He even forgot the mystery attached to his birth. Karna was only interested in education--how to become a powerful warrior. He learned all the astras; even the brahmastra and the very powerful hhargavastra. He pleased his martial teacher in all respects. When his education was complete, Parashurama advised him, "Your presence in my ashrama has brightened my life. I have taught you the complete science of military arts. You are very honest, fond of those who are elder to you, and you are eager to walk the path of righteousness. You must never use the knowledge I have given you for an unrighteous cause.

It was now noontime, and the sun was at it's meridian. Feeling tired, Parashurama told Karna to bring him a roll of deerskin to use as a pillow. "My lord, Karna replied, "please use my lap as a pillow. I can at least do this service for the foremost of men. Parashurama then laid his head in his disciple's lap and fell fast asleep. Karna was meditating on all that had taken place over the past year. He had lied to the great sage telling him that he was a brahmana. Would the reaction to this ever come upon him? His only desire was to acquire knowledge. The wise declare that the end justifies the means. He had not tried to commit any sin. Surely his small offense would be forgiven.

As Karna was thinking in this way, he felt a pain in his right thigh. The pain became unbearable. He looked down and saw a boar-like insect cutting into his skin. Karna could not stop it from penetrating his flesh. But what could he do? He did not deem it proper to awaken his guru. The insect bored right through his thigh and blood touched the face of Parashurama. The great brahmana awoke, and seeing the blood exclaimed, "Where did the blood come from?

"My lord, It came from my thigh, Karna answered. "While you were sleeping, an insect bit me on the leg. It caused me pain for some time but I did not want to awaken you. Parashurama flared up with anger, "You say this insect stung you, and you tolerated it? Why did you not awaken me and stop the pain?

"My lord, replied Karna, "you were asleep, and I did not want to disturb you. For this reason I have tolerated this pain. Parashurama was furious, "How could a

brahmana bear so much pain? Only a kshatriya could have done so. Have I, after all this time, taught my astras to a sinful warrior? I will never forgive you for this deception.

Karna fell at the feet of his teacher and tears flowed from his eyes thinking that all he had learned would be futile. He held onto the feet of his guru and pleaded, "Forgive me, my lord. You have been more of a father to me than my own father. A father should forgive the faults of his son. I am not a brahmana, but neither am I a kshatriya. I am the son of a carpenter named Adhiratha. I only wanted to learn the science of archery. I told a lie to you, but it was only to become your student. I have been devoted to you, and you are more dear to me than anything else in this world. Please show mercy and forgive me.

Parashurama was furious, and he was not moved by Karna's prayers. The only thought in his mind was that this person had told a lie and a kshatriya is supposed to be truthful. He then remembered the kshatriyas who had killed his father and, becoming angry, he cursed Karna, "You have learned the science of archery under false pretenses. I curse you that when you are in desperate need of an astra, your memory will fail you. You wanted fame, however, and I say that here after you will be known as one of the greatest archers of all time. Parashurama then left and went back to his ashrama leaving Karna in tears.

Wiping the tears from his eyes, Karna began walking aimlessly. He walked for days thinking of the curse of the great rishi. Suddenly, what he thought was a lion flashed by him, and out of instinct, he took an arrow from his quiver and shot the animal. However, it was not a lion but a cow. Karna was horrified. He went to the brahmana who owned it and told him that he had shot the cow in ignorance. Karna tried to appease him, but the brahmana was not to be pacified. He cursed Karna saying, "When you are fighting with your worst enemy, the wheel of your chariot will sink into the mud, and just as you killed my poor innocent cow when she was unaware of danger, you will also be killed by your opponent when you are least prepared for it. Karna was stunned that all these things were suddenly happening to him.

Karna then understood that this was his karma. Otherwise how could these events take place without his control. He took it that he was the chosen target of providence and thought how cruel she was. He remembered his mysterious birth and the stigma of his being a sutaputra (son of a chariot driver). He might have overcome it by being the student of the great Parashurama, but his teacher had cursed him and gone away. Now he had been cursed by another brahmana. This was all his fate. He accepted it as such and went back home to his mother. His mother was proud when she heard that he had learned from the great Parashurama, but he did not tell her of Parashurama's curse, or of the curse of the brahmana. After some time he heard about a tournament of weapons at Hastinapura and decided to go there to enter the competition.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to the Ninth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Curse of Parashurama.

### Chapter Commentary

Materialistic people are very worried about their status in society. If one takes a high birth, he or she is considered fortunate by common people. In this world there is always competition to get to the top. Those on top want to push down those who are rising. Those, who are at the bottom, strive to climb to the top. Therefore, there is always friction. Fortunately, God does not care for our pedigree. He is attracted only to loving devotion. The rich man or poor man, the black or white, the man or woman, the young or the old, all have an equal opportunity to approach the Lord. Lord Krishna states in the Bhagavad-gita, "One can understand the Supreme Person as He is, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Lord by such devotion, he can enter the kingdom of God. (Bg. 18.55) Queen Kunti considered it an impediment to have a high birth. In her prayers to Lord Krishna she states, "My Lord, Your Lordship can be easily approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of material progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling. (Bhag. 1.8.26) As long as one is trying to advance materially, one will experience frustration. There is only one person at the top and that is Lord Krishna. We should just desire to remain the servant of His humble servant.

When Karna was cursed by his guru, karma took its effect. Nothing happens by accident. Everyone in this material world is under the law of Karma--action and reaction. It is impossible to tell where it begins or where it ends. For every action we perform, there is an opposite and equal reaction. If a person performs a sinful act, he gets a sinful reaction. If he performs a pious act, he gets a pious reaction. Sinful or pious actions cause us to take birth again in this world. Karna was suffering the reactions to past sinful activities, and they took the shape of curses from great personalities. The only way to stop the waves of repeated birth and death is to become Krishna conscious. Fortunately for Karna, he died on the battlefield with his vision fixed on Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Thus, ultimately, he was elevated and purified of all the offences he had committed against the Pandavas. As confirmed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita (8.5), "And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.

Another point to be learned from this chapter is that a person should be judged by his quality and not by his birth. Karna's birth was celestial, his father being Surya and his mother being Kunti. Although he was raised by lower caste parents, his quality was that of a kshatriya or warrior. He should have been accepted by his quality and not by the caste which he was raised in. Narada Muni states in the Shrimad Bhagavatam, "If one shows the symptoms of being a brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya or sudra, as described above, even if he has appeared in a different class, he should be accepted according to those symptoms of classification (Bhag. 7.11.35). Drona should not have rejected Karna on the basis of his foster parents. He should

have judged him by quality. It is a fact that in the glorious days of Vedic culture a person born of a particular caste had the qualities of that caste, but there are always exceptions to the rule, and Karna was an exception.

## Chapter Ten

### The Tournament of Arms

When Dronacharya saw that his students had been sufficiently educated, he assembled the Kuru elders and informed them, "O best of the Kuru kings, your children have now completed their education. I suggest there be a tournament of arms where the youths may display their prowess.

"O invincible brahmana, King Dhritarastra replied, "you have indeed accomplished something wonderful. I envy those who have eyes and can see the achievements of my children. Vidura will make the necessary arrangements so that all will be able to witness the prowess of these mighty youths. Understanding the intentions of the King, Vidura left the palace and began making preparations for the tournament of arms.

When the day for the tournament came, all the Kings and elders of the Kuru dynasty assembled in the arena in their respective seats. The ladies headed by Kunti and Gandhari also entered the arena and took their seats on the platforms assigned to each of them. The inhabitants of Hastinapura were so anxious to witness the exhibition that there was an instant crowd at the arena. The whole sky was filled with the sounds of conchshells, drums, kettledrums and trumpets.

Dronacharya entered the arena and announced the students one by one. He then called them forward in their chariots and ordered them to display their prowess with different weapons. With Yudhisthira at their head, the boys came forward and released their arrows at selected targets. Fearing that some of the arrows might miss their target, some of the spectators lowered their heads. However, others fearlessly gazed on in wonder. After exhibiting their skill with the bow and arrow, they showed their ability with other weapons such as the sword and shield, the javelin and celestial darts.

Then Bhima and Duryodhana, both eager for combat, entered the arena with mace in hand. They began to exhibit their energy, roaring like two lions. As they were fighting, Vidura was describing to Dhritarastra and Gandhari all the feats of the two princes. When the fighting became too intense, Dronacharya ordered his son, Ashvatthama, to stop the fight. The spectators in the crowd were taking sides, and the whole atmosphere of the competition became tense.

To ease the mood of the competition, Drona called for Arjuna and announced to the crowd, "Now all behold Partha, who is dearer to me than my own son. He is the master of all arms, the son of Indra himself. Arjuna then entered the arena of competition carrying his bow and a quiver of arrows. He was dressed in golden mail and appeared like a streak of lightning in the bright sun. There arose a great uproar of appreciation from the assembly exclaiming, "This is the graceful son of Kunti! The son of the mighty Indra! This is the protector of the Kurus! Unequaled of those versed in arms! The annihilator of all unwanted elements! Upon hearing those exclamations, tears flowed from Kunti's eyes and milk filled her breasts.

Arjuna then began to exhibit his celestial weapons. By the agneya weapon, he created fire, and by the varuna weapon he created water. By the vayavya weapon, he created a hurricane, and by the parjanya weapon he created clouds. With the bhauma weapon, he created land, and with the parvatya weapon he brought mountains into being. By the antardhana weapon all these were made to disappear. Within a short time, he exhibited all the astras given by Drona, and the crowd was struck with wonder.

When Arjuna had finished, and the excitement of the crowd had died down, a personality dazzling like the sun appeared at the gate of the arena. Struck with wonder, Duryodhana stood up along with his one hundred brothers. Not knowing who the celestial person was, Drona, as well as the five Pandavas, stood to receive him. He was actually Karna, Kunti's first born son. He was the son of Surya, the sun god and was endowed with his power. Natural golden mail and exquisite golden earrings were a part of his body from birth. The spectators talked among themselves about the unknown person whose effulgence was spreading in all directions. Karna offered his obeisances to the preceptors Kripa and Drona, and then challenged Partha (Arjuna), "I shall perform feats before this crowd that will excel yours. You will be amazed to behold them.

On hearing these challenging words, Duryodhana was delighted, and his affection for this unknown warrior increased when he saw the rivalry with Arjuna. Karna introduced himself to all present and then with the permission of Drona, he accomplished all that Arjuna had accomplished. Witnessing the superexcellence of this great warrior, Duryodhana and his followers embraced Karna saying, "Welcome, O mighty-armed warrior! I have obtained you as my friend by good fortune. Live as you please in the kingdom of the Kurus.

Arjuna welcomed the competition and addressed Karna with challenging words, "Exhibit the weapons you have learned from your preceptor. I shall counter all of them, and prove my superiority with the bow and arrow. Stand and prepare to fight!

"O Phalguna [Arjuna], this arena is meant for all, Karna replied, "not only for you. Why do you fight with words only, O Bharata. You may release your arrows until I strike off your head before the great Drona himself!

Encouraged by his brothers, Partha, with the permission of Drona, advanced for combat. On the other side, Karna, having been embraced by Duryodhana, took up

his bow and arrows and stood ready for the fight. Indra shaded his son Arjuna with many clouds, and the sun god dispersed the clouds above his son Karna. Understanding that a fatal competition was about to take place, Kunti fainted to the ground. She was brought back to consciousness by Vidura. When she saw her two sons dressed in armor, she was seized with fear.

Kripa, the son of Saradwat, who was conversant with the rules of fighting, questioned Karna, "This Pandava, the youngest son of Kunti, belongs to the Kaurava race. But, O mighty-armed one, you must also announce the royal dynasty to which you belong. Upon hearing this, Partha will fight with you as he sees fit. Sons of kings never fight with men of lower castes.

When thus addressed by Kripa, Karna's vanity disappeared like a lotus flower during the rainy season. Rising up from his seat, Duryodhana hastily said, "O Kripa, the scriptures say that there are three classes of persons who lay claim to royalty: persons of royal blood, heroes, and lastly, those who lead armies. If Phalgunas is unwilling to fight with one who is not a king, I will establish Karna as the king of the Angas.

At that time Duryodhana called for a golden throne, and seating Karna on it, anointed him King of the Angas. This was done under the direction of some brahmanas well versed in Vedic mantras. He was fanned with yak tails, and the royal umbrella was held over his head. The crowd loudly applauded and signaled their approval. Feeling grateful to Duryodhana, Karna said, "O tiger among men, what shall I give you that can compare to this gift. I will follow your instructions and become your faithful friend. And Duryodhana said to Karna, "I am eager for your friendship. Thus the two embraced. This was the beginning of a strong bond of friendship that would annihilate the Kuru dynasty.

At that time Adhiratha, the foster father of Karna, entered the arena. He embraced Karna and tears of joy wetted his son's head. Bhimasena thought Karna to be the son of a charioteer, and thus addressed him, "O suta, do you desire death at the hands of Partha? You are not worthy to rule over the kingdom of Anga anymore than a dog deserves butter from the sacrificial fire.

Hearing these words, Duryodhana rose up in anger, and addressed Bhimasena, "These are not truthful statements. Heroism and courage in battle are the symptoms of a kshatriya, and even a kshatriya of inferior birth should be fought with. Can a she-deer bring forth a tiger like Karna? Can this warrior, who resembles a demigod, born with natural golden mail and earrings, be the son of a chariot driver? This prince among men deserves the sovereignty of the world. If there is anyone who cannot tolerate what I have done for Karna, let him ascend the chariot and string his bow.

There were mixed feelings in the crowd upon hearing Duryodhana's statements. The sun, however, set on the horizon signaling the end of the day's activities. Some thought Arjuna to be the victor of the day, and others thought Karna to be the champion. And Kunti, recognizing her lost son by various auspicious marks, was

pleased to see him alive and faring well. Upon seeing the gifted genius of Karna, Yudhisthira was convinced that there was no warrior on earth who could equal his bowmanship.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to Chapter Ten of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Regatta of Arms.

### Chapter Commentary

When Duryodhana was chastising Bhima for considering Karna's birth, it seems that for once in his life Duryodhana spoke some truth. A person was placed in the divine varnashrama (caste) system by quality and not by birth. In the fourth chapter of Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna says that he created the divine varnashrama system according to quality of work. Generally, in those days a person of priestly quality, warrior quality, business quality or worker quality took birth in their respective classes. However, as the age of Kali (quarrel) progressed, men born in priestly families exhibited lower class qualities but were not put into those classes due to their pride. Also saintly persons were born in lower families, but not allowed to elevate themselves socially due to the pride of the priestly class. When this happened the whole system collapsed. One should be classified by quality and not by birth. Here Duryodhana states that Karna had the quality of a warrior, and therefore he should be held in esteem as a warrior. Although what Duryodhana said was truth, he was motivated by his own ambitions. If it had suited his purpose for Karna to be called a chariot driver, he would not have hesitated to award him that classification.

In all societies and countires these classifications exist. Some men are naturally inclined toward priestly activities; some are inclined to be warriors and fight; some men are attracted to business, farming or banking; and some men are interested in labor activities. In the Vedic culture some 5,000 years ago civilization was set up along these lines of brahmana (priest), kshatriya (warrior), vaishya (merchantile) and shudra (labor). There was also four divisions of ashrama or spiritual life. The first division was brahmacharya where a student was trained in spiritual and material knowledge. The brahmana, kshatriya and vaishya were trained in spiritual knowledge and received the brahmical initiation or sacred thread as an indication of second birth or reformation of character. This teaching was given to instill in a person that the goal of life was not to be happy in this earthly realm, but to prepare oneself for entering the kingdom of God. The laboring class was not given this training due to their inability to control the senses. The student training lasted for different amounts of time according to a person's classification. The vaishya spent till his twelfth year in his guru's ashrama. The kshatriya could spend more years, say to this fifteenth year, and the brahmana could staty with his guru till his 24th year, and if he remained a brahmacharya, he could spend the rest of his life in the ashrama.

The next division was the grihasta ashrama where the student took permission from his teacher and married according to his classification. The marriage institution was called an ashrama because it was meant for spiritual cultivation and not just to enjoy the senses. Marriage was mandatory for all classes except the brahmanas who could accept the order of sannyasa without going through the different stages. The third stage was vanaprastha or retired life. In this stage the children are grown and married. The man and woman visit different places of pilgrimage for spiritual upliftment and detachment. The brahmana, kshatriya and vaishya can accept this order. The last stage is the sannyasa ashrama where the husband leaves the wife with the eldest son and dedicates his life to preaching the glories of the Lord. This ashrama was meant for the brahmana class only. This may sound cruel by western standards, to leave the wife behind, but the reward is very great. If the husband attains perfection by gaining birth in the kingdom of God, the wife automatically attains that position. This is the greatest gift a husband can give his wife. This ashrama was held in high esteem by the people in general, because the sannyasis or itinerant preachers were decorated with spiritual qualities such as compassion, austerity, forgiveness, learning and sense control.

## Chapter Eleven

### Tuition for Drona

Drona saw that all his students were now adept in the use of weapons, and therefore their training period was over. It was time to ask for daksheen (tuition) from them. One day he assembled them and gave the following order, "Challenge Drupada, the King of the Panchalas, to battle. Capture him and bring him to me. This will be suitable payment for my teaching.

All the students readily agreed and mounted their chariots eager to fulfill the desires of their martial teacher. Drona followed them. As the Kurus approached Drupada's capital, they informed the King of their desire for battle. The Kuru army was led by Duryodhana, Karna, Yuyutsu, Duhshasana and Vikarna. King Drupada, not tolerating the attack on his kingdom, mounted his chariot and along with his brothers met the Kuru army head on. Duryodhana and his followers then competed with one another to see who could capture King Drupada first.

Before the battle started, Arjuna saw the vanity of Duryodhana and his brothers. He therefore informed Drona, "O best of the brahmanas, we shall refrain from fighting until Duryodhana has displayed his prowess. The King of the Panchalas can never be captured on the battlefield by any of these warriors. Having made his plan, Arjuna, surrounded by his brothers, waited outside the town about a mile away.

Meanwhile, King Drupada, beholding the Kuru army, rushed forward releasing hundreds of arrows from his powerful bow. The Kuru ranks were so afflicted that they thought that there were many Drupadas opposed to them. There arose from the Panchala army a war cry that shook the firmament. Duryodhana and his brothers

became furious and began to shower their arrows upon the enemy. But the mighty bowman Drupada was not affected and began killing the enemy with greater vigor. He challenged Duryodhana, Vikarna and Karna, and sent them running from the battlefield. The arrows from the Panchala army began to rain upon the Kurus, breaking their ranks and causing them to flee for their very lives.

The Pandavas, seeing the fun, offered their obeisances to Drona and mounted their chariots. Arjuna asked Yudhisthira to stay in the background and appointed the sons of Madri as the protectors of his chariot wheels. Bhimasena, mace in hand, rushed into the center of the army. He headed for the elephant battalion and began to destroy those huge beasts with a single blow from his powerful club. The elephants screamed and fell to the ground, their heads cracked in many places. With his invincible club, Bhima began to destroy chariots, horses, infantrymen and elephants. As a cowherd man controls countless cows with his staff, so Bhimasena controlled the army of Drupada with his fierce club.

Meanwhile, Phalguna (Arjuna), wanting to please his martial teacher, inundated King Drupada with a deluge of arrows and caused him to fall from the back of his elephant. With his arrows, Arjuna then killed soldiers, elephants, and horses by the thousands. The Panchala army challenged Arjuna head on with a downpour of arrows, and sending up courageous shouts, fought desperately with him. The battle became furious and frightening to behold. The son of Indra was filled with fury and released thousands of arrows intending to annihilate the Panchala army. Those who were watching Arjuna could not see any interval between his fixing the arrows on the bow string and releasing them. The King of the Panchalas, accompanied by his commander in chief, Satyajit, assaulted Arjuna with the speed of the wind. Arjuna covered King Drupada with hundreds of arrows. Partha then rushed at King Drupada to apprehend him. Seeing Arjuna coming forward, Satyajit tried to stop him. As the two warriors approached for combat, they began to destroy each other's army. Suddenly Arjuna pierced Satyajit in the chest with ten arrows. Unaffected by the force of those arrows, Satyajit released one hundred shafts at the son of Pandu. Arjuna, not wanting to waste anymore time, released an arrow that cut the bow of Satyajit in two. Taking up another bow, the commander-in-chief of the Panchalas attacked Arjuna again. This time Arjuna cut the bow, killed the horses and charioteer, and shattered the chariot. When Satyajit found his bow useless and his horses slain, he desisted from fighting.

Seeing his general defeated, the Panchala king began to rain arrows upon the Pandava prince. Arjuna immediately cut King Drupada's bow and pierced his chariot driver with five arrows. Setting aside his bow, Arjuna took out a scimitar and, sending forth a loud battle cry, jumped from his chariot to the chariot of Drupada. He seized King Drupada as Garuda would seize a snake, and at the sight of this, the Panchala army fled the field of battle.

Thus Dhananjaya [Arjuna], having exhibited the strength of his arms, sent up a loud roar and made his way from the battlefield to the presence of Drona. He asked Bhima to desist from any further slaughter, as the Panchalas were related to the Kurus. Bhimasena was unsatiated in battle, but agreed to Arjuna's proposal. They

then took the King of the Panchalas to Drona. Drona, seeing King Drupada brought under his complete control, remembered how Drupada had formerly humiliated him in his court.

"I have now taken possession of your capital and your kingdom, Drona said. "You need not fear for your life. I once again desire your friendship. O mighty warrior, previously you told me that only one who was a king could be a king's friend. I therefore will give you half of the kingdom south of the Bhagirathi, and I shall rule over the land north of that river. And if it pleases you, I ask again for your friendship.

On hearing these words, Drupada answered, "You appear to be an invincible brahmana, and your prowess is superior to a kshatriya. Therefore, O brahmana, I am not surprised at what you have accomplished. I am very satisfied with you and desire your eternal friendship. Drona then released Drupada, and from that day on the King of the Panchalas resided in the city of Kampilya in the province of Makandi on the banks of the Ganges.

King Drupada was convinced that by kshatriya strength alone he could not defeat Drona. He began to wander the earth searching for a sage who could help him obtain a son to kill Drona. He also desired a daughter who would be a suitable wife for Arjuna. King Drupada was so impressed with Arjuna that he thought there was no warrior comparable to him. Therefore, by means of marriage, he wanted to unite the two families.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Eleventh Chapter of the Adi Parva Entitled, Tuition For Drona.

### Chapter Commentary

Formerly the kings of this earth were endowed with an heroic nature. They would face the enemy and not retreat. They were convinced that by dying in battle they would attain a higher state after death. They did not sit behind the lines and command ordinary soldiers to do their work for them. We have seen in the course of history that generals began to stay behind the lines and order their soldiers to fight. These days the leader of a country doesn't even appear anywhere near the battlefield. He sits behind his comfortable desk in his capital and orders others to do the job. This is why no one has respect for modern leaders.

By the push of a button millions of people can be wiped out by atomic weapons, not just fighting soldiers, but innocent women, children and old men. In the glorious days of Vedic culture such barbarianism was unheard of. As we see in this pastime Arjuna and Bhima were the first ones into battle and they would not retreat. For a great warrior to leave the battlefield would cast him to shame. He would be unable to face the citizens or his relatives. This spirit of heroism and chivalry has been lost as human society regresses in quality in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy. We are

not advancing in good qualities but descending into the mentality of barbarians despite so much progress in the field of technology.

## Chapter Twelve

### The House of Lac at Varanavata

A year after this incident, Dhritarastra decided to appoint Yudhisthira, the first son of Pandu, as the heir-apparent to the kingship of the world. His firmness, fortitude, patience, benevolence, straightforwardness and unswerving honesty won the hearts of the people of the earth. Within a short time, he had overshadowed the accomplishments of his father, the great Pandu.

The second son of Pandu, Bhimasena, began to receive instructions from Balarama, the brother of the Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. He received continued lessons in the use of the mace and sword. After Bhima's education was finished, his strength and prowess with the mace were unsurpassed except for the all-powerful Lord Balarama.

Arjuna, the third son of Pandu, was esteemed for his mastery of the bow and arrow. Drona certified that there was none in the world who was Arjuna's equal in the use of weapons. Sahadeva obtained the whole science of morality and duties from Brihaspati, the heavenly priest of the demigods, and Nakula, the favorite of his brothers, became known as a skillful warrior and a great chariot fighter.

Indeed, Arjuna and his brothers became so powerful that they killed in battle the great Sauvira, who was powerful due to his sacrifices to the heavenly gods. The King of the Yavanas, whom Pandu had failed to subjugate, was conquered by the mighty bow of Arjuna. While riding on a single chariot, Arjuna and Bhima conquered the kings of the East backed by ten thousand chariots. The five Pandavas conquered all the kings of the earth and extended their influence to all parts of Bharatvarsha. Seeing the great prowess of the sons of Pandu, Dhritarastra's sentiments towards them suddenly changed. The blind King, who was also blind spiritually, was overcome with envy and began a plot to kill the Pandavas.

Dhritarastra called to his side one of his chief ministers who was expert in the art of politics and inquired, "O best of the brahmanas, Kanika, the Pandavas are daily growing in power and influence. I am envious of them. Tell me whether I should make peace with them or endeavor to destroy them. I will act on your advice.

Kanika, who was crooked by nature, then ill advised the blind king who was intent on sovereignty for his own sons, "Listen to my words, O sinless King and do not be angry with me. If your son, friend, brother, father, or even the spiritual preceptor--anyone who becomes your enemy--should be killed by all means. By curses or mystic power, by gift of wealth, by poison or fire, or by deception, the enemy should be slain. To maintain the interests of the Kurus and your own self, you should not let

the enemy know what you are thinking. Comfort your foe with sweet words, give him a gift of wealth, and then kill him when he is not looking. You should burn the house of the person you wish to kill. You should act with the greatest cruelty, and sharpen your teeth to inflict the greatest pain. You should strike him in such a way that he will never raise his head again. O King, protect yourself from your brother's sons for they are stronger than your own sons. The so-called brahmana, Kanika, then returned to his own chambers, and the King contemplated the ill advice of the crooked brahmana.

The citizens of Hastinapura became affectionate to the sons of Pandu because of their good qualities and desired Yudhisthira as their King. In the market places, in the homes, in the countrysides, the glories of the Pandavas were spoken. The sinful Duryodhana, hearing the citizen's discussions, became distressed. Inflamed with envy, he went to King Dhritarastra and said, "O father, I have heard the words of the citizens favoring the Pandavas. They desire Yudhisthira to rule the kingdom. What then will be our fate? If Yudhisthira does indeed become King, we and our children shall be excluded from the royal line. We should act quickly to acquire the kingdom and win the hearts of the citizens.

Overcome by affection for his sinful son, King Dhritarastra made a plot to kill the Pandavas by fire in the town of Varanavata. One day, in the court at Hastinapura, some of the King's counsellors began to speak of the glories of Varanavata. These counsellors, instructed by Dhritarastra, spoke of the beauty of the town and its pious citizens. Hearing these descriptions, the Pandavas became attracted to go there. King Dhritarastra noticed that the curiosity of the Pandavas had been awakened, and he then advised them, "My counsellors have spoken of Varanavata and the activities that go on there. If you desire to witness the festivities in this beautiful town, then take your followers and friends and enjoy the atmosphere. Give away charity to the brahmanas and the citizens, and after living comfortably for some time, return to the city of Hastinapura.

Yudhisthira fully understood the motives of his blind uncle, but because he was in a helpless condition, he had to agree with the proposal. He took permission from the leaders of the Kuru dynasty and prepared to leave for Varanavata. Previously, Duryodhana had summoned his counsellor Purochana and ordered him, "O Purochana, this world is destined to be mine, and you can share in it equally. It is in our best interests to protect it. I have no more trustworthy counsellor than you to consult with. Therefore, help me to kill my enemy by doing as I ask. My father will request the Pandavas to go to Varanavata to enjoy the festivities there. I want you to construct a palace made of flammable materials. It should be constructed in such a way as to deceive the Pandavas. Soak the walls with ghee, resin, oil and a large quantity of shellac. Do it in such a way that they will not think it flammable. Make sure the palace is of the finest workmanship, and with the greatest humility, request the Pandavas to live there. On a certain day chosen by me, you will burn the palace of lac while the Pandavas and their mother are sleeping. Agreeing to all of Duryodhana's proposals, the sinful Purochana went to Varanavata and did all that he was told.

As the Pandavas and their mother were leaving Hastinapura, Vidura approached Yudhisthira and instructed him in a Mleccha (lower class) language which no one else could understand. Vidura lovingly said to him, "One who knows the schemes of his enemy should act in such a way as to avoid all danger. He who knows that there are sharp weapons capable of cutting the body which are not made of steel, and understands the means of avoiding them, can never be harmed. One who knows that the consumer of straw and wood and the drier of dew never burns the inmates of a hole in the forest, lives to see another day. Remembering this, be on guard. One who is given a weapon by his foes that is not made of steel, can escape from his enemies by making his abode like unto the jackal [one who lives underground]. By wandering, a man can acquire certain knowledge, and by the stars he can ascertain direction, and he who keeps his senses under control can never be oppressed by his enemies.

When offered good counsel, Yudhisthira replied, "I have understood you. Vidura then bade them farewell and returned to his own house. When Vidura had left, Kunti approached Yudhisthira and questioned him, "What did the pious Vidura say to you? He spoke in such a way that no one could understand him. If it is not improper for me to know, then I should like to hear everything that he has spoken. Yudhisthira replied, "The pious Vidura has told me that the palace in which we are to live is built of flammable materials. He further said, The path of escape will be known to us, and that he who has controlled his senses can acquire sovereignty of the world.' The reply that I gave to him was, I have understood you.'

The Pandavas had set out on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Phalguna when the star Rohini was in ascendance. Upon arriving in the city of Varanavata, the townspeople came to greet them. The assembly consisted of many thousands of people who were anxious to see the pious Pandavas. The sons of Pandu were presented many auspicious articles and taken on a tour of the town. The scheming Purochana then took them to the palace made of lac. The foremost of all virtuous men, Yudhisthira, upon inspecting the palace, said to Bhima, "O chastiser of the enemy, this house is truly made of burnable materials. Our adversaries, by the aid of trusted artisans, have built this house with hemp, resin, straw and bamboos, all soaked in ghee. The wicked Purochana is also staying in this palace to burn us to death when we least expect it. Our well wishing uncle Vidura has warned me that Duryodhana has had this house constructed for our death.

"If this is the fact, Bhima replied, "then we should live in another house in Varanavata.

"It seems to me that we should continue living here, Yudhisthira said, "seemingly unsuspecting. However, we should always be on guard and know all means of escape. If Purochana has found out that we have understood his plans, he may try to burn the house immediately. If we leave here, Duryodhana may try to have us killed by spies. While we have no rank and power, Duryodhana has both. We also have no friends and allies, and Duryodhana has both. While we have no wealth, Duryodhana has a full treasury. Duryodhana should think that we have died by fire.

Deceiving him in this way, we shall escape from here when the occasion presents itself.

After some time, a friend of Vidura's, well skilled in excavation, arrived at the palace of the Pandavas. In private he talked to Yudhisthira, "I have been sent by Vidura for excavating a tunnel under this house. Purochana will set fire to this palace on the fourteenth day of the dark moon. This is all the plan of the wicked Duryodhana. Previously, Vidura instructed you in the mleccha language, and you replied in the same language. I am saying this so you will know that I am actually acting on Vidura's behalf.

"I know you as a trusted friend of our uncle Vidura, Yudhisthira replied. "This large mansion has been built of flammable materials, and there are few doors. I want you to build a large tunnel beginning from the center of the house and ending by the river Ganges. We will spend our days hunting in the forest so that the sinful Purochana will not detect that you are working. Make sure the floor is covered well, so no one will suspect that there is a tunnel.

On hearing these instructions, the miner agreed, and the next day he began his work. Every day the Pandavas would go to the forest accompanied by Purochana, and they seemed very happy to be under Purochana's care. Thus they lived in that palace for one full year.

Seeing the Pandavas living in the palace cheerfully and without any suspicion, Purochana felt content that his plan would be successful. Beholding Purochana in a happy mood, Yudhisthira, the pious son of Kunti, spoke to his brothers, "The cruel-hearted Purochana has been well deceived. I think the time has come for our escape. Let us set fire to the mansion and burn Purochana to death. Then we shall leave here unobserved by anyone.

Yudhisthira planned a festival in the palace of lac and invited many of the leading citizens of Varanavata. At the end of the night all had left, and Purochana had become so drunk with wine that he lay on the floor unconscious. It so happened on that occasion that a nishada (lower class) woman and her five sons had come to the festival in hopes of receiving charity. They also became drunk and laid on the floor unable to move. They fell fast asleep in a part of the palace that few people frequented. When everyone had left the house, it was late at night and suddenly a violent wind began to blow outside. Yudhisthira ordered Bhima to set fire to the house. Bhima first of all set fire to the place where Purochana was sleeping and then to other parts of the house. Soon the whole mansion was ablaze, and the Pandavas and their mother escaped through the tunnel excavated by the miner. They came out near the bank of the Yamuna, and in the distance, as they looked back, they could see the palace of lac high in flames.

The heat of the fire became intense and awakened the townspeople. Seeing the house ablaze, the citizens with sorrowful faces began to exclaim, "The wicked Purochana, guided by Duryodhana, has built this death house. O, to hell with

Dhritarastra who has such a wicked heart. He has burnt to death the sinless sons of Pandu.

The citizens thus lamented the loss of the Pandavas, and waited the whole night until the flames died down. They extinguished the fire and searched through the ashes. They then found the burnt body of Purochana and the bodies of the nishada woman and her five sons. The people began to weep saying, "Indeed, this is the plan of the evil Duryodhana. By his wickedness, he has brought about the death of the Pandavas. There is little doubt that Duryodhana has, with Dhritarastra's permission, burnt to death the heirs of Pandu. Let us send a message to King Dhritarastra saying, Your desire has been achieved! You have burnt to death the sinless Pandavas!"

Upon receiving news of the supposed death of the Pandavas, Dhritarastra and Duryodhana were jolly at heart, but outwardly expressed great regret. They arranged for the last funeral rites of the Pandavas, and Lord Krishna Himself attended the ceremony. Neither Vidura nor Lord Krishna were in lamentation because they knew that the Pandavas and their mother were happy and alive. The deceitful Duryodhana felt his desires had been fulfilled, and in due course of time began to rule the kingdom under the direction of his father Dhritarastra.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to Chapter Twelve of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The House of Lac at Varanavata.

### Chapter Commentary

The burning of the Lac house was the second in an ongoing series of attempts to kill the Pandavas. It is said that whoever God protects, no one can kill, and whoever God doesn't protect, no one can save. It is obvious that the Pandavas were divinely protected by Lord Krishna, and therefore, no amount of scheming plots by Duryodhana could possibly kill them. Asuras cannot understand the divine protection of the Lord. They think that sheer numbers, power, or wealth alone can defeat the pious.

Whatever harm we try to do to others always backfires on us. When we try to hurt someone else, the reaction always comes back to us. Instead of hurting someone else, we suffer more. Similarly, if we do good to others, good will come to us. Because Yudhishthira was always looking after the welfare of others, his welfare was automatically looked after. Everytime Duryodhana tried to to harm to the Pandavas, the Pandavas simply became stronger. We will see the result of Duryodhana's attempt to kill the Pandavas in the upcoming chapters. The Pandavas simply gained by the attempted murder designed by Dhritarastra and Duryodhana.

What is required to receive the protection of the Lord? It is simple; one has to surrender everything to the Lord and become His obedient servant, as did the Pandavas. Anyone can receive this protection. One has to take the Lord into the heart and remember Him at all times. Lord Krishna will then carry what we lack. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita, "But those who worship Me with devotion, meditating on My transcendental form+to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they have. (B.g. 9.24) If we always think of Krishna, Krishna will always think of us. The Pandavas were eternal associates of the Lord and always carried the beautiful form of Lord Krishna in their heart of hearts. Thus, they could not be harmed under any circumstances.

One may wonder how it was possible for the Pandavas to allow the nisadha woman and her five sons to die in the house of lac to cover their own trail. Yudhisthira has been pictured as a kind hearted soul who could not hurt anyone. The fact of the matter is that the palace was very big as was most palaces in those days and it could may have well been that the Pandavas did not know that they had fallen asleep due to intoxication. Yudhisthira or any of the Pandavas would not unnecessarily hurt anyone. It is not stated that they knew the woman and her sons were there. They could have fallen asleep in some room not seen by any of the Pandavas.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Hidimba Slain

While the palace of shellac was burning intensely, the Pandavas escaped unnoticed. Upon emerging from the tunnel, they looked back and saw the palace blazing in the distance. They then looked toward the bank of the Ganges and saw a man sitting in a boat. The man was sent by Vidura, and by signals he indicated that they should board the boat. He convinced the Pandavas by certain messages that he was actually sent by their uncle. The Pandavas then boarded the boat and the boatman led them across the river Ganges to safety. They thanked the boatman and sent a message back to Vidura that they were heading in a southerly direction.

Then Bhimasena, who was endowed with supernatural power, placed his mother on his shoulders, the twins on his sides, Yudhisthira and Arjuna on his arms, and proceeded quickly through the darkness. The son of the wind god ran at the speed of the wind, breaking the trees and bushes before him. With every step he caused the earth to tremble. The motion of his legs created a wind so intense that it was comparable to the March winds. Indeed, so great was the force with which Bhima moved that his brothers and mother seemed to faint on his body. Before the day was over, Bhima had covered a distance of one hundred and sixty miles.

Towards the evening Bhima reached a densely dark forest where fruits and water were scarce and which echoed terrible cries of wild birds and beasts. The wind blew strongly, breaking the branches of the trees. Afflicted with hunger, thirst, and sleep,

they were unable to proceed further. Bhimasena carefully lifted his mother and brothers off his body. Exhausted, they all lay down to sleep with the exception of Bhima, who stayed awake to guard against Duryodhana's spies or any Rakshasas who lived in the forest. As Bhima glanced over his mother and his brothers, he felt a deep pain in his heart. After all it was just a night ago that they were sleeping in the finest beds, and eating the finest foods. Did Queen Kunti, the wife of the great Pandu and the daughter of King Surasena, deserve to lie on the bare ground? Did the sister of Vasudeva and the mother of the Pandavas deserve leaves as a bed sheet? Yudhisthira, the son of Yamaraja, was lying on the bare ground. Did he deserve such a fate? Did he not deserve sovereignty of the three worlds? Did Arjuna, the greatest Bowman the world has ever known, deserve to lie on the ground like an ordinary man? Did Nakula and Sahadeva, who are like demigods in appearance, deserve to be soiled by the dust of the earth? Bhima then spoke as if the sons of Dhritarastra were present, "You sons of Dhritarastra have little foresight. You wicked fellows may enjoy your temporary success. You still breathe only because Yudhisthira does not command me to take your lives. If ordered by him, I would send you all to the region of Yamaraja this very day! Having said this, the mighty armed Bhima squeezed his palms, breathing heavily in anger. Looking over his dear brothers and mother, he continued to guard the rest of the night.

Not far from where the Pandavas were sleeping, there lived a rakshasa (man eater) named Hidimva and his sister Hidimvi. Hidimva was not an ordinary rakshasa for he ruled over all others in his race. He had sharp teeth and a protruding belly. His shoulders were like the neck of a tree, and he was reddish in hue. Longing for human flesh, he sat in a tree along with his sister. Understanding by the scent in the air that some humans were nearby, he ordered his sister, "O Hidimvi, I smell human flesh close by. My mouth waters at the thought of eating, for I have not satisfied my hunger all day. Go and see who has come. Attacking the human throat and opening the veins, I shall drink to my full satisfaction a large quantity of human blood. Go and bring to me any human beings who are nearby. We will feast on human flesh and dance together in happiness.

Thus commanded by Hidimva, Hidimvi proceeded to the spot where the Pandavas were resting. She saw four brothers lying asleep with their mother and the invincible Bhima guarding them. Beholding Bhimasena, unrivalled in strength and handsome appearance, the rakshasi immediately fell in love. She thought to herself, "This person has a body like molten gold, and his shoulders are like those of a lion. His neck is shaped like a conchshell, and his eyes are like lotus petals. Truly he is worthy of being my husband. I shall disobey my brother's order, because affection for one's husband is greater than for one's brother.

The rakshasi, capable of assuming any form at will, assumed the form of a beautiful celestial woman. Approaching Bhima with a mind enchanting smile, she said to him, "O bull among men, where have you come from and who are you? Who also, O sinless one, is this lady of transcendent beauty sleeping here so contently as if in her own chambers? Do you know that this forest is the abode of a rakshasa named Hidimva? I am his sister, and he has sent me here with the intention of killing you all. Speaking truthfully, I tell you that after beholding your celestial handsome

features, I can accept no one else as my husband. My heart as well as my body have been pierced by the arrows of Cupid. I will rescue you from this brother of mine who eats human flesh. By my mystic power, I will take you wherever you like. Traveling to the celestial gardens, we can enjoy to our hearts content.

Hearing the affectionate words of the rakshasi, Bhima replied, "O beautiful woman, how can I leave my brothers and mother simply to satisfy lusty desires. I will never run from fear of any rakshasa, for Rakshasas are never able to bear the prowess of my arms. What to speak of Rakshasas, neither mortals nor Gandharvas nor Yakshas can bear my strength. O celestial lady, you may either go or send your cannibal brother. I care not.

Hidimva, the chief of the Rakshasas, seeing that his sister had not returned, got down from the tree and proceeded quickly to where the Pandavas were. He saw that his sister had taken a celestial form bedecked with garlands of flowers and silken garments. The rakshasa, beholding her in that charming form, understood her motives. He was red hot with anger and scolded her, "Why, O sister, have you thrown obstacles on my path when I am now overcome with hunger? O Hidimvi, don't you fear me in the least? You are desiring to enjoy intercourse with my evening meal. You are ready to sacrifice the good name and honor of all the Rakshasas for some gratification of the senses. Therefore, I will kill you this very moment!

Upon seeing the rakshasa rushing toward Hidimvi, Bhima, the foremost slayer of man eaters, jumped up and exclaimed, "O Hidimva, what need is there to awaken these sleeping persons. O wicked cannibal, challenge me first, and do not touch your sister. Why do you want to kill a woman who is scarcely responsible for a desire that pervades all living entities? She does not deserve to be punished for this offense. Come and fight with me, O rakshasa, and I shall send you to the court of Yamaraja without delay!

Replying to Bhima, Hidimva said, "What need is there for all this boasting. Accomplish what you have said and then crow with your tongue! You have wrongly calculated my strength, or else you would not have challenged me to combat. Let your brothers sleep comfortably, and after killing you and drinking your blood, I shall devour them one after another!

The most powerful Hidimva, whose eyes were burning like molten copper, ran at Bhima desiring to kill him. Very quickly Bhima grabbed the outstretched arms of Hidimva and began dragging him away from where his brothers and mother were sleeping. The Rakshasa, humbled by the might of Bhima, became furious, and squeezing the body of Bhima, sent forth a loud roar. The mighty son of Pandu then dragged the demon a further distance so the cries of the Rakshasa would not awaken his brothers. Fighting like two full grown elephants, they pulverized the nearby trees and bushes.

From the sound of falling trees, the sleeping brothers awoke. Kunti also awoke from sleep and gazed in wonder at the beautiful woman who was standing before her.

Desirous of knowing her identity, Kunti said, "O beautiful woman, whose complexion resembles the lotus, where have you come from, and what is your name? Hearing the inquiry of Kunti, Hidimvi replied, "The forest that you have taken shelter in belongs to my brother Hidimva, the powerful Rakshasa. I have been sent here to kill all of you on his order. However, seeing the handsome features of your son Bhima, I have fallen in love with him and have chosen him as my husband. My name is Hidimvi. Presently your son Bhima has dragged my brother to a great distance, and they are engaged in combat.

Rising up from sleep and gazing into the distance, Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva saw Bhima and the Rakshasa engaged in an earth trembling duel. The dust raised by their feet was filling the whole forest. Rushing to that spot, Arjuna requested his elder brother, "I have now rested from sleep. Step aside and let me kill this Rakshasa.

"Do not fear the result of this battle, Bhima replied. "Having come within my reach, he shall not escape with his life. Blazing with fury, Bhima picked up the Rakshasa and whirled him around a thousand times. Speaking to the Rakshasa, Bhima said, "Today I shall make this forest fit for habitation. You shall no longer feast on human flesh. Saying this much, Bhima threw the Rakshasa down with all his might, causing a big dust cloud to rise into the sky. The demon uttered a ghastly shriek that filled the whole forest. The mighty Bhima then picked up the battered body of the Rakshasa, and holding it with his hands, bent it backwards breaking it in the middle. This action greatly satisfied his brothers. Seeing the mutilated body of the Rakshasa, Arjuna came forward and congratulated Bhima. They all then headed in the direction of a nearby town. The beautiful Hidimvi followed from a distance.

Bhima, seeing the Rakshasa woman following, ordered her, "If you seek revenge for your brother's death, do not follow us or your fate will be the same. Yudhisthira quickly admonished Bhima, "O Bhima, O tiger among men, however angry you are, never kill a woman. A higher virtue is to protect life. Besides, what can this woman do to harm us?

Hidimvi then respectfully addressed Kunti, "O blessed lady, you know the heart felt pangs women feel at the hands of the deity Cupid. I have cast off my relations and friends and have chosen your son as my husband. I tell you truthfully that if this desire is not fulfilled, I will no longer live in this body. Have mercy upon me and unite me with Bhima, who resembles a heavenly denizen. Allow him to accompany me to the celestial regions. I shall again return him after some time.

Hearing Hidimvi's appeal, Yudhisthira said, "Your desire shall be fulfilled in all respects, O beautiful woman. Sport with him during the day, but you must return him by nightfall. Smiling bashfully, Bhima also agreed to the proposal and said, "I will fulfill your desires, but I will stay with you only till you have obtained a son. Bhima then climbed on the back of Hidimvi, and she took him to the abodes of the heavenly gods. They enjoyed each others company day after day, and in time a child was conceived who was destined to become a mighty warrior. He was named Ghatotkacha. The child was born bald, with fierce eyes and a large mouth. Endowed

with the invincibility of the devas, the child soon became a great bowman. Although born an infant, he grew to be a youth within the very hour he was born. Rakshasa women give birth to children the day they conceive. The bald headed child bowed at the feet of his mother and father. Bhima then gave him the name Ghatotkacha, which means bald like a pot. Ghatotkacha became exceedingly devoted to the Pandavas and became a favorite among them.

Then Hidimvi, knowing that her period of stay with her husband had come to an end, offered respects to the Pandavas and told them that she would again seek their company. Ghatotkacha told his father that if he thought of him, he would immediately come to his presence. The mother and son then departed, and the Pandavas continued on their journey.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to the Thirteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva Entitled, Hidimva Slain.

#### Chapter Commentary

A pure devotee like Vidura is the well wisher of all living beings. He was always looking after the welfare of the Pandavas just like the eye lid protects the eye. Vidura was the incarnation of Yamaraja, religion personified, one of the twelve mahajanas. He had been cursed by Mandavya Muni to take birth as a Shudra. However, that did not stop him from being a self realized soul. There is nothing that can impede pure devotional service. Therefore, it doesn't matter what family or what caste one is born in. What matters is how much devotion a person has developed. Lord Krishna is only attracted by pure devotion.

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has instructed us that any one can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krishna consciousness. This is open to the man or the woman, the young or the old, the brahmana or the Shudra, the black or the white. Mirabhai was a famous vaishnavi guru in a woman's body. Her devotion and bhajans are famous throughout India. Prahlada Maharaja was only a five year old boy when he instructed his school mates in the science of devotional service. His prayers to Lord Nrisimhadeva detail the most profound devotion. One can find a great devotee in any section of society.

## Chapter Fourteen

### The Cannibal Baka Slain

The Pandavas continued on their journey wandering from one country to another. Wanting to remain concealed from the general public, they disguised themselves as ascetics, wearing deerskin and the bark of trees. They saw the countries of the Matsyas, the Trigartas, the Panchalas and the Kichakas. In the course of their travels, the Pandavas came upon their grandfather, the exalted sage Vyasadeva. They offered their obeisances and stood before him with joined palms. Vyasadeva then informed them, "O best among the Bharata dynasty, I am aware of the wicked plans of Dhritarastra and his sons. Therefore, I have come here with good counsel. You should not lament your fate. In the future this calamity will work in your favor. Just near here is the town of Ekachakra. I suggest you live there in disguise and no harm will come to you. The sons of Dhritarastra will not find you for you have been blessed by higher powers.

Vyasa then satisfied Kunti with sweet words, "Listen, O daughter, to my words. Your eldest son Yudhisthira, who is ever devoted to truth, will soon rule over all other monarchs. There is no doubt about this. Backed by the potency of Arjuna's bow and Bhima's mace, Yudhisthira will be the king of this entire earth bounded by the seas and oceans. Your sons and the sons of Madri will together perform many pious sacrifices such as the rajasuya and the ashvamedha. The fame of your sons will spread over the earth and will be known for all time.

After giving these benedictions, Vyasadeva led them to the town of Ekachakra and to the house of a pious brahmana where they could live peacefully. He introduced them to the brahmana, and after situating them properly, he advised them, "Wait here for me until the time I call for you. Do not be impatient. When the opportunity presents itself, you will succeed in your endeavors. Vyasa then left Ekachakra and returned to his own hermitage on the bank of the Saraswati.

While living in the town of Ekachakra, the sons of Pandu would daily beg their food. When the day's begging was over, they would gather what they had collected and place it before their mother. Kunti would then divide it in half. One half would be for Bhima, and the other half would be for herself and the rest of her sons. In this way they lived a life as mendicants.

One day while the boys were collecting their food, Kunti and Bhima overheard loud crying and wailing in the brahmana's house. Being very grateful to the brahmana for his hospitality, they wanted to relieve his distress. As Kunti approached the brahmana's quarters, she overheard a conversation between him and his wife. "To hell with this earthly life, the brahmana said, "for it is full of misery. It is hollow like a reed and a fruitless glory. The attachment to wife, children, home and wealth lead only to an unhappy life. When one becomes attached to these and they are then lost, one suffers greatly. How will I escape this danger? How can I sacrifice my son,

who all these years I have raised so carefully? If my son or daughter dies then I shall certainly die with them.

Kunti, taking the opportunity, entered the room and spoke soothing words that pacified the brahmana and his wife. Her words were just like nectar that revive dead men. "Please tell me what is causing your distress. I am certain that my sons or myself can remove any anxiety you feel.

"This speech is indeed worthy of you, the brahmana replied, "but I am afraid this grief cannot be removed by any human being. Not far from this town lives a Rakshasa named Baka. Due to the weakness of the local king, this cannibal rules the country. Because he is the chief asura, he protects us from any enemies, but his fee is very high. Every fortnight one of the householders in this town must deliver to him a cart load of vegetables and rice, two buffaloes and one human being. The turn comes to each family only after many long years. If there are any who seek to avoid their turn, the Rakshasa finds and devours them. It has been decided that this fortnight is our turn, and I don't have the money to buy a man-animal, nor can I part with one of my family members, nor can I escape from the hands of that Rakshasa. For this reason I am sunk in an ocean of grief.

Smiling all the while, Kunti spoke to the brahmana, "Do not be unhappy on account of this danger. I see a way to rescue you from this Rakshasa's grip. You have only one son who is very young, and your daughter is also young and helpless. It also not a good idea for you or your wife to sacrifice your life. So my suggestion is that one of my sons take the offering to this Rakshasa.

Hearing Kunti's offer the brahmana replied, "To save my own life, I shall never sacrifice the life of a guest or a brahmana. The learned have said that a guest who has taken shelter in one's house should be given protection by all means. Therefore, it is fitting that myself and my wife should perish by the hands of this Rakshasa.

"O brahmana, Kunti replied, "I am also of the firm opinion that brahmanas should be protected. My sons are very dear to me, but this Rakshasa will never be able to kill them, for they are gifted with superhuman powers. This second son of mine will faithfully deliver to the Rakshasa his food, but will not be harmed by him. I have previously seen many invincible Rakshasas fight with my son, but in the end they were vanquished. Do not disclose this fact to anyone, for we have many enemies who might harm us.

Thus addressed by Pritha, the brahmana and his wife smiled with pleasure and agreed with her proposal. Her words were like a soothing balm. Then Kunti and the brahmana approached Bhima and asked him to accomplish all that they had talked about. Bhima agreed saying, "So be it.

Yudhisthira and his brothers, upon returning to the brahmana's house, heard about the proposal and spoke sharply to their mother, "O Mother, what proposal have you offered to this brahmana without consulting us? You should not have acted so rashly. The learned never allow a mother to abandon her own children. This act will

be equal to murder. Why do you want to sacrifice your own child for the sake of another? Relying on the strength of Bhima's arms, we shall certainly vanquish the sons of Dhritarastra. If you are resolved to abandon him, how will we accomplish our goals?

Hearing Yudhishthira's anxious words, Kunti replied, "Do not be uneasy about Vrikodara. I have not made my decision on account of womanly weakness. Witnessing his bodily strength in carrying us from Varanavata and also in killing the Rakshasa Hidimva, I have great confidence in him. The prowess of Bhima's arms is equal to that of ten thousand elephants. There is no one on earth who can overcome Bhima in strength. Bhima will kill this Rakshasa with the greatest ease. By this act two objects will be accomplished. One is offering gratitude to the brahmana for allowing us to stay here undetected by the sons of Dhritarastra, and secondly, by killing this demon, Bhima's fame will spread far and wide. It is the duty of a kshatriya to protect the brahmanas, and for this reason I have offered to help this pious brahmana.

Having heard his mother's reasoning, Yudhishthira replied, "What you have done, moved by compassion for this brahmana, is, indeed, the proper choice of action. Bhima will certainly kill this Rakshasa and come back with his life. But tell the brahmana, O mother, that he should not speak to anybody about what is taking place. Make him promise to this request.

The following day Bhimasena, the mighty son of Pandu, loaded the cart full of vegetables and rice, and set out for the place where the Rakshasa lived. As he approached that place, Bhima was eating the food that was intended for the Rakshasa Baka. All the way Bhima was calling out the Rakshasa's name in jest. Hearing his name mocked at and ridiculed, the Rakshasa became furious and came out from the place where he was hiding. The Rakshasa's body was gargantuan, and his power was frightening. He had red eyes, a red beard and red hair, and he was terrible to behold. His mouth opened from ear to ear, and as he advanced toward Bhima, he bit his lips in rage and expanded his eyes in wrath. "Who is this fool, he yelled, "eating my food and desiring to enter Yamaraja's abode? I shall kill him at once!

Laughing at the Rakshasa's angry mood, Bhima continued eating the food in the cart. Seeing Bhima's indifference, the Rakshasa roared frightfully and ran at Bhima with upraised fists, desiring to kill him then and there. He struck Vrikodara on the back with all his strength, but Bhima was not affected in the least and continued eating the food. The mighty Rakshasa, inflamed with wrath, uprooted a tree and ran toward the son of Kunti. Meanwhile Bhima, having finished his meal, washed his hands and stood cheerfully for a fight. As the tree came his direction, Bhima caught it with his left hand, smiling all the while. The Rakshasa was infuriated and uprooted more trees hurling them with all his power at the son of Kunti. Bhima, however, caught those trees and threw them back at the Rakshasa. Soon the forest became treeless and finding no other weapon, Baka ran at Bhima and seized him with his arms. He dragged Bhima on the ground, and Bhima also dragged him on the ground. Soon the Rakshasa became fatigued and Bhima pressed him down to the

earth with his knees and beat him with his fists. Then placing one knee on the middle of the Rakshasa's back, Bhima seized his neck with his right hand and with his left grabbed the cloth around his waist. Lifting up his neck and legs, while keeping his knee on Baka's back, Bhima bent him double with great force. The cracking of his back and the screaming of his voice filled the whole forest. Baka then vomited blood and gave up his life force.

The friends of Baka were frightened, and Bhima commanded them, "Do not kill human beings again, for if you do, you will die as Baka did. The Rakshasas were terrified at Bhima's power, and from that day on, they were seen by the inhabitants of that town to be very peaceful toward mankind. Then Bhima dragged the lifeless corpse of the demon, placed him on the city gate and went away unseen by anyone.

The next morning the citizens of Ekachakra saw the cannibal's mutilated body covered in blood. News spread quickly through the town and soon a thousand residents were seen at the city gate. They were amazed to see such a superhuman feat, and out of curiosity, they went to the brahmana's home to inquire about the matter. The brahmana was careful to cover-up the identity of the Pandavas, and he told them, "A certain brahmana traveling on pilgrimage came to my home and agreed to take my place. He assured me that no harm would come to him. He then carried the food cart toward the forest. This wonderful deed has been certainly accomplished by him. The citizens of Ekachakra were joyous to hear what had happened and held a festival especially honoring the brahmana.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to the Fourteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Cannibal Baka Slain.

#### Chapter Commentary

Shrila Vyasadeva spoke words of wisdom when he advised the Pandavas not to lament their fate. Even though it seemed to be a tragic incident, still the Lord had a plan to glorify His devotee. No one understands the inconceivable plan of the Lord. Vyasa prophesied that the Pandavas, in the future, would gain a great kingdom and become famous for all time. The words of the sage would not prove otherwise. Sometimes the Lord puts us through the dark night of the soul so that we can learn to depend completely on His mercy. We should not depend on any other living being. The Pandavas were already eternally liberated souls and knew this fact, but the Lord put them through these trying circumstances to show us how to act. It would be during these distressful times that the Pandavas would kill demons like Hidimva and Baka and win Draupadi as a wife and gain an alliance with Drupada. "All things work together for good to them who love God. (St. Paul) Even distressful situations turn out for the good for a surrendered soul. Because a devotee gives his life for the service of the Lord, the Lord guides his devotee in all circumstances.

## Chapter Fifteen

### The Svayamvara of Draupadi

After the killing the Baka demon, the Pandavas continued to reside in Ekachakra as before. One day, a brahmana, traveling to different places of pilgrimage, came to Ekachakra and was invited as a guest in the house where they were residing. The Pandavas, wanting to hear some interesting news, inquired from him about anything he had seen in his travels. The brahmana spoke to them of various countries, holy places and sacred rivers. He also told them about the proposed marriage of Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupada. He explained how Draupadi and her brother Dhristadyumna were born from the sacrificial fire and also how Shikhandi was born.

Wanting to hear more in detail, the Pandavas questioned him, "How, O brahmana, did Dhristadyumna's birth take place from the sacrificial fire? Please also explain the remarkable birth of Draupadi from the center of the sacrificial arena? How also did Drupada's son learn all the military arts from the great Bowman Drona?"

Thus questioned by those bulls among men, the brahmana began to narrate all they had asked about. He informed them, "After the great King Drupada was defeated in battle by the Pandavas, that pious monarch wandered among the ashramas of brahmanas well-skilled in sacrificial rites. He was searching for someone who could help him kill Drona and regain his kingdom.

"Once he came upon the sacred river Ganges, and there he saw in an ashrama two sages, Yaja and Upayaja, who were descendants of Kasyapa Muni. They were peaceful and had subjugated their senses. The King made friends with them and daily came to see them. He sometimes invited them to his court. One day, King Drupada conversed with Upayaja as follows, O great brahmana, I desire a son who can kill Drona, the preceptor of the Kurus. He has taken half my kingdom and disgraced the Panchala dynasty. If you perform a sacrifice for this purpose, then my desire will be fulfilled. I promise to give you ten thousand cows in charity.'

"The rishi then replied to the King, I cannot perform such a sacrifice.' However, Drupada continued to worship that brahmana, and after one full year, Upayaja said, I desire nothing of this material world, and therefore I will not perform this sacrifice. However, my brother Yaja still covets worldly possessions. Approach him and ask him to perform the sacrifice you desire.'

"Drupada then went to the abode of Yaja and implored him to perform the sacrifice. He pleaded, O brahmana, there is a preceptor of the Kurus named Drona who has unfairly defeated me in battle and taken half my kingdom. There is no kshatriya equal to him on earth. His bow is a full nine feet long, and his arrows are capable of subduing any enemy. His brahminical power combined with kshatriya strength is superior to mine. However, your strength is greater than his, and I request you to

perform a sacrifice by which I may receive a son who will be invincible in battle and cause the death of Drona. I promise to give you ten thousand cows in charity.' The brahmana immediately replied, So be it.'

"After Yaja had agreed to perform the sacrifice, the King made all the necessary preparations for the yajna. When everything was prepared, Yaja offered ghee into the sacrificial fire accompanied by the chanting of Vedic mantras. As the flames rose, there appeared from the fire a child who possessed the effulgence of the sun. He was wearing a golden crown and was encased in celestial armor. In his left hand, he held a bow and arrow, and in his right hand, he held a sword. He immediately ascended a chariot and rode about producing thundering roars from his mouth. Suddenly there was a voice from the sky prophesying, This prince has been born for the purpose of slaying Drona. He will dispel all the fears of the Panchalas and spread their fame. He will also remove the sorrows of the King.'

"At this time there also arose from the sacrificial fire a young princess who was blest with good fortune and was comparable to a demigoddess in beauty. Her eyes were black and shaped like lotus petals. Her complexion was dark and her hair bluish and curly. Her nails were raised and the color of copper. She emanated a fragrance like that of a blue lotus, perceivable for a full two miles. Her beauty was such that she had no equal on earth. When she was born, a voice from the sky predicted, This dark complexioned girl will be a crest jewel among women, and she will cause the death of many kings. This slender-waisted girl will accomplish the purpose of the demigods and bestow upon the Pandavas all good fortune.'

"When the family members of King Drupada heard these auspicious omens, they were very happy and roared with joy. The brahmanas then gave the children names. Let this son of King Drupada,' they said, be called Dhristadyumna. Dhrishta, meaning one who has been born from the fire and dyumna, meaning one who is born with natural armor. The girl shall be called Krishna because she is dark in complexion, and she will also be known as Draupadi, being the daughter of King Drupada.'

The brahmana continued, "Thus those two children were born from the sacrificial fire of King Drupada. Dhristadyumna was taken as a student of the great Drona even though he was destined to kill Drona. Dronacharya welcomed this as Providence and accepted Dhristadyumna as his disciple, giving him equal instructions with the other students.

Hearing of Draupadi's beauty, the Pandavas appeared bitten by Cupid's arrows. Indeed, the sons of Pandu lost their peace of mind. Then Kunti, seeing her sons inattentive and restless, addressed Yudhisthira and said, "For such a long time we have been living in the abode of this brahmana. Now we should leave this place. Perhaps the kingdom of the Panchalas would be a suitable place to go. We have not yet seen that country, and it will no doubt, O hero, prove delightful to us. All the brothers+Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva+agreed, and they prepared themselves to go to the province of King Drupada.

While they were in the midst of their preparations, Vyasa, the son of Satyawati, arrived at the brahmana's house. The Pandavas and their mother offered obeisances and stood before the great rishi with joined palms. They offered him a sitting place, water, food and sweet words. They then waited for the distinguished sage to speak. Vyasadeva advised, "In the city of Kampilya in the country of the Panchalas lives a king named Drupada. He has a very beautiful daughter named Draupadi who is destined to be your wife. Soon there will be a svayamvara ceremony in which she will choose the husband she desires. Go there and obtain her for your wife, for she will bring happiness to all of you. Having said this, the great ascetic left and again returned to his hermitage.

The Pandavas then set out for the country of the Panchalas. They traveled along the banks of the Ganges until they came to a sacred place where great sages worshipped Lord Shiva. It was nighttime, and it so happened that a certain king of the Gandharvas was sporting in the water along with his queens. Arjuna was carrying a torch and leading the party along the bank of the river. The King of the Gandharvas, seeing them coming, rose out of the water and ascended his chariot. He picked up his bow, stretching it to full length. He then commanded the Pandavas, "It is commonly known that the hours of nightfall are set aside for the Gandharvas, Yakshas and Rakshasas to sport in this great river. The hours during the day are for the human beings. I am Angaraparna, the Gandharva, and I am the friend of Kuvera, the treasurer of the heavenly planets. This forest on the bank of the Ganges has been given to me by Kuvera and bears my name. Therefore leave this area if you value your life.

Hearing the challenging words of the Gandharva, Arjuna replied, "Blockhead, whether it be day, night, or twilight, who can bar others from the ocean, the Himalayas, and this sacred river, the Ganges? One can bathe in the Ganges and take advantage of its purification. Because this river flows from the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu, it can cleanse one of all sins. It is meant for all living beings at any time. How then can you stop us from drinking its water?

Angered by Arjuna's words, the Gandharva, drawing his bow to a full circle, released arrows that were deadlier than poisonous serpents. Dhananjaya [Arjuna], wielding a shield and torch, deflected all the arrows released. He then addressed the Gandharva, "Do not try to frighten those who are skilled in warfare. If you think that you are very powerful then defend yourself from this weapon. Arjuna then threw his torch which was empowered with the mantras for the agneyastra. The weapon burnt the Gandharva's chariot and deprived him of his consciousness. He fell from his chariot to the ground. Arjuna grabbed him by the hair, and dragging him along the ground, brought him to his brothers. The Gandharva awoke and spoke to Arjuna, "You have defeated me, and I can no longer boast my strength. I am pleased with you and want to impart to you the science of producing mystic illusions which the Gandharvas possess. I will also bestow upon you one hundred horses that will never tire on the field of battle. These horses cannot be killed and can travel at any speed according to the will of the charioteer. I want in return your weapon of fire.

"I will accept your horses in exchange for my weapon, Arjuna said. "Let our friendship last forever. Why have you stopped us from traveling the path along the Ganges? Normally, we have nothing to fear from the Gandharvas. This is a well known pilgrimage path so why have you attacked us in this way?"

"Kshatriyas are known to be guided by the brahmanas, the Gandharva replied. "You are traveling from a great distance, but there is no brahmana preceding you. Also no one can distinguish your ashrama although you have completed your brahmacharya (student) training. The fact is that you are not recognizable to human society. For this reason I have challenged you. In the forest nearby is a sacred place called Utkochaka. Dhaumya, the younger brother of Devala, is engaged in penances and austerities. Go there and request him to become your Guru. His superior intelligence will guide you through distressful circumstances."

Arjuna, being pleased with the Gandharva, gave him his fire weapon and told him to keep the horses until the time he called for them. The Pandavas then approached Dhaumya in the forest, and seeing his good qualities, they humbly requested him to become their priest and advisor, for every kshatriya should be guided by a brahmana. Dhaumya developed an immediate attachment for the Pandavas and agreed to become their priest. Indeed, the Pandavas considered themselves so fortunate to have Dhaumya as their guide that they thought Draupadi to be already obtained and their kingdom returned. They requested Dhaumya to accompany them to Kampilya and help them win Draupadi in marriage. Dhaumya agreed, and they all set out together for the kingdom of the Panchalas.

The city of Kampilya was alive with the sounds of musical instruments and the citizens were busily preparing for the svayamvara. Kings and princes from the most noble dynasties had come for the svayamvara. The Pandavas and Dhaumya took up their residence in the house of a potter and witnessed the preparations for the marriage ceremony. King Drupada had a special amphitheater built for the marriage of his daughter. In his heart he wanted only Arjuna to marry Draupadi, and for this purpose he had a unique bow constructed that was so stiff that only Arjuna could string it. Also, if by chance, someone else could string the bow, on the amphitheater ceiling was a wheel, and on the wheel was a fish. The person who strung the bow also had to pierce the eye of the fish, not by looking at it directly, but seeing the reflection of it in a pot of water on the floor. King Drupada felt that only Arjuna could perform this feat. Having arranged the svayamvara in this way, he announced to all the kings of the earth the means by which to obtain his daughter. He was hopeful that Arjuna had not been killed in the house of lac and that this svayamvara would bring him to the city of Kampilya.

On the day of the svayamvara, those kings and princes who had come from different kingdoms entered the amphitheater and took their respective seats. The citizens, anxious to see the outcome of the marriage ceremony, assembled in thousands. The priest for the marriage ceremony lit the sacrificial fire by means of Vedic mantras. When everyone was perfectly quiet, Dhristadyumna, taking the hand of the beautiful Draupadi, spoke to the assembled kshatriyas, "Welcome to all kings and princes from different lands. Here is my sister, Draupadi, whose beauty surpasses the

beauty of all women on earth. To gain my sister in marriage, one must string this strongly constructed bow. When the bow is strung, one must pierce the fish as it lies on the chariot wheel below the ceiling in the eye. One cannot directly look at the fish, but must see it by the reflection in this pot of water. Whoever can achieve this feat will obtain my sister Krishna for his queen.

Having spoken to the assembled monarches, Drupada's son then informed his sister, "Here, O Draupadi, are assembled the best of the kshatriya race. Here is Duryodhana and his one hundred brothers accompanied by Karna. They have come here to obtain you for a wife. Innumerable other monarches have also come for you. Here is Shakuni, the son of the Gandhara King. He is also accompanied by his brothers. Here is the great bowman Ashvatthama, the son of Drona. Here is King Susharma with his five brothers, and here is the very powerful Jarasandha. There is King Virata along with his two sons, Sankha and Uttara. There is King Paundraka and King Bhagadatta who are counted amongst the great maharathis. The King of Kalinga has come as well as the King of Madras, Salya, whose strength equals thousands of elephants. There, sitting in front of you, is Krishna, the son of Vasudeva and His very powerful brother Balarama. Also from the Yadu dynasty have come Satyaki, Kritavarma and Akura. There are many kings from the Vrishni dynasty as well as powerful kings from the Kuru race. There is Somadatta and his three sons Bhuri, Bhurishrava and Sala. Also here is King Shishupala. All these warriors as well as many others have come to gain your hand in marriage. Endowed with unsurpassable might, they will endeavor to pierce the eye of the fish.

Gazing upon the loveliness of Draupadi, all the princes and kings stood up anxious to exert their strength. They all became jealous of each other exclaiming, "Draupadi shall be mine! They were all infatuated by the celestial beauty of King Drupada's daughter, and some were so drunk with that beauty that they could barely walk. The demigods assembled in the sky in their stellar airplanes to witness the event. The whole arena became alive with excitement, and the Pandavas, dressed like brahmanas, stood up to get a better view of the beautiful princess. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, seeing the Pandavas sitting amongst the brahmanas, leaned over and spoke to Balarama, "O son of Rohini, sitting in the midst of the brahmanas is Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Lord Balarama glanced in the direction of the brahmanas, and seeing the Pandavas looking intently upon Draupadi, smiled with satisfaction.

One by one the kshatriyas came forward to string the bow. They were all adorned with crowns, garlands, golden armlets and other ornaments. They were full of enthusiasm and energy. However, most of them could not even string the bow. Indeed, in the attempt, they were knocked to the ground when their strength proved insufficient. Some, such as Duryodhana, were able to string the bow, but missed the fish's eye by the width of a finger. The great Salya missed the target by the width of a bean seed. Shishupala, the son of Damaghosa, was able to string the bow, but missed the target by the width of a sesame seed. Jarasandha was the next to try. He was able to string the bow, but missed the target by the width of a mustard seed. Seeing no one able to pierce the target, Karna, the foremost wielder of the bow and arrow, rose from his seat and approached the bow. Everyone was

watching him with tense excitement. The Pandavas regarded the eye of the fish as already pierced. He quickly strung the bow and placed the arrow on the string. However, Draupadi loudly exclaimed, "I will not select a suta as my lord. Karna released his arrow, but missed the target by a hair's breadth.

When none of the great kings were able to fell the target, Arjuna in the dress of a brahmana stood up and inquired from Dhristadyumna, "Is a brahmana allowed to take part in this competition? I see that no king or prince can hit the target. His fearless eyes swept over the assembly of monarchs with a contemptuous look. "Yes, Dhristadyumna replied, "anyone can take part in the competition. Come forward and string the bow, and if you can, pierce the target. Arjuna then picked up the bow and stood there like a mountain. Remembering Lord Krishna in his heart, he quickly strung the bow and set his arrow. There was not a sound in the audience. All eyes were on Arjuna. Looking at the reflection of the fish in the water, Arjuna raised his bow toward the ceiling. He slowly drew back the string to full length and let loose his arrow, which pierced the fish's eye causing it to fall to the ground. There was an uproar amongst the demigods in the firmament, and the amphitheater resounded with joy. The demigods began to shower flowers upon Arjuna, and the brahmanas waved their upper garments in the air. The kings, who had been unsuccessful, were shocked with disbelief. The whole arena was filled with the sounds of drums, kettledrums, cymbals and conches. And thinking the brahmana to be Arjuna, King Drupada was smiling from ear to ear. The beautiful Draupadi, whose smiling eyes resembled lotus petals, then approached Arjuna and placed the garland of victory upon his neck.

Unable to tolerate King Drupada bestowing his daughter upon a brahmana, the assembled kings contemptuously bellowed, "This Drupada has insulted us deliberately. The Vedic statement is that the svayamvara ceremony is meant for the kshatriyas and not for the brahmanas. Since the brahmanas are to be protected, we can do nothing to harm this one who has pierced the target. However, in order to avoid total disgrace let us kill this Drupada.

After speaking to one another in this way, they picked up their weapons and rushed at King Drupada to kill him. And Drupada, seeing the kings and princes approaching him, took shelter of Arjuna. Arjuna smiled reassuringly at him and told him, "Do not fear! I am able to handle all of them. In order to counteract the weapons of the enemy, Bhima uprooted a tree and stood next to his brother. Yudhisthira, Nakula and Sahadeva also stood ready for combat.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, addressed His brother, "That hero there, who walks like a lion and wields a bow four cubits in length, is Arjuna! There is no doubt of this. Look at that brahmana standing with an uprooted tree in his hand. That must surely be the second son of Pandu, the mighty Bhima. The tall youth who walks like a lion and is kingly in stature is Yamaraja's son, Yudhisthira. The other two handsome youths are the sons of Madri, Nakula and Sahadeva. They have not died in the house of lac after all. Lord Balarama, smiling at His brother, said, "This is good news, My dear Krishna. I am happy to hear that our Aunt Kunti and her five sons are alive.

While Lord Krishna and Balarama were speaking, the kings approached Arjuna for combat. The brahmanas stood up to help Arjuna, but he assured them that he could handle the whole situation himself. Karna then rushed against Arjuna, and Salya rushed at Bhima. Duryodhana fought with Yudhishthira, and Shakuni fought with Nakula and Sahadeva. Arjuna counteracted all the arrows of Karna, and Karna, becoming furious, fought with greater vigor. Unable to defeat his opponent, Karna addressed him, "O foremost brahmana, I am amazed to see the strength of your arms in combat. Are you Parasurama, or the great Indra himself? Could you be the younger brother of Indra, the infallible Lord Vishnu, disguised to defeat me in battle? No one can defeat me except for the son of Sachi or Arjuna, the son of Pandu. Hearing these words, Arjuna replied, "O Karna, I am not Parasurama, Indra or the eternal Lord Vishnu. I am only a brahmana, and I have learned the science of archery from my preceptor. I am here to vanquish you in battle.

Karna then desisted from fighting for fear of angering a brahmana. Meanwhile, Bhima, engaged in battle with Salya, picked him up and threw him a distance without hurting him. No one could understand who the brahmanas were, and being unable to defeat them, they stopped their advances. Arjuna, followed by his brothers and Draupadi, left the arena of competition and went back to the potter's house. Lord Krishna, desiring to help the Pandavas, followed from a distance.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Fifteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Svayamvara of Draupadi.

### Chapter Commentary

The marriages of beautiful princesses were always full of pomp and excitement. There are eight kinds of marriage ceremonies mentioned in the vedas. They are brahma, arsha, prajapatya, daiva, Gandharva, asura and Rakshasa. Draupadi was married to Arjuna in the Gandharva style which means that the suitor had to exhibit his prowess before the would be bride. The word svayamvara means placing the garland on the neck of the future husband. Before Arjuna could receive the garland of Draupadi, he had to pass the test of piercing the eye of the fish. Krishna married the beautiful Satya, the daughter of King Nagnajit, in the same style when He had to wrestle with seven bulls and defeat them. Similarly Lord Ramachandra obtained Sita by stringing a bow that was impossible for an ordinary mortal.

There are other types of marriages such as Rakshasa where the proposed husband steals the beautiful maiden and fights with competitors to show his prowess. Krishna married Rukmini in this type of ceremony. There are other types of marriages where the father gives the daughter to some young prince for a certain price, or when a

man of good qualities and good family is asked to come and take the bride. All these marriages were rich in culture and full of chivalry and pomp.

A majority of the marriages that take place presently are based simply on physical attraction and sexual compatibility, and therefore, when there is some disturbance to the physical beauty, like aging, or sexual incompatibility, there is divorce. Unrestricted sex life will cause one to lose respect for the partner. Therefore, in Vedic culture sex was allowed for the purpose of procreation. If a man could not control his sex drive, he was allowed to take more than one wife, but unrestricted sex was not allowed even in marriage.

In present times, degradation of the marriage institution has come about because of too much free mingling between men and women. The animals do not have a marriage institution. The male monkey will go from female to female whenever the urge arises, which is quite often. If a human being ignores marriage vows and simply goes from one woman to another, then he is no better than a monkey in mentality. In his next life he becomes an animal and fulfills his desires for unrestricted sex.

In Vedic times men and women were not allowed to mingle freely. The boys and girls were restricted in their association. When the British conquered India, they highly criticized the marriage of women at an early age before their puberty. They called it child marriage. The actual fact is that a youthful marriage is very good for chastity. The husband is usually ten years older than the female. If the girl is ten or twelve, then the male is twenty or twenty-two. The girl does not live with her husband immediately, but her mind is fixed on one man. By service and association she develops an attraction only for her husband, and her husband develops an attraction only for his young wife. In this way the girl will never have sex with any other male. So many problems in society are solved by chasity between husband and wife.

From the grand arrangements of the marriage ceremony of Draupadi, one can glimpse the richness of Vedic culture. Marriage at that time was something magnificent. In Vedic age there was no divorce. Before the marriage the partners were chosen on the basis of like personalities. A man who was brahminically (priestly) inclined was married to a woman who had a similar attraction. A man with kingly qualities was married to a woman of a similar nature. The same was true for the merchants and worker class. An astrological reading was taken to see if the marriage was compatible and would last through the whole life. This type of marriage was more stable than the present system where it is left up to the girl and boy to search out their partners. Not taking into consideration like mentalities, they marry on the basis of physical attraction. The divorce rate in the western world is over fifty percent, showing us that this type of marriage is not working. In fact no one is objecting, because men and women are liking the animal consciousness of unrestricted sex. Many of our troubles in society stem from this one problem.

One may question why none of the Kings except Lord Krishna and Balarama could recognize the Pandavas in the dress of brahmanas. The answer is that brahmanas

were generally thin due to not eating often. In fact B hima had become slender due to not living the lavish style of kingly life. Generally, brahmanas also kept their heads shaved with a sikha or tuft of hair on the head. Along with the simple dress of a brahmana, they were not to be recognized by the other kings present.

## Chapter Sixteen

### The Pandavas Marry Draupadi

When the Pandavas entered the potter's house, they called out to Queen Kunti, "Mother, come and see what we have collected today. Kunti was inside the house, and without seeing her sons she said, "Whatever you have brought today shall be shared equally among you. The next moment she saw Draupadi and exclaimed, "Oh, I have spoken too soon. They then informed her of the events that had taken place that day. She took the daughter of Drupada by the hand and approached Yudhisthira, "The daughter of King Drupada has been given to me as the alms collected for the day. In ignorance I have spoken the words, Share equally what you have obtained.' O best among the Kuru race, tell me how my words will not prove false.

Thus addressed by his mother, Yudhisthira reflected for a moment and then ordered Arjuna, "Today, you have won Draupadi. It is proper, therefore, that you marry her. Ignite the sacrificial fire and wed her according to the Vedic rites.

Hearing the order of his elder brother, Arjuna declined, "I do not want to take part in any sinful activities. You are the oldest, and according to the Vedic injunctions, the older brother must be married first. Once you are married, then the rest of us will marry according to our birth. We, therefore, await your decision after due deliberation.

Arjuna's remarks were full of respect and devotion for his elder brother. After Arjuna declined to accept Draupadi, all the brothers cast their glance at the beautiful princess, and Draupadi also looked upon all the Pandavas with affectionate glances that captivated their hearts. Understanding what was within their minds, Yudhisthira, fearing division, decided, "The beautiful Draupadi shall be our common wife! With these words, all the brother's faces blossomed like lotus flowers.

After the Pandavas had left the svayamvara assembly at Drupada's palace, Lord Krishna and Balarama had followed them. Lord Krishna is the universal Godhead and is very kind to His devotees. The Pandavas are all His eternal associates, and Lord Krishna wanted to benedict them with His association, which is hankered after by all pure devotees. Lord Krishna entered the house of the potter along with His brother Balarama. There They saw the Pandavas sitting around their mother, and They also saw Draupadi. Lord Krishna then approached Yudhisthira and offered His obeisances

saying, "I am Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. The Lord then touched the feet of Queen Kunti. Balarama did the same. Krishna then embraced Arjuna because they were the same age and accepted the obeisances of Nakula and Sahadeva. Lord Balarama embraced Bhima because they were the same age and accepted the obeisances of Arjuna and the twins.

Yudhishthira then inquired from Lord Krishna, "O Vasudeva, how did you detect us though we have been living in disguise? Lord Krishna was smiling and then answered Yudhishthira's inquiry, "O King, fire, even if it is covered, can never be concealed. Who else but the Pandavas could exhibit such prowess as was shown today? It is by good fortune that you have escaped the burning house of lac. Those evil sons of Dhritarastra could not carry out their wicked plans. Remain hidden for some time, and do not let the sons of Dhritarastra know where you are until you have made alliances. You have the support of the Yadu and Vrishni dynasties. Do not fear anything. We must leave soon so that no one will know we have come here. Then obtaining King Yudhishthira's permission, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Lord Balarama, His immediate expansion, left the potter's house and returned to Their own abodes.

There was also someone else who had followed the Pandavas to the potter's house. It was Dhristadyumna, the son of Drupada. He was anxious to find out who had gained his sister in marriage. After Lord Krishna and Balarama left the house, he came close to the window to listen to their conversation. Kunti was talking with Draupadi about the food that they had collected that day. "First, take a portion and offer it to Lord Vishnu, she said, "then distribute it to the brahmanas and guests. Divide what is left into two portions. One portion is for Bhima, for my second son is ever hungry. Bhima turned red from embarrassment and Draupadi smiled. Dhristadyumna saw the happy expressions on her face and was glad to know that she was not sad or depressed. Queen Kunti continued, "The other portion can be divided amongst the other four brothers and ourselves. Draupadi then did as she was told. After her husbands had eaten, Draupadi took her portion of prasada (food offered to Lord Vishnu).

When they were finished with their evening meal, the sun was setting. Sahadeva then laid a bed of kusha grass on the floor. Deerskins were laid on top of the kusha grass, and the brothers lay down to sleep. Kunti lay at their heads and Draupadi at their feet. They talked about chariots, bows, arrows, maces, elephants and armies. Dhristadyumna overheard their whole conversation, and then after they had fallen asleep, he went back to the palace of his father.

King Drupada was lamenting, unsure of who had taken his daughter. After returning from the potter's house, Dhristadyumna entered the palace and offered obeisances to his father. As his son stood before him, King Drupada inquired, "Oh my son, where has Krishna [Draupadi] gone? Who has taken her away? Has a shudra of the lower orders abducted her? Has a vaishya taken her and polluted my dynasty? Has a kshatriya of high birth taken her away from my palace, or has a brahmana obtained my daughter in marriage? O my son, I would feel greatly happy if Draupadi has been united with Partha, that foremost warrior. Please tell me who has won my daughter.

Are the sons of Pandu alive? Was it Arjuna who took up the bow and pierced the mark?

Dhristadyumna then related all that he had seen during the night. He then told his father, "From their conversation I can understand that they are not shudras, vaishyas or brahmanas, for their talk was only on military topics. Their voices were deep and commanding. They are definitely heroes of the highest order. It seems, O father, that our hopes have fructified. From the way in which the mark was shot down by the youth, and the strength in which the bow was strung by him, and the manner in which I have heard them talk with one another, I conclude that they are the sons of Pandu wandering in disguise.

King Drupada regained the hope that he had cherished in his heart. He sent his priest and other messengers to the potter's house to announce that the wedding would be that day, and that they should come to the palace. Drupada sent valuable dresses for Draupadi, and he also sent valuable clothes and ornaments for the five heroes whom he hoped were the Pandavas. A royal chariot then arrived at the potter's house to bring them to the palace. The Pandavas and their mother as well as Draupadi ascended the chariot and soon arrived at the palace.

Queen Kunti, upon entering the palace, was taken away by the ladies of the King's household and worshipped according to her position. Draupadi went with her. The Pandavas then entered the palace, and King Drupada saw those bulls among men dressed in deerskin and walking with the gait of lions. Each had broad shoulders and long arms extending to the knees. He could understand that they were of royal blood and offered them the finest seats. He fed them all with the finest food, and after they were fully satisfied, inquired from them, "Are we to know you as kshatriyas, brahmanas or demigods in disguise? Tell us the truth for we have great doubts. Hearing your reply, I shall make arrangements for my daughter's wedding according to the order to which you belong.

Thus questioned by King Drupada, Yudhisthira replied, "Do not be unhappy, O King. Your cherished desire has been fulfilled. We are kshatriyas and the sons of Pandu. Know me to be the eldest of Kunti's sons, Yudhisthira, and here is Bhima, by whose prowess all the earthly monarchs were humbled yesterday. Here is Arjuna, whose expert bowmanship has won your daughter. Here also are Nakula and Sahadeva and our mother Kunti. O foremost of kings, drive away the distress in your heart. Your daughter, O Monarch, like a lotus flower, has been transferred from one lake to another. O King, you are our chief refuge and our worshipable superior.

Drupada's eyes rolled in ecstasy, and he almost lost consciousness. His voice was choked, and for a moment he could not reply to the statements of Yudhisthira. With great effort he inquired how they had escaped from the house of lac. Yudhisthira related everything, and hearing what had happened, King Drupada condemned Dhritarastra for his diplomacy. Drupada then vowed to support Yudhisthira and help him regain his paternal throne.

King Drupada was overjoyed that the Pandavas were now living in his kingdom, and he requested them, "According to the Vedic injunctions, let the Kuru prince Arjuna take my daughter in marriage on this auspicious day. Replying to the King, Yudhisthira said, "O great King, the shastras declare that the oldest son must be married first. King Drupada replied, "If it pleases you, take my daughter yourself, or give Draupadi in marriage to whomever of your brothers you like. Yudhisthira then said, "Your daughter, O King, shall be the common wife of all of us. It has been ordered by our mother. This jewel of a daughter has been won by Arjuna. It is a standard rule amongst us that we enjoy equally what we obtain. That rule of conduct we shall not abandon. Krishna [Draupadi] shall become the wedded wife of all of us.

King Drupada was confused by Yudhisthira's decision, "O scion of the Kuru race, it has been declared that one man may have many wives. But it has never been heard that one woman may have many husbands. O son of Kunti, you are conversant with the rules of morality and opposed to sinful acts. Please tell me, O Prince, on what basis have you made your decision?

As they were discussing, the great Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa appeared on the scene. He was given a proper reception and an elevated seat. King Drupada then inquired, "O esteemed sage, you very much welcomed in my court. At this time there is something that is troubling us, and I am sure that you can settle the matter. Please tell me how one woman can become the wife of many men without being touched by sin.

Wanting to speak with Drupada in private, Vyasa arose from his seat and took the monarch by the hand, leading him away to his quarters. The others waited for the return of the great sage. Vyasa then explained that in Draupadi's previous birth she had prayed to Lord Shiva to obtain an elevated husband. Since she asked Lord Shiva five times, Shiva appeared before her and gave her a benediction that she would have five husbands. Vyasadeva then informed King Drupada that the Pandavas in their previous births were demigods and eternal associates of the Supreme Lord. Vyasadeva then granted divine vision to Drupada so that he could see who the Pandavas were in their previous lives. King Drupada was then convinced that it was the desire of higher authorities, and he agreed to the marriage proposal.

The day the marriage ceremony took place, the moon had entered the constellation of Pushya which is considered very auspicious. King Drupada planned a grand and opulent ceremony. The palace was decorated beautifully. Flags and festoons hung from the ceilings of the different rooms and thousands of multi-colored garlands were draped everywhere. The whole palace was alive with excitement, and people were moving here and there making the necessary preparations. When the marriage ceremony began, Dhaumya, the priest of the Pandavas, lit the sacrificial fire with mantras recited from the Vedic literatures. He then called the Pandavas one by one and had them circumambulate the fire, each holding the hand of Draupadi. King Drupada then bestowed upon the Pandavas an opulent dowry consisting of one hundred golden chariots, each drawn by magnificent horses with golden bridles. He

also gave them one hundred elephants endowed with auspicious marks. He gave jewels, gold, bedding, carpets and maidservants. He gave all this out of affection for his beautiful daughter.

After the marriage ceremony was over, Lord Krishna, the Infallible Lord, sent to the Pandavas many presents such as golden ornaments set with pearls and lapis lazuli, many beautiful and soft blankets, carpets and golden chariots. He also gave them many well-trained elephants and many excellent horses. He gave them hundreds and thousands of gold coins and many precious jewels. Yudhisthira, feeling great devotion, accepted all those gifts from Lord Krishna, whom he always thought of in the core of his heart.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Sixteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Pandavas Marry Draupadi.

#### Chapter Commentary

King Dhritarastra had planned to kill the Pandavas by burning them in a house of lac. This so-called reversal for the Pandavas turned out to be a benediction, because they acquired Draupadi as their wife, and they developed a more intimate friendship with Lord Krishna, the Supreme Person. They also acquired an alliance with the most powerful King Drupada. The devotees of the Lord never lament when reversals come upon them. They take these reversals as the mercy of God. As stated in the Shrimad Bhagavatam, "One who seeks Your compassion and thus tolerates all kinds of adverse conditions due to the karma of his past deeds, who engages always in Your devotional service with his mind, words and body, and who always offers obeisances unto You, is certainly a bona fide candidate for liberation. (S.B.10.14.8) This is part of Lord Brahma's prayers to Lord Krishna. Brahma offered prayers to Lord Krishna after he had been humbled by Lord Krishna's mystic potency. This quotation explains how we should accept reversals. When impediments come to a devotee, he does not complain, but continues his service to the Lord, knowing that he must be given a slight punishment for sins committed in the past. No harm can ever come to a devotee and even seeming reversals turn out favorable in the end.

In Vedic culture all actions were seen through the eye of scripture. Vedic culture was set up to elevate a person to a high standard of life. By following the Vedic injunctions a person could prosper both materially and spiritually. King Drupada had a doubt, and rightly so, about marrying his daughter to five men, because this was not sanctioned by scripture. In the Vedic times the kings were trained in sastra so they could lead society on the right path. It is unfortunate that today all scripture has been taken out of the schools on the basis of a secular society. Even in India, the mother land of religion, Bhagavad-gita is no longer taught in the school system. It is no wonder then that the youth are imitating the westerners and taking up a life of sense gratification that will lead them to an animal birth in the next life.

## Chapter Seventeen

### Khandavaprastha

News spread quickly that Draupadi had been married to the Pandavas, and that Arjuna was the brahmana who had pierced the eye of the fish and defeated Karna in battle. Everyone thought that the Pandavas had died along with their mother in the house of lac. They now regarded the Pandavas as persons resurrected from the dead. They remembered the cruel scheme of Purochana and cursed Dhritarastra again and again. After the svayamvara was over, all the kings and princes returned to their respective kingdoms. When Duryodhana heard that Draupadi had selected Arjuna as her lord, he was greatly despondent. He left the city of Kampilya accompanied by his brothers, Ashvatthama, Shakuni, Karna and Kripa. Understanding that the mighty sons of Pritha had escaped from the house of lac and were allied with King Drupada, the sons of Dhritarastra were embarrassed and frustrated that their plan had not succeeded.

When Vidura learned that Draupadi had been won by the Pandavas and that Duryodhana and his allies had been humiliated, he was elated. Approaching Dhritarastra, Vidura exclaimed, "The Kurus are faring well by the grace of God! Dhritarastra thought that Vidura was referring to his sons and that Duryodhana had won the competition for Draupadi. He immediately ordered ornaments made for Draupadi and that Duryodhana and his new wife be brought to Hastinapura in great pomp. It was then that Vidura told the blind King that Draupadi had chosen the Pandavas as her lords. Vidura told Dhritarastra that the Pandavas were alive and well. He also informed his brother that the Pandavas had made a pact of friendship with the family of King Drupada and also many other families including the Yadu and Vrishni dynasties.

Dhritarastra pretended he was cheerful to hear news of the Pandava's success and well being. Actually the news broke his heart. He said to Vidura, "To hear that the sons of my brother are living is good news. They are more dear to me than my own sons. I am delighted to hear that they now have many friends and that the great Drupada is their ally.

"Let this realization remain within your heart for one hundred years, Vidura replied. Vidura then returned to his own residence.

Duryodhana then approached his father pouring grief from his evil heart, "The Pandavas have now become invincible by the will of Providence. O Father, we should now act to weaken their strength. The time has come to assemble the Kurus and discuss how the Pandavas may not swallow us.

"You should be happy, King Dhritarastra replied, "and I will do whatever you recommend. But I do not wish to inform Vidura of this meeting. If you have some plan, then reveal it here so it will remain a secret.

The sinister Duryodhana then revealed his thoughts, "Let us, O Father, by some means produce dissension between the sons of Kunti and the sons of Madri. Or let us win to our side King Drupada by means of gifts and wealth. Perhaps we can send spies who can kill Bhima, and without his strength, the Pandavas can be easily defeated. Or maybe we can send some celestial girls to the Pandavas as a gift, and Draupadi, being neglected, will leave them. By some means we must deflate the power of the Pandavas.

Karna then spoke his mind, "O Duryodhana, your reasoning is not well founded. O brave Prince, you have tried many times to kill the Pandavas by subtle methods, while they were living in the palace and still young. Now they have matured and are more powerful in strength. How then will you defeat them by these methods? Also it is impossible to disunite them. Draupadi chose them when they were in poverty. Will she now neglect them when they are in prosperity? King Drupada is honest and truthful, and by no means can we tempt him with gifts. Dhristadyumna has made a strong pact of friendship with the Pandavas which cannot be broken by offers of wealth. I think we should now attack them, and by our power decimate them from the face of the earth. We should attack now when they are not prepared. Exert your prowess before the Yadu and Vrishni dynasties are able to support the Pandavas. Prowess is the symbol of a kshatriya. We should assault them, supported by our large army, and grind Drupada and the Pandavas into the earth.

King Dhritarastra applauded Karna's opinion as heroic. "You are gifted with intelligence and power," he said. "But before we take action, let us take counsel with Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, and adopt a plan of action that will suit our purpose.

King Dhritarastra then summoned Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and other elders to the court. When asked by Dhritarastra to give his opinion, Maharaja Bhishma replied, "O Dhritarastra, I would never advise a quarrel with the Pandavas. I have affection for you in the same as I have affection for Pandu, and of course, I look upon your sons as well as the sons of Pandu equally. I think a settlement should be concluded and half the kingdom should be given to them. As Duryodhana looks upon the kingdom as his own, so the sons of Kunti look upon it as theirs. In fact, they are the lawful heirs to the throne. If you act aggressively, a sinful reaction will befall you. You will be veiled with dishonor and will lose your good name. Are you aware how the citizens talk about you? The citizens have more affection for the Pandavas, and if you kill them, what will be your fate? It is said that a person has lived in vain who loses his reputation. A person who becomes famous because of his good deeds lives eternally. O Duryodhana, follow the path worthy of a Kuru king. We are fortunate that the Pandavas and their mother have not perished. We are fortunate that the sinful Purochana was not successful and that he himself was killed. From the time I heard that the sons of Pandu had been burnt in the house of lac, I could not face any citizen of the state. O Duryodhana, upon hearing about the attempted murder of the Pandavas and their mother Kunti, the world does not blame Purochana as much as it blames you. As long as the Pandavas live, they cannot be deprived of their rightful share, even by the powerful Indra. They are being deceitfully kept from their inheritance, and therefore you should give them half the kingdom.

After Maharaja Bhishma had finished, Drona gave his opinion, "Bhishma has spoken wisely. We must give the Pandavas half the kingdom. Messengers should be sent to the kingdom of the Panchalas with a gift of wealth for the Pandavas. Let Yudhishthira know that both yourself and your son are truly happy that they are alive. Also, you should make an alliance between the Kurus and the dynasty of King Drupada. The Pandavas should be invited to Hastinapura and greeted like kings. Those exalted princes should be brought to Hastinapura and given their rightful claim. Yudhishthira is the heir to world sovereignty. Therefore, let him become king. This will bring joy to all the people of the world.

After Drona had given his opinion, Vidura said, "O King, Bhishma and Drona have wisely spoken as your well wishers. However, I doubt you can accept their advice because of affection for your son. Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, always gives you good counsel. Drona, the preceptor, has never once offered any ill advice. Without a doubt, O King, both of these great men are comparable to Lord Ramachandra and the great King Gaya. These two great souls have never harmed you. The words of your son and the words of Karna will lead to the extinction of your dynasty. The Pandavas can never be defeated in battle. Arjuna alone is able to subdue all these princes. With Krishna, the eternal Lord, and Balarama as their allies, how do you think you can usurp the kingdom? Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni are sinister and foolish; and if you remember, I predicted at Duryodhana's birth that he would cause the annihilation of this dynasty. Do not be influenced by sinful people.

Hearing the advice given by the Kuru elders, which was meant for his welfare, Dhritarashtra concluded, "The learned Bhishma, and the great Rishi Drona, and you also, O Vidura, have spoken the truth. The sons of Pandu are entitled to a share of the kingdom as are my sons. Therefore, O Vidura, go to the Panchala kingdom and induce the Pandavas to come here along with their wife Draupadi. Take with you various presentations such as jewels, horses, chariots and gold. It is by good fortune that the sons of Pandu are still alive.

Vidura then went to the city of Kampilya and requested the Pandavas to come to Hastinapura. With the permission of Lord Krishna and King Drupada, the Pandavas started for the city of elephants. As the Pandavas approached the city of Hastinapura, certain heroes of the Kuru dynasty, such as Vikarna, Drona, Chitrasena and Kripa of Gautama's line, came out to greet them. The whole city became alive as the Pandavas approached. The citizens gathered in thousands and showered flowers upon the saintly Pandavas. The affectionate sons of Pandu enlivened the citizens as the sun enlivens the lotus flower in the early morning. The Pandavas heard the words of the citizens as they moved through the crowd. Some of them said, "Here is Yudhishthira, the first son of Pandu, conversant with all the rules of morality, and who always protects us as if we were his nearest relatives. Other citizens said, "It seems that King Pandu, the foremost among the descendants of the Kuru dynasty, has returned today after a long absence. If we have ever given in charity, if we have ever performed any pious activities, let the Pandavas remain in this great city for one hundred years.

The Pandavas entered the city to the sounds of trumpets, bugles, conchshells, drums and kettledrums. The citizens waved their upper cloths and threw flowers before the procession of those pious souls. Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva as well as their mother Queen Kunti entered the palace at Hastinapura in state. They worshipped the feet of King Dhritarastra as well as grandfather Bhishma and then entered the rooms assigned to them.

After they had rested for some time, they were called to the court by King Dhritarastra and Shantanu's son, Bhishma. When they had been seated properly, Dhritarastra spoke to them, "Listen, O Yudhishthira, to what I have to say. I want you to reside in Khandavaprastha so that no quarrels may arise between yourselves and my sons. I am sure if you live there no harm will come to you, protected as you are by the strong arms of Partha. You may rule over this half of the kingdom. Agreeing to the commands of their uncle, the Pandavas made arrangements to travel to Khandavaprastha.

After Yudhishthira was crowned the King of Khandavaprastha, he, along with his brothers and their beautiful queen, set out for that tract of land. The history behind this half of the kingdom is that at one time it had been the capital of the Kuru ancestors, but due to the curse of the rishis, it had turned into a barren waste. Nothing would grow there and no animals lived there. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing but desert. Lord Krishna had accompanied the Pandavas and upon seeing the situation summoned Indra, the King of heaven, and ordered him, "The Kuru monarch has magnanimously given this tract of land to the Pandavas. I want you to pour rain over this entire region and make it beautiful. Make it so fertile that the finest fruit trees and most fragrant flowers will grow in this region. Also the finest crops should grow in the land of Khandavaprastha. From this time on, because you will beautify this region, it will be known as Indraprastha. Make it as beautiful as Indraloka.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then called for Vishvakarma and ordered him to construct a city for the Pandavas. By his mystic power Vishvakarma was able to construct a beautiful city that was dazzling in all respects. Vyasadeva was there to consecrate the new city with mantras from the Vedic hymns. The city was indeed beautiful with its nicely aligned roads and symmetrical houses. The mansions were made of first class marble, and the walls, inside and out, were embedded with precious gems. At different places within the city there were gardens of a transcendental nature. Within the gardens were small lakes decorated with different colors of lotus flowers. These gardens were filled with fruit trees of every description, and beautiful birds such as the peacock, cuckoo, parrots and chakravakas were seen here and there. When the city was complete, men and women from all classes came to live under the protection of the saintly sons of Pritha. All these citizens were pious and devoted to the cause of the Pandavas. With Lord Krishna living in the city as the most beautiful ornament, Indraprastha appeared like Vaikuntha, the spiritual world.

After some time Lord Krishna took leave of the Pandavas and returned to His capital city Dvaraka. The celestial sage Narada then came to Indraprastha. He was received

in the palace of the Pandavas with great respect. Draupadi also came and offered her respects to the great sage, and after receiving benedictions from him, retired to her own chambers. Narada then advised the Pandavas in private, "This beautiful princess is your common wife. Some rule must be established so that you do not quarrel amongst yourselves. In former days there lived two brothers named Sunda and Upasunda who were inseparable and could not be killed by anyone. However, when they saw the beauty of the heavenly apsara Tilottama, they quarreled over her and killed each other. Do not let this happen to you.

Hearing these words of wisdom from the great sage Narada, the brothers decided that Draupadi would live with each of them for one year at a time. If it so happened that one of the brothers were to enter another brother's palace where Draupadi was staying without permission, that brother must enter the forest for one year as a punishment.

After establishing this rule, the Pandavas resided happily in Indraprastha. One day providence arranged that some thieves stole the cows of a certain brahmana. The brahmana came to Indraprastha and complained to Arjuna. Arjuna said he would help the brahmana, but that he could not do it immediately, for his bow was in the chambers where King Yudhisthira and Draupadi were sitting. The brahmana wanted immediate action before the thieves went too far. Arjuna had to surrender to the brahmana's demands and entered the chambers where Yudhisthira and Draupadi were residing. He told King Yudhisthira why he had entered and then took his weapons. Arjuna seated the brahmana on his chariot and with great speed followed the same path the thieves had taken. Following their tracks, he soon caught and pierced them with his arrows. He retrieved the cows and the satisfied brahmana bestowed his blessings upon Arjuna. Arjuna then returned to Indraprastha. At that time Partha approached King Yudhisthira and said, "Give me permission, O lord, to fulfill the vow that we had all taken. I had entered the room when you were sitting with Draupadi. I shall, therefore, enter the forest for one year. King Yudhisthira tried to persuade him from his resolution, but it was no use. Arjuna was determined to go to the forest.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Seventeenth Chapter of the Adi Parva Entitled, Khandavaprastha.

## Chapter Commentary

Dhritarastra was truly blind in all respects, both spiritually and materially. Due to his affection for his deceitful son, he could not understand the right path to take. Although given good advice by Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, still he could not give up his affection for Duryodhana. Duryodhana attracted persons of the same mentality. Shakuni, Karna, Duhsasana, Asvatthama and others were deceitful by nature and were not fit persons to rule the world or act as advisers. As this age of Kali yuga progressed, kings of the Duryodhana mentality gained power. Because of their devious nature the citizens lost faith in them. As seen in this chapter the citizens were cursing Dhritarastra and Duryodhana for their conspiracy to kill the Pandavas. As this age progresses, things will get worse and worse.

In this material world there is always some happiness and distress. Sometimes we gain something and again we lose it. There is always some upheaval. The dualities of the material world exist as long as we identify with the material body. If we think that we are this body, we will be disturbed by happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor, etc. The symptom of a liberated soul is that he is transcendental to these temporary situations. The Pandavas, as we will see, are about to lose their acquired kingdom. However, because they took shelter of Lord Krishna in all circumstances, their so called distress turned out to be happiness. For liberated souls there is never distress as we experience it in this world.

## Chapter Eighteen

### Arjuna Goes on Pilgrimage

After leaving Indraprastha in the dress of a mendicant, Arjuna came to the bank of the Ganges. He entered the celestial waters to bathe, and while coming out he was seized by some unknown force. Actually it was Ulupi, the daughter of the King of the snakes. She was overcome by the handsome features of Arjuna and thus bitten by Cupid's arrows. She took him below the waters of the Ganges to her mansion. Arjuna then addressed her smilingly, "O beautiful girl, you have certainly performed a rash act! Where have you brought me and whose daughter are you?"

"There is a Naga (snake) king named Kauravya, Ulupi replied, "born in the line of Airavata. I am, O Prince, the daughter of that king and my name is Ulupi. O tiger among men, seeing you bathing in the waters of the Ganga, I have been bitten by the arrows of Cupid. O sinless one, I am still unmarried, and if it pleases you, I can become your wife.

"I have entered the forest for one year Arjuna said, "to perform atonement for breaking a promise to my brother Yudhisthira. I am not free to act in any way I like. I must strictly undergo the vow of brahmacharya for the period of one year. How, therefore, can I fulfill your desires?"

"I know why you are wandering the earth, Ulupi replied. "Draupadi is your common wife, and by accident you have entered the room where she was sitting with Yudhisthira. Thus you have broken a vow that was made in this connection. But this vow of celibacy is only in relation to Draupadi. Therefore, O Arjuna, it is your duty to relieve my distress. I am your worshiper, and if you do not accept me, I will give up this life.

Thus supplicated by the daughter of the Naga king, Arjuna, the son of Kunti, did everything that she desired. The mighty Arjuna spent that night in the mansion of Ulupi, and in the morning she took him back to the bank of the Ganges. Before leaving she gave him a benediction, "You will be able to defeat every creature of the waters.

Arjuna then traveled to the base of the Himalayan mountains and then east toward the ocean. He then came to the province of Manipur, and desiring to meet the king of that country, he went to his palace. The King of Manipur was Chitravahana, and while in his court, Arjuna happened to see Chitrangada, the beautiful daughter of the King. He was astonished by her beauty and immediately petitioned the King for her hand in marriage. Not recognizing Arjuna because of his ascetic dress, the King inquired, "Who are you, and to what dynasty do you belong?"

"I am Arjuna, the son of Pandu and Kunti, Arjuna replied. The King informed Arjuna, "There was a previous monarch belonging to our dynasty whose name was Prabhanjana. Although he had many queens, he was childless. He underwent severe penances and austerities, and thus he pleased Lord Shiva, who granted him the benediction of a child. However, Lord Shiva told him that each successive king would also only have one child. Each of my forefathers has begotten a son, but I have given birth to a daughter. I will give you my daughter on the condition that the son born from her will be given to me as the next king of Manipur. Arjuna agreed to the proposal, and thus he married Chitrangada and lived happily for three months in that kingdom.

Arjuna then traveled on pilgrimage to different places in South India. At one holy tirtha, he delivered the Panchapsaras. These Apsaras (beautiful heavenly maidens) were cursed by a great rishi to become alligators. They were cursed to take that form for one-hundred years. Arjuna came to that sacred lake and pulled all five alligators out of the waters. The alligators immediately returned to their normal features as beautiful Apsaras. They then thanked Arjuna and left for the heavenly planets.

Arjuna then went north to the city of Dvaraka. When the sons of the Vrishni dynasty were learning archery from Drona at Hastinapura, Arjuna's good friend had been Gada, one of Lord Krishna's cousins. Gada had told Arjuna about his cousin

Subhadra. Arjuna had heard so much about her beauty that he always thought of her. Arjuna was curious and wanted to see her. He thought that since he was dressed as a mendicant, no one would recognize him. With this in mind, he went to Prabhasakshetra near the city of Dvaraka. Arjuna sat underneath a banyan tree, and suddenly it began to rain. He thought deeply of Lord Krishna and hoped He would help him. Lord Krishna was staying that night in the palace of His wife Satyabhama. He had heard that a sadhu had arrived at Prabhas, and because He is the Paramatma within everyone's heart, He knew that it was Arjuna. Lord Krishna began laughing, and wanting to know about the situation, Satyabhama questioned Him. He then replied to her, "My cousin Arjuna has been on pilgrimage for several months and now has come to Dvaraka seeking marriage with Subhadra. Indeed, his heart is filled with thoughts of her. He is sitting under a banyan tree at Prabhas in the pouring rain. I must go and welcome him to Dvaraka.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the benefactor of His devotee, then went to Prabhas in the rain and greeted His friend who was sitting under a banyan tree. They embraced, and Lord Krishna was smiling to see His friend in the guise of an ascetic. Arjuna told Krishna of his plan to marry Subhadra, and Krishna agreed to the proposal. Lord Krishna then took Arjuna to Raivataka mountain and told him to reside there for a few days.

One day there was a procession of the Yadus and the Vrishnis traveling to the holy Raivataka mountain. They were coming to worship the gods in the temple. In that procession Arjuna saw the beautiful Subhadra, and as he was contemplating her features, he felt that someone was near him. Arjuna looked up and saw it was Lord Krishna. Smiling, Lord Krishna said, "The attraction in your eyes doesn't seem to fit the dress you are wearing. Arjuna replied, "Please do not tease me. Tell me the truth. Is that Your sister Subhadra who just passed in the procession? Krishna replied, "Yes, that is Subhadra. If you are very interested in her, I will tell My father about your desire. Arjuna said, "I want to marry her. Please tell me how she can become my wife. Krishna replied, "I think if you sit in the temple courtyard there, everything will take its destined course. Lord Krishna then left and mingled with His relatives.

Arjuna, in an ascetic's dress, then sat in the courtyard of the temple, and when the worship in the temple was over, the members of the Yadu dynasty headed by Lord Balarama came out and saw the young sage sitting under a tree in deep meditation. The son of Rohini was impressed with the young sage and went over to him. Arjuna was very nervous because he knew of Balarama's anger. Lord Balarama was already in favor of handing His sister over to Duryodhana. Therefore Arjuna had to be careful not to reveal his identity. Lord Balarama fell prostrate before the young sannyasi and asked him who he was and why he had come to Dvaraka. Arjuna told Lord Baladeva that he was on pilgrimage, and that since it was the rainy season, he needed somewhere to stay. The carrier of the club and plough then suggested the gardens of His sister Subhadra, since it would give a chance for His sister to serve a great ascetic. Besides, He lived close by and the sannyasi could take his meals occasionally at His palace.

Lord Krishna came up to them at this time and offered obeisances to the so-called sannyasi. Lord Krishna was playing the part of an ordinary human being and to set the example for society in general, He offered obeisances to the sannyasi although the whole world bows down to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. Lord Baladeva then told Krishna of His plan, and Krishna expressed His displeasure, "I do not think it advisable for this ascetic to associate with our sister. We don't know anything about him. He is young and handsome, and Subhadra could be attracted to him. But You are wiser than I am, and ultimately you should make the decision. Lord Balarama replied, "This sannyasi has traveled all over the world and has completely controlled his senses. There is no harm in letting him stay in Subhadra's gardens.

Lord Krishna, acting like an ordinary human being, agreed and took Arjuna to meet Subhadra. Krishna introduced the so-called sannyasi to His sister and informed her of the desires of Lord Baladeva. Subhadra then took the ascetic to the gardens and gave him a place to stay. She served him day after day by getting him water and food to eat. Arjuna would sometimes go to the palace of Lord Balarama and take his meals there. Subhadra would come too, and Arjuna would always look upon her beautiful features. Balarama was much pleased with the great ascetic. Subhadra sometimes could not understand why the ascetic looked at her with burning eyes.

In the city of Dvaraka the name of Arjuna was a household word. When young children challenged each other, it was in the name of Arjuna; and if elders blessed young children, it would be in hopes they would become like Arjuna. Subhadra had heard much about Arjuna, especially from Gada. She developed an attraction for Arjuna by hearing about him, just as Rukmini had developed an attraction for Lord Krishna by hearing His glories. Lord Krishna would also tell her about the wonderful qualities of Arjuna; and if anyone came from Indraprastha, she would inquire about Arjuna from them. From the descriptions given by all these persons, Subhadra began to think that maybe this sannyasi was Arjuna.

One day Subhadra began to question him, "People say that you have traveled all over Bharatvarsha. In your travels surely you must have visited Indraprastha. In that city lives my aunt Kunti and my cousins, the Pandavas. Have you met them? The so-called sannyasi said that he had.

"I have heard, Subhadra continued, "that Arjuna has been away from Indraprastha and traveling on pilgrimage like you are. Have you by chance met him?

"Oh yes, Arjuna replied, "I have met him. In fact, I know where he is at the present moment.

"Where? asked Subhadra in an excited voice.

"I will tell you, Arjuna replied, "Arjuna has taken the dress of a sannyasi and is sitting in your garden. How is it that you have not recognized me so far? Subhadra's face turned red and she looked down. She didn't know what to say. Arjuna explained that he was very attracted to her and wanted to marry her. She listened without speaking a word of reply, and then went away to her chambers.

Lord Krishna, the Omniscient Lord, is the Supersoul of every living entity. He knew the inner desires of both, and thus he went to Arjuna and told him to kidnap her as was the custom amongst the kshatriyas. Arjuna went to Vasudeva and Devaki and took their permission; and on the right day, when Subhadra was visiting the temples of the devas, Arjuna grabbed her by force and took her away. Lord Krishna had given Arjuna His own chariot which was drawn by His horses, Saivya, Meghampuspa, Sugriva, and Balahaka. After taking the beautiful Subhadra on the chariot, he headed in the direction of Indraprastha with the greatest speed.

Everyone soon learned that the so-called sannyasi was Arjuna and that he had forcibly taken Subhadra away. Balarama was furious and wanted to kill Arjuna. Lord Krishna came before Him and pacified Him. He said, "Do not be so angry, My dear brother. Let us consider what has happened. Subhadra has accompanied Arjuna willingly. In fact she readied My chariot and horses and even drove the chariot for Arjuna. Surely she has chosen Arjuna as her lord. What better husband could we have chosen for our sister? He is the brightest jewel in the house of the Kurus. Our families are now more closely allied. Let us go to Indraprastha and make peace with them. Balarama was convinced by the arguments of His brother and His anger ceased. They all then made plans to attend the wedding ceremony of Arjuna and Subhadra in Indraprastha.

Meanwhile, Arjuna reached the city limits of Indraprastha. He thought of Draupadi and how she would be angry about what had happened. He told Subhadra, "Draupadi will be angry. You must win her affection first. Go to her in the dress of a cowherd girl and say that you are her maidservant. Then tell her that you are Subhadra, the sister of Krishna. She will be charmed, and if she finds out later that I have married you, it will not matter. Subhadra followed Arjuna's instructions.

Subhadra then went to the chambers of Draupadi in her simple cowherd dress. She offered obeisances to Draupadi and said, "I am the sister of Krishna, Subhadra. Please consider me your maidservant. Draupadi embraced her and blessed her with sweet words, "May you be the wife of a hero and the mother of a hero. They sat down and talked for hours about Lord Krishna and Dvaraka.

Suddenly, there was a commotion in the streets of Indraprastha. It was announced that Arjuna had arrived. The streets became crowded, and everyone was overjoyed to see their hero return. They showered him with flowers and spoke of him in sweet words. He soon reached the palace and was greeted by his brothers. He went to Draupadi and inquired if she had heard any news. Draupadi said, "I have already met the cow herd girl. She is very beautiful and welcome in the palace.

Within a few days the Yadus headed by Lord Krishna and Balarama entered the city of Indraprastha and were given a royal reception by the Pandavas and the citizens. Together they celebrated the marriage ceremony of Arjuna and Subhadra. Many costly presents were given by the Yadus and Vrishnis, and after enjoying the ceremony, they went back to Dvaraka City. However, Lord Krishna remained in Indraprastha just to give His association to the Pandavas.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Eighteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, Arjuna Goes on Pilgrimage.

### Chapter Commentary

One may question how it is possible for a devotee like Arjuna to be attracted by so many women and at the same time be a pure devotee. The devotees of Lord Krishna cannot be swayed by lust; they are free from all material desires. The answer is that Arjuna was playing the part of a kshatriya (king). All kings were married even if they were pure devotees. The role of a king is that he must be an ideal householder. It was known that King Dasaratha, the father of Lord Ramachandra, had 350 wives, but one cannot say that he was a lusty person. It was common in those days that kings take a number of wives and support them in great opulence. The pure devotees of the Lord are always under the influence of the internal energy of the Lord (yogamaya). Arjuna apparently fell under the sway of family affection just before the Kurukshetra war. He didn't want to kill his relatives. That incident happened by the will of the Lord Krishna so the Bhagavad-gita could be spoken. Similarly, these pastimes of Arjuna are not like the lustful attraction men feel for women in this world, although they appear to be so. Arjuna's gusto to get Subhadra as his wife is because of her relationship to Lord Krishna. Arjuna's attraction for Krishna was far greater than the attraction of any woman of this world. An aspiring devotee cannot imitate Arjuna and at the same time think himself a follower of Lord Krishna. There is a class of people called sahajiyas who imitate Krishna's dancing with the gopis. They engage in illicit sex and at the same time think themselves liberated. Lord Krishna's rasa dance was free from any tinge of lust. We must be very careful in judging eternally liberated souls; we have to follow their instructions and not imitate them.

## Chapter Nineteen

### Devouring of the Khandava Forest

It was now summertime and the heat had become unbearable. Arjuna went to Lord Krishna and suggested, "Dear Krishna, let us go to the Yamuna. We can spend the day there and come back in the evening. Lord Krishna welcomed the proposal, and they made preparations to go to the Yamuna River, near the Khandava forest. The ladies, including Draupadi, Subhadra, and Satyabhama, also went on the excursion. They set up an encampment near the bank of that sacred river. Leaving the ladies in their tents, Lord Krishna and Arjuna rode in their chariots along the Yamuna bank.

They soon came upon the Khandava forest, which was so thick with trees that no sunlight could penetrate it. It was inhabited by ferocious animals and was the home of the serpent king Takshaka. The whole forest had a terrifying appearance to it. Lord Krishna and Arjuna sat on a fallen tree at the perimeter of the forest and began talking.

While the two heroes were conversing, a certain brahmana came to them. This brahmana had a complexion like molten gold. His eyes and beard were both red. Lord Krishna and Arjuna stood up to offer respect to the brahmana. They seated him and asked if they could satisfy him with any service. The brahmana then said, "I know You, Lord Krishna, to be the Supreme Godhead and you, Arjuna, to be His eternal companion. Therefore you are both capable of fulfilling my desires. I am very hungry, and wish that you satisfy my hunger.

"If you tell us what kind of food you desire, Arjuna replied, "then we will try to satisfy you to the best of our ability.

"I do not eat ordinary food, the brahmana said. "Actually, I am Agni, the fire god. I have been waiting a long time for you both to come here. Previously, in a sacrifice to the demigods, I had been offered too much butter, and now I am suffering from sickness. The only cure is to devour this Khandava forest. However, every time I try to ignite it, Indra descends and safeguards it by pouring water from the heavens. He has a friend living in the forest named Takshaka, a certain king of the serpents whom he protects, and it is for this reason that I am not successful. I know that you both are expert in the divine astras; and if you can ward off the rain, then I can successfully devour the Khandava forest.

Upon hearing this unusual request, Arjuna said, "It is a fact that Krishna and I possess the divine astras. However, I do not own a suitable bow that is capable of bearing all of them. If I am to continue releasing arrows, I must also possess a quiver of arrows that is inexhaustible. I also require a chariot that is comparable to the sun and fine white horses with the speed of the wind. Then also Krishna needs some weapon with which to kill the serpents and ghosts that inhabit this region. If you can supply us with these necessities, then certainly we can help you.

Thus petitioned by Arjuna, the fire god Agni called for the demigod Varuna and appealed to him thus, "Here is Lord Krishna, the Supreme Person and His companion Arjuna. They are in need of certain weapons. You have in your possession a divine bow given to you by Soma and also two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. Please offer them as gifts and also supply the finest chariot drawn by white horses. Please give these for Arjuna is in need of them.

"These things that you ask for, Varuna replied, "eternally belong to these two great heroes. Here is the celestial Gandiva bow along with two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. This bow equals a hundred thousand bows and cannot be destroyed by any weapon. This multicolored bow that resembles a rainbow will enhance your fame and achievements.

After handing over the Gandiva bow, Varuna then gave Arjuna a golden chariot drawn by four white horses obtained from the regions of the Gandharvas. This chariot was invincible and could not be destroyed by the celestial denizens or the Asuras. It delighted the heart of anyone who saw it. Arjuna was emotional with gratitude. He offered obeisances to Agni and then forcefully strung the multi-colored bow. Whoever heard the twang of that bow was struck with fear. Varuna then gave the Sudarshana chakra to Lord Krishna.

"Formerly, my dear Lord, this weapon belonged to You, Varuna said. "It has been used to vanquish the demons and the asuras. I am returning it to You after a long time. Here also is Your mace named Kaumodaki, which is capable of killing every demon on earth or in the lower regions. Please use these weapons to again establish religious principles. Lord Krishna and Arjuna thanked Varuna and prepared to help Agni to fulfill his desires.

Agni then ignited the Khandava forest. The forest was soon surrounded on all sides by burning flames. All the living creatures in the forest were from demoniac species, and as they came out of the forest to escape the heat, they were killed by the arrows of Lord Krishna and Arjuna. As the flames rose in the forest, they seemed to reach the sky, and the demigods became alarmed. Indra, upon seeing the forest being consumed by Agni, caused dark clouds to appear over the region and pour torrents of rain. Water hit the fire causing the forest to be filled with smoke, and in combination with flashes of lightning, the forest became fearful to behold. Then the son of Pandu invoked his astras and covered the entire forest with his innumerable arrows that were as thick as fog.

It so happened that on that day Takshaka, the serpent King, was not in the forest. However, his son Aswasena was present and tried to escape the fire, but could not get outside the network of Arjuna's arrows. Aswasena along with his mother rose into the sky, and as they were making good their escape, Arjuna killed the mother. Indra saw all this, and desiring to save his friend's son, deprived Arjuna of his consciousness by a violent wind. While Arjuna was regaining his consciousness, the son of Takshaka escaped.

When Arjuna saw this, he became furious and wanted to fight with the powerful Indra. He began to release thousands of arrows that filled the whole sky. Indra then produced fierce winds that roared loudly. Masses of clouds began to vomit thunder and terrible flashes of lightning charged with thunderclaps were heard and seen in all directions. Arjuna then released the vayavya weapon to disperse the clouds sent by Indra. When the clouds were destroyed, the sun appeared in the sky again. Colossal birds then appeared and attacked Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Also innumerable Nagas (snakes), with mouths emitting poison and fire, attacked those two heroes. Seeing them approaching, Arjuna cut them to pieces with his arrows. Deprived of their lives, they fell into the fire below.

Indra next sent Asuras, Gandharvas, Yakshas and Rakshasas, who bellowed loudly causing the hearts of all to tremble. They poured upon Arjuna a deluge of arrows, but Partha struck off their heads with his own arrows. Indra, desirous of testing his son's strength, caused a heavy downpour of stones to fall upon Arjuna. Arjuna, however, destroyed that shower of rocks. Indra then released a mountain weapon. Arjuna cut that mountain top into thousands of pieces, and it fell into the forest, causing great distress to the demons and Rakshasas living there. They rose up to escape, but were killed by the discus of Lord Krishna.

When Indra and the demigods saw that Lord Krishna and Arjuna could not be defeated, they glorified the prowess of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Suddenly an unembodied voice from the heavens announced, "O Indra, your friend Takshaka has not been slain. He has presently gone to Kurukshetra . It is impossible for you to defeat Lord Krishna and Arjuna, for they are Narayana and Nara. Krishna is Narayana, the Supreme God, and Arjuna is Nara, his eternal companion. They are invincible in battle. They deserve the worship of all the demigods in heaven. You should, therefore, leave with the host of demigods; the destruction of the Khandava forest has been ordained by fate. Hearing these words, Indra, the destroyer of the Paka demon, left for his own abode accompanied by the demigods.

As the Khandava forest continued to blaze, an asura of the name Maya tried to escape from the abode of Takshaka. He was chased by Agni as well as Lord Krishna, who was ready to kill him with His disc. Seeing his certain death, Maya ran to Arjuna for shelter pleading, "Protect me, O Arjuna!"

"You need not fear for your life, Arjuna called out. "You will not be harmed. Because the demon took shelter of Arjuna, Krishna and Agni desisted from chasing him. The fire continued to rage for hours until the whole forest was burnt to ashes. Then Agni came to Lord Krishna and Arjuna and thanked them for their help. Due to devouring the forest, his health was now restored. Lord Krishna and Arjuna then returned to their camp.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Nineteenth Chapter of the Adi Parva, Entitled, The Burning of the Khandava Forest.

Thus Ends the Adi Parva Section to the Summary Study of Mahabharata.

## Chapter Commentary

The contents of this chapter are, seemingly, beyond our sensory experience. We can't imagine a person able to devour a forest by fire, because he ate too much ghee. This seems to be in the realm of mythology. However, the beings in charge of this universe are not ordinary mortals. They are beings empowered by the Supreme Lord. Just like the President has a cabinet to help him manage the government, so the Supreme Lord has administrators to help Him manage the universe. Beings like Brahma, Shiva, Indra, Varuna, Vayu, Soma, Surya and others are in charge of the universal elements. They are given powers capable of manipulating the material elements. However powerful they may seem, still, Lord Krishna is their origin. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita, "Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and the sages. (B.g. 10.2) These heavenly gods are not seen by the common person, especially in this age of Kali when people are devoid of good qualities.

Fire has a presiding deity, and his name is Agni. The wind and water are presided over by Vayu and Varuna respectively. The planets also have presiding deities. Soma rules the moon, Surya rules the Sun, etc. In order to administrate on behalf of the Lord, these beings are given super human powers not found on earth. They need these powers to do their job. The members of the presidential cabinet are given special powers by the president to do their jobs also. We should not be astonished to hear that a heavenly god devoured a forest by fire. Nothing is spectacular in relation to the Lord. Because something is beyond our sensory experience, we should not think it is mythology.

The Supreme Lord simply enjoys in the kingdom of God while the universe continues to perpetuate itself. Sometimes we see a picture of Atlas struggling to hold up the earth, but God is not like that. He doesn't struggle to create, maintain or annihilate this universe. He simply sets His energies into motion, and they do everything on His behalf. However, when Krishna descends to this earth, He does set an example for others to follow. "O son of Pritha, there is no work prescribed for Me within all three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I need of anything-- and yet I am engaged in work. (B.g. 3.22) He also states in the ninth chapter of the Gita, "This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings. By its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again. (B.g. 10.10)

One may ask how Lord Krishna received the Sudarshana chakra from Vayu if it eternally belongs to Him. When Lord Krishna appears on this earth, He displays pastimes like those of a human being. When we think of God, we sometimes think that He must act like we think He should act. However, God is God, and He can do

whatever He likes. If He wants to create a pastime where He receives one of His weapons from Varuna, He is free to do so. The heavenly god received the weapon originally from the Lord to begin with. The demigod is simply returning the property to its original owner.

Sabha Parva

Chapter One

Maya Danava Erects the Imperial Court

Before Lord Krishna and Arjuna had gone a great distance, the demon Maya Danava fell at their feet pleading, "You have spared my life, and for this I am very grateful. My name is Maya Danava, the architect of the demons. Please allow me to show appreciation for your merciful act."

Since the demon was looking at Arjuna, Arjuna replied, "I do not want anything in return for saving your life. It is my principle never to accept charity for performing a good deed. However, if you want to offer a gift, then ask Krishna what you can do for Him."

Lord Krishna thought for a moment and said, "You are the architect of the demons, capable of performing many wonderful feats. The Pandavas are very dear to me, and, therefore, I want you to construct an imperial court for them that will excel all on earth." Maya Danava readily agreed, and together they departed for Indraprastha.

Upon reaching the royal palace, Arjuna related to Yudhisthira all events that had transpired in relation to the burning of the Khandava forest. Maya Danava was then introduced to Yudhisthira, who welcomed him with great honor. Maya Danava greatly appreciated the humility of the King and considered him a saint amongst the kshatriyas. They then began discussions about the construction of an assembly hall that would have no equal in the universe. Maya Danava chose a plot of land that was 90,000 feet square to begin his work.

Now that Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had lived Indraprastha for some time, He desired to return to His own capital, Dvaraka. The Pandavas were very reluctant to let Him go. "You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead," Yudhisthira lovingly said; "that brightest moon that guides our boat to safety. You have given us everything, and, therefore, how can we agree to Your leaving us at this time? You are Hrishikesha, the master of our mind and senses. Please stay and always direct our thoughts and actions."

Lord Krishna declined the loving offer of Yudhisthira, but reassured His devotee that He would return whenever Yudhisthira called for Him. Lord Krishna then took leave of His Aunt Kunti, who affectionately smelled His head and embraced Him. He satisfied His sister Subhadra with sweet words and bestowed many blessings upon her. Then Lord Keshava ascended His chariot, and Yudhisthira took up the reins. Arjuna and Bhima stood on either side and fanned Him with chamara whisks. Nakula and Sahadeva stood behind, holding an umbrella over the Lord of the universe.

When the chariot had gone about two miles, Lord Krishna requested the Pandavas to return to their capital. He then affectionately bade farewell to the five brothers and proceeded toward Dvaraka. The Pandavas could not take their attention off the Supreme Person because of His exquisite beauty. Their eyes followed Him a great distance until He could be seen no more. They were unsatiated with the sight of Lord Krishna, and their minds accompanied Him to the city of Dvaraka. The Pandavas returned to the city of Indraprastha, but they always contemplated the transcendental qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Maya Danava was busy with preparations for constructing the great assembly hall. He approached Arjuna and informed him, "Near Mount Kailasa there are many jewels that I have secretly hidden. To the east of Mount Kailasa there is also a lake called Bindu, wherein lies a mace that was thrown by a king of the demons after killing his enemies. That mace is equal in power to a hundred thousand maces. It is a fit weapon for Bhima, even as the Gandiva is for you. Also, in the lake is a large conchshell named Devadatta which belongs to Varuna. The blast of that conchshell can be heard in all directions. I will bring that conch as a gift." Maya then took leave of Arjuna and went to Mount Kailasa.

Maya Danava searched for his great quantity of jewels and found them. He also entered Lake Bindu and found the powerful club and the conchshell Devadatta. He took those back to Indraprastha and presented the club to Bhimasena and the conchshell to Arjuna. The sound of this conchshell could break the heart of any opponent.

Maya then began to construct the great royal assembly house. It took him a full fourteen months, but it was, indeed, magnificent. The columns were golden and radiated an effulgence like the sun itself. The walls were embedded with thousands of multi-colored jewels, and the effulgence of the precious gems illuminated the entire palace. Within the palace Maya Danava placed water ponds that were lined with highly polished stone and filled with lotuses whose leaves resembled dark colored emeralds and whose stalks were made of precious jewels. There were also other flowers with golden leaves. The water was crystal clear and filled with a variety of fishes and tortoises of a golden hue. The pond was surrounded by a flight of crystal stairs, and it was difficult to understand where was water and where was land. Flowers inside and outside the palace bloomed in all seasons and were the finest variety.

When the palace was completed, Maya Danava informed Maharaja Yudhisthira, and a great celebration was planned. Thousands of brahmanas came and invoked

auspiciousness by chanting the Vedic hymns. Maharaja Yudhishthira gave thousands of cows in charity and fed the brahmanas sumptuously. He then entered this most opulent royal assembly court accompanied by his brothers. Kings and sages from every country came to see the wonderful Sabha (Royal court), and upon seeing it, they were struck with wonder. The fame of the assembly hall built by Maya spread far and wide, and even the demigods came to see it. Some of the princes who visited at this time stayed in Indraprastha to learn the science of archery from Arjuna. Chief amongst these princes was Satyaki, or Yuyudhana. He was a cousin of Lord Krishna. This was a happy time for the Pandavas, but it was like the lull before the storm. They were destined to enjoy their kingdom for only a few months more.

During this time Subhadra gave birth to a son named Abhimanyu. He was born with many auspicious marks. The astrologers foretold that he would be a great warrior and add fame to the Pandava dynasty. Draupadi also gave birth to a child by each of her husbands. From Yudhishthira, Prativindhya took birth, and Bhima's son was Sutasoma. Arjuna's son was Shrutakirti. Nakula's son was Sataneeka, and Sahadeva's son was Shrutasena. The sons matured with the good qualities of their fathers, including mastering the science of weapons.

One day while the Pandavas were sitting in their imperial assembly court, the great rishi Narada Muni came to see them. The Pandavas rose with excited hearts and offered their respects to the great sage. They seated him properly and washed his feet, offering him all kinds of presentations for his pleasure. Narada Muni was then shown the royal assembly hall by Maharaja Yudhishthira, and Narada appreciated the wonderful workmanship. When Narada was again seated, Yudhishthira began to inquire from the exalted sage, "My dear lord, you have traveled through the three worlds, and seen many elegant imperial assembly halls like the one I have. Can you tell me about them?"

"Yes, I have seen all the great sabhas of the universe," Narada smilingly said. "I will tell you about them. However, I have never seen an assembly hall anywhere that was built of such rare precious stones and jewels. This sabha defeats the beauty of the Sudharma imperial court in the heavenly planets."

Narada then described the different assembly houses, such as those of Indra and Yamaraja. He told Maharaja Yudhishthira that in the imperial court of Yamaraja there were many kings from the Kuru house, including Pandu and others. Narada then went on to describe the royal courts of Varuna and Kuvera.

When the narration was finished, the hall was silent. Narada waited for Yudhishthira to speak. "My lord," inquired Yudhishthira, "I have been listening to all the descriptions of the different sabhas, and I have noticed one thing. Most of the kings who were lords of this earth are all in the assembly house of Yamaraja rather than Indra's. Even my father, the great Pandu, was not in Indra's abode, as I was thinking all these years. I have heard from you that Harischandra of the solar dynasty is sitting on the throne of Indra. What pious activities did Harischandra perform that my father did not? My father was the purest of men and never spoke a

word of untruth. He was a saint amongst the kingly order. Please tell me why my father is not in the court of Indra."

Narada, who had come just to discuss this point, replied, "Certainly, I shall tell you. The great Harischandra was the son of Trishanku, the favorite of the sage Visvamitra. Harischandra was a powerful monarch and had conquered all the kingdoms of the earth. Because of his pious activities, he was able to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. For this reason he is able to share the same throne with Indra. The king who performs the Rajasuya sacrifice receives immense benefit in the heavenly realm. While I was in Yamaraja's abode, I met your father. He told me, 'My sons have become powerful on earth. If Yudhisthira performs the Rajasuya, I will be transferred to Indraloka, and also his fame will be spread far and wide.' This is the desire of your father. With your four brothers to help you and with Lord Krishna on your side, it will be possible for you to perform the Rajasuya. However, you must first conquer all the earthly kings. It is not an easy task, but I know you are capable of it. Reflecting on this, do as you think fit. I will go to Dvaraka City and request Lord Krishna to help you." Narada then left Indraprastha and ascended into the heavens, constantly chanting the glories of Lord Krishna.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the First Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Maya Danava Erects an Imperial Court.

## Chapter Commentary

Lord Krishna is the origin of all incarnations. He is the original Personality of Godhead, the master of all heavenly gods. As stated in Bhagavad-gita 4.8, "In order to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants as well as to establish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium." Before the appearance of Lord Krishna, Bhumi, the superintending deity of this earth, requested relief from the unnecessary military forces which burdened her. The demigods headed by Lord Brahma then went to the ocean of milk to pray to Lord Vishnu. Kshirodakasayi Vishnu answered the prayers of Brahma and appeared as the son of Devaki. Lord Krishna knows past, present and future. He could foresee the battle of Kurukshetra and its outcome. He remembered how in Vaikuntha His two doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya had been cursed by the four Kumaras to come to this material world. Jaya and Vijaya were to act as enemies of the Lord and allow Him to exhibit His fighting tendency.

The first births of Jaya and Vijaya were as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. They were killed by the Lord in His incarnations as Lord Nrisimhadeva and Lord Varaha

respectively. In the next birth they were Ravana and Kumbhakarna, and they were killed by the Lord in His incarnation as Lord Ramachandra. Now they had taken birth as Shishupala and Dantavakra and were destined to be killed by Lord Krishna. Krishna decided that Shishupala should die in an imperial court constructed by the demon Maya.

The Pandavas were always situated in a state of spiritual perfection. Due to their intimate association with the Lord, they could not forget Him at any time. They remembered His beautiful features, his loving glances and joking words. They remembered His unparalleled prowess and all of His pastimes. This is the process of transcending this material world. The kingdom of God is within all of us, and it has to be awakened by the process of hearing, chanting and remembering the Name, features and activities of the Supreme Godhead. What was available to the Pandavas is available to all of us by hearing the glories of the Lord from the Lord's bonafide representatives and scriptures. Hearing and chanting will lead to absorption in the Lord which will take one beyond this world of birth and death.

## Chapter Two

### King Yudhisthira Prepares for a Rajasuya Sacrifice

King Yudhisthira, having heard the advice of Narada, sighed heavily and engaged his thoughts in the matter of the Rajasuya sacrifice. He assembled his counsellors and ministers in the imperial court and worshiped them accordingly. They also venerated him in return. They then began to discuss preparations for the Rajasuya sacrifice. King Yudhisthira wanted to determine the ultimate good for all his citizens and not simply for his own personal glorification. That foremost of all virtuous men was always kind to his subjects and worked for the welfare of all without making distinctions. Being devoid of arrogance and anger, King Yudhisthira always said, "Give unto each his due." The citizens responded to such righteousness with the sounds, "Blessed be Dharma (Yudhisthira)! Blessed be Dharma!"

Receiving paternal assurance from Maharaja Yudhisthira, the citizens in his kingdom never harbored ever the slightest hostile feeling towards him. He therefore came to be known as Ajatrashatru (one with no enemy at all). The king cherished every citizen in his state as a personal family member.

Bhima, also, governed the citizens justly. Arjuna, the carrier of the Gandiva bow, protected everyone from any external enemies. The wise Sahadeva administered justice impartially, and Nakula behaved towards all with a humility that was inherent in him. Owing to the natural good qualities of the Pandavas, the kingdom became free from disputes and fear of any kind. The citizens were attentive to their

respective occupations and there was no such thing as unemployment. In King Yudhisthira's kingdom every one joyfully executed his occupational duties. The rain became so abundant that the fields produced more than their usual amount. The kingdom of the Pandavas grew in prosperity.

In consequence of the King's virtues, the money lenders, the cowherdsmen, the farmers and the traders grew in prosperity. During the reign of King Yudhisthira, whoever was devoted to truth, never experienced extortion, recession, fear of disease, fire, or death by poisoning or incantations. It was never heard at any time that thieves or royal favorites ever behaved inimically toward the King or towards one another. In other words, there was no crime in Maharaja Yudhisthira's domain.

Kings from other countries were always desiring to serve King Yudhisthira in order to please and worship him. The merchants of different classes were always happy to bring their taxes levied on their respective occupations. Whatever countries King Yudhisthira conquered, the citizens, from brahmanas to shudras, became more attached to him than to their own fathers and mothers.

After assembling his ministers and brothers, King Yudhisthira repeatedly questioned them about the possibility of performing the Rajasuya sacrifice. The ministers, as a body, then responded to the King, "O prince of the Kuru race, all in this assembly have concluded that you are worthy of the attributes of an emperor. Therefore, the time for you to perform the auspicious Rajasuya sacrifice is now. The time for that sacrifice, in which ascetic rishis kindle the six fires with mantras from the Sama Veda, has come for you in consequence of your kingly possessions. At the conclusion of the Rajasuya sacrifice, when the performer is installed as the world sovereign, he is rewarded the fruits of all other sacrifices, including the agnihotra. You are quite able, O noble King, to perform this sacrifice. Therefore, make your resolution to perform the Rajasuya without any further discussion."

King Yudhisthira, that foremost emperor, having heard the decision of his ministers agreed mentally. However, he again consulted with his brothers, the brahmanas, with Dhaumya, Dwaipayana and others. He wanted to be sure that this was not his own personal desire, but the desire of the Supreme. The King possessed great wisdom and had subjugated his mind and senses. He took everything into consideration including his own strength and means, the circumstances of time and place and his income and expenditure. He knew that the wise never grieve after giving full thoughtfulness to all points.

Thinking that the sacrifice should not commence only on his desire, the pious King Yudhisthira thought Lord Krishna to be the proper person to make the final decision. He knew Lord Krishna possessed infinite prowess and wisdom. He knew also that the Lord was birthless although apparently taking birth. Reflecting on the Godly qualities of Lord Krishna, Maharaja Yudhisthira concluded that there was nothing unknown to Him. Maharaja Yudhisthira, therefore, humbly requested Narada to go to Dvaraka to convey his desires to Lord Krishna.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, lived in the city of Dvaraka along with his sixteen thousand one hundred and eight queens. He built a separate palace for each and every one of them, and each queen thought that Krishna was living with her alone. The Lord would perform certain morning duties, and after He had completed them, He would leave His palaces and go to the Sudharma imperial court. His charioteer Daruka would come with the Lord's chariot, bow down before the Lord, and stand with folded hands, intimating that the chariot was ready. Holding on to His charioteer's hands, Lord Krishna would mount the chariot, together with Uddhava and Satyaki. While sitting on the dazzling chariot, Lord Krishna appeared more beautiful than the sun rising on the Eastern horizon. When the Lord was about to leave His palaces, all the queens and palace ladies would look at Him with shy, loving glances. The Lord would respond in a loving way, making separation very difficult. He attracted their hearts so much so that they could not forget Him for a moment during their daily activities. The Lord would say good-bye in all the sixteen thousand palaces, and again He would become one and enter the Sudharma Imperial court in procession with other members of the Yadu dynasty.

Then Lord Krishna, attended by all the Vrishnis, would enter the Imperial Royal court named Sudharma. The Sudharma Imperial Court had been taken away from the heavenly planets and reestablished in Dvaraka City. The uniqueness of the Royal Court was that anyone who entered it would be freed from the six kinds of material waves, namely hunger, thirst, lamentation, illusion, old age and death. As long as one remained in that imperial court of Sudharma, he would not be infected by these six material pangs.

After entering the imperial assembly house, Lord Krishna sat on the exalted royal throne, emanating a radiant aura of transcendental effulgence. In the midst of all the famed heroes of the Yadu dynasty, Lord Krishna resembled the full moon, surrounded by the multitude of luminous stars. In the imperial court professional jesters would entertain the Lord by displaying various comic moods. The jesters would joke in such a way that the Lord and His associates would laugh heartedly, refreshing the morning mood. One by one actors, female dancers and musicians would begin their respective functions to please the Lord and put Him in a happy mood. The dramatic actors would relive the lives of great kings and incarnations of the Lord, and the dancing girls would separately display their artistic movements. These performers would dance and sing to the sounds of mridangas (drum), vinas (stringed instrument), flutes, symbols and conchshells followed by the sound of the murajas, another type of drum.

Along with the melodic sounds of the instruments, the professional poets (sutras) chroniclers (magadhas) and panegyrists (vandinahs) would recite the Lord's glories. In the imperial court highly pious brahmanas were heard fluently and devotionally chanting the Vedic hymns, while other brahmanas narrated histories of past kings of pious renown. In this way, the residents of Dvaraka City would offer their respective services to the Supreme Personality of Godhead just to please Him. The Lord, accompanied by the other members of the Yadu dynasty, would be very much pleased to accept the loving devotion of His eternal associates.

Once, while this festive mood was in progress, a man arrived at the door of the imperial court, and with the permission of Lord Krishna, he was admitted into the assembly by the doorkeeper. The man bowed down to the Lord and then stood before Him with joined palms. With the permission of the Lord he then began to describe how King Jarasandha conquered all other kingdoms and how many kings did not accept subjugation before Jarasandha. As a result of their refusal, all of them, numbering twenty thousand, were arrested and incarcerated. This man was a messenger from these imprisoned kings, and he now presented their pleas before Lord Krishna, "O Krishna, Krishna, O inconceivable Soul, O destroyer of all fear for Your surrendered devotees, despite our unsundered mentality, we have come to You for shelter out of fear of material existence. People in this world are always diverted by sinful activities and are thus bewildered about their real duty, which is to worship You according to Your will. Devotional service to You is the only activity that would truly bring them good fortune. Let us offer our obeisances unto You, the all-powerful Lord, who appears as eternal time and frustrates one's stubborn hope for a long life in this world. You are the predominating Lord of the universe and have descended into this world with Your personal potency to protect the saintly devotees and annihilate the wicked. We cannot understand, O Lord, how anyone can transgress Your supreme will and still continue to enjoy his fruitive work.

"O Lord, we are engaged in these material bodies, and are thus always full of fear. We bear the burden of the illusory happiness of kings, which is just like a dream. Thus we have rejected the inner happiness of the soul, which comes by rendering unmotivated and selfless devotional service to You. Because of our wretched attachments, we simply suffer in this life under the enchantment of Your deluding energy. Therefore, since Your lotus feet relieve the material affliction of those who surrender to You, please release us from the shackles of our past sinful activities, which have now manifested in the form of the Magadha King, Jarasandha. Wielding alone the prowess of ten thousand maddened elephants, he has arrested us and locked us in his prison just as a lion captures sheep.

"O wielder to the disc! Your strength is unlimited and beyond human comparison, and thus seventeen times You crushed Jarasandha in battle. But then, absorbed in Your own pastimes, he appeared to defeat You once. Now he is so filled with pride that he thinks he can harass those who are Your devoted followers. O unconquerable Lord, You have descended to protect the pious and to annihilate those opposed to Your supreme will. Please fulfill Your mission by killing this Jarasandha."

"This is the appeal of the kings imprisoned by Jarasandha," the envoy continued. "They are aspiring for Your personal association, having surrendered to Your lotus feet. Please shower your grace and causeless mercy upon these afflicted souls."

After the representative of the imprisoned kings had thus spoken, Narada rishi, the sage amongst the demigods, suddenly appeared in that assembly. Bearing golden matted locks on his head and emanating a cooling effulgent aura, the sage entered the imperial court like the radiant solar orb. Lord Krishna is the worshipable deity for even planetary rulers like Brahma, Shiva, Indra, Surya, Chandra, Varuna and others,

yet as soon as He saw Narada Muni, He humbly and joyfully stood up along with the other members of the Yadu dynasty to receive the powerful sage. To set an example of how to receive a saintly person, He then offered His respectful obeisances by bowing His head.

Knowing that Lord Krishna was setting an example for the kingly order, Narada accepted the seat offered to him. Lord Krishna worshiped the sage with full paraphernalia according to scriptural injunctions and gratified him with reverence. He then spoke the following truthful and pleasing words, "It is certain that today the entire universe, and certainly our small assembly, has attained freedom from all fear, for such is the influence of a great personality like yourself. There is nothing unknown to you within the cosmic manifestation of the Supreme Lord. Certainly you have visited Indraprastha and the Pandavas headed by King Yudhisthira. Therefore please tell Us how the Pandavas are faring and what plans they intend to execute for the welfare of the entire world."

"I have many times seen," Narada replied, "the insurmountable power of Your illusory energy, O infallible one. With this power You bewilder even the creator of this universe, Brahma. O Lord of infinite prowess, it does not surprise me that You disguise Yourself as an ordinary human being by Your own diverse energies while moving among the created beings, as fire covers its luster with smoke. Who can understand properly Your purpose? Simply by Your desire this material energy creates and also withdraws the cosmos, and the interim manifestation appears to have substantial existence. Obeisances to you, whose transcendental position is inconceivable. The conditioned soul bound by the repetition of birth and death does not know how to free himself the material tabernacle, which is the cause of his affliction. But You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, descend to this world in various incarnations to teach and illumine the soul's path back to the spiritual sky. Your glorious pastimes triumphantly dominate this universe and are the only panacea for the conditioned soul. Therefore, I surrender unto You.

"Nonetheless, O Supreme Truth, who plays the part of a human being, I shall relate to You what Your devotee Maharaja Yudhisthira, the son of Your Aunt Kunti, intends to do. Desiring unrivaled sovereignty, King Yudhisthira plans to worship You with the greatest fire sacrifice, the Rajasuya. First of all may I inform You that King Yudhisthira has all material opulences which are possible to achieve in the highest planetary system, Brahmaloaka. He has no material opulence for which to aspire, and yet he wants to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice only to get Your association and please You. Please bless his endeavor with Your personal presence. O Lord, exalted heavenly Gods and glorious kings, eager to see you, will all come to that best of sacrifices. O Lord, even mlechas and yavanas are purified by hearing and chanting Your glories and meditating upon You, the Absolute Truth. What then to speak of those who see and touch You?

"My dear Lord, You are the symbol of everything auspicious. Your transcendental name and fame is spread throughout the universe like an umbrella, giving a chance to the conditioned souls to revive their original nature as Your eternal servant. The transcendental water that washes Your lotus feet is known in the higher planetary

systems as the Mandakini River, in the lower planetary systems as the Bhogavati and in this earthly planetary system as the Ganges. This sacred water flows throughout the entire universe, purifying wherever it goes."

Previous to Narada's arrival, the Yadus had been listening to the messenger from the imprisoned kings, and they were contemplating how to conquer Jarasandha. Therefore, they objected to the proposal of Narada out of a desire to subjugate the Magadha King. Seeing the differences of opinion, Lord Keshava turned to his servant Uddhava and smilingly requested him in the following words, "My dear Uddhava, you are always my well-wishing confidential friend, and because you possess the eye of wisdom, I wish to see everything through you because I believe that your counsel is always right. Therefore please advise us what should be done in this situation."

It was known to Uddhava that although Lord Krishna was acting like an ordinary man, He knew everything - past, present and future. However, because the Lord was trying to consult with him, Uddhava, in order to render service to the Lord, began to speak.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Second Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, King Yudhisthira Prepares for the Rajasuya Sacrifice.

### Chapter Commentary

The greatness of King Yudhisthira is obvious from this chapter. Although surrounded by intelligent ministers, wise brahmanas, sages, and his brothers, still he did not want to make a decision without consulting Lord Krishna. He wanted to execute all duties on behalf of the Lord's desire. A surrendered soul wants to find out the will of the Lord and act accordingly. He never wants to act for his own sense gratification. Maharaja Yudhisthira did not want an unrivaled kingdom if it was opposed to the desire of the Lord. His only ambition was to gain the Lord's association and also give that association to others.

It is interesting to note that Maharaja Yudhisthira had no enemies in his kingdom. Everyone loved him as father, because they knew he cared about their ultimate welfare. It is stated that even in their minds the citizens never held hostile intentions towards the King. This kind of leader was a rare jewel indeed. If the present leaders of society could gain a taste for reading Shrimad Bhagavatam and Mahabharata, they might pick up the qualities of Maharaja Yudhisthira. It is hard to accept everyone as one's own family member unless one is an advanced devotee of the Lord. Because Maharaja Yudhisthira saw Lord Krishna in the heart of every living being, he treated everyone equally, irrespective of his caste.

There were no complaints in Maharaja Yudhisthira's kingdom, and, therefore, there was little need for a judicial system. Any complaints were brought directly to the king. Can you imagine not needing judges, lawyers and prosecutors? How much money would the taxpayers save? This kind of government exists when there a godly leader heading the government. Because current governments cater to the sense gratification of the citizens, there is constant bickering and quarrel. Each person is trained to look after his or her own selfish needs. Everyone is competing with all other persons. However, in Maharaja Yudhisthira's kingdom, everyone thought of the next person's welfare instead of his own. Such a kingdom is like the kingdom of God.

It is also interesting to note that there was no crime in Maharaja Yudhisthira's kingdom. Mother Earth supplied all necessities to man due to the piety of the King. There were ample jewels, gold, cloth, food, water and whatever else anyone desired. What was the need to steal? Mother Earth restricts the necessities of life when people are Godless. Today we feel the pinch of material life because we don't worship the Lord and follow His desires. Famine, drought, flooding, earthquakes, rampant diseases and other natural disasters are a direct result of not obeying the will of the Lord. A lot can be learned from the rule of Maharaja Yudhisthira.

Lord Krishna does not always do everything personally. He may act through His energies or through his devotees and representatives. Lord Krishna knew how to solve the dispute about whether to kill Jarasandha or to attend the Rajasuya sacrifice. However, he decided to give that decision through Uddhava. There will be a similar case after the Kurukshetra battle, when not even Lord Krishna could convince Yudhisthira that the battle was the desire of the Lord. It took Bhishma's instructions to convince Maharaja Yudhisthira. The Lord acts in mysterious ways and no one can understand His purpose. We only have to surrender to His Divine will.

### Chapter Three

#### Lord Krishna journeys to Indraprastha City

Having heard the statements of Devarshi Narada, and understanding the opinions of both the assembly and Lord Krishna, the highly intelligent Uddhava began to speak, "O Lord, as the rishi advised, You should help Your cousin Yudhisthira fulfill his plan for performing the Rajasuya sacrifice, and You should also protect the kings who are begging for Your shelter. Only one who has conquered all opponents in every direction can perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, O almighty one. Thus, in my opinion, conquering Jarasandha will serve both purposes. By this decision the Rajasuya sacrifice will be performed, and You will save the imprisoned kings. Thus, Govinda, You will be glorified.

"The invincible King Jarasandha" Uddhava continued, "is as strong as ten thousand elephants. Indeed, other powerful warriors cannot defeat him. Only Bhima is equal to him in strength. He will be defeated by an equal opponent in duel, not when he is leading his hundred military divisions. Now, Jarasandha is so devoted to brahminical culture that he never refuses requests from brahmanas. Bhima should go to him

disguised as a brahmana and beg charity. Thus he will obtain single combat with Jarasandha, and in Your presence Bhima will no doubt kill him. Even Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva act only as Your instruments in cosmic creation and annihilation, which are ultimately done by You, the Supreme Lord, in Your invisible aspect of time.

"In their homes, the wives of the imprisoned kings sing of Your noble deeds--about how you will kill Jarasandha and deliver them. The gopis also sing Your glories--how You killed the crocodile enemy of Gajendra, the elephant king; Ravana, the enemy of Sita; and the enemies of Your own parents as well. So also do the sages who have obtained Your shelter glorify You, as do we ourselves. O Krishna, the killing of Jarasandha, which is certainly a reaction of his past sins, will bring immense benefit. Indeed, it will make possible the execution of the Rajasuya ceremony as You desire."

Devarshi Narada, the Yadu elders, the ministers and Lord Krishna all welcomed Uddhava's proposal, which was entirely auspicious and full of wisdom. Thereafter, Lord Shree Krishna, the chief of the Yadus, honored Narada Muni. After bowing down to the Lord, Devarshi Narada's senses were fully satisfied. Thus having heard the decision of the Lord and having been worshiped by Him, Narada placed the Lord firmly within his heart and gracefully departed into the clear blue sky.

With pleasing words the Lord, who has eyes like lotus petals, addressed the messenger sent by the kings, "My dear messenger, I wish all good fortune to you, I shall arrange for the killing of King Magadha. Do not fear." Feeling satisfied at heart, the messenger departed and relayed the Lord's message to the imprisoned kings. Eager for freedom, they then waited anxiously for their meeting with the Lord of all sentient beings.

The almighty personality of Godhead, the son of Devaki, begged His superiors for permission to leave. Then He ordered His servants, headed by Daruka and Jaitra, to prepare for departure. Arrangements were made for His 16,108 queens, their children and baggage to be taken to Indraprastha. After taking leave of Lord Baladeva and King Ugrasena, Lord Krishna mounted His chariot marked with the insignia of Garuda and departed for Indraprastha. The vibrations of mridangas, bheris, kettledrums, conchshells and gomukhas filled the sky in all directions as the Lord set out on His journey. He was accompanied by the commanders of His chariot, elephant, cavalry and infantry divisions. He was also surrounded on all sides by His personal body guards. Lord Achyuta's chaste wives, along with their children, followed the Lord on golden palanquins carried by stout armed men. The queens were adorned with fine clothing, ornaments, fragrant oils and flower garlands, and they were surrounded on all sides by soldiers carrying swords and shields.

On all sides of the procession were finely adorned women--attendants of the royal household, as well as courtesans. They rode on palanquins and camels, bulls and buffalo, donkeys, mules, bullock carts and elephants. Their conveyances were fully loaded with tents, blankets, clothes and other items for the trip. Lord Krishna's imperial procession was adorned with royal umbrellas, chamara fans and huge flagpoles with waving banners. During the day the sun's rays reflected brightly from

the soldiers' finely polished weapons, jewelry, helmets and armor. Thus Lord Krishna's army, exuberant with shouts and clatter, appeared like an ocean stirring with agitated waves and timingila fish. The royal procession could be seen from one horizon to the other, so great was the number of men, women, animals and paraphernalia.

As He traveled through the provinces of Anarta, Sauvira, Marudesha and Vinashana, Lord Hari crossed rivers and passed mountains, cities, villages, cow pastures and stone quarries. The inhabitants of these regions perfected their eyesight by gazing on the transcendental features of the Lord. They waved their upper clothes and glorified the transcendental activities of the Lord. After crossing the rivers Drishadvati and Sarasvati, He passed through Panchala and Matsya and finally came to Indraprastha.

King Yudhisthira was delighted to hear that the Lord, whom ordinary citizens rarely see, had now arrived. Accompanied by his priests and dear associates, the King came out to meet Lord Krishna. As songs and musical instruments resounded along with the loud vibration of Vedic hymns, the King went forth with great reverence to meet Lord Hrishiksha, just as the senses go forth to meet the consciousness of life. The heart of King Yudhisthira melted with affection when he saw his dearest friend, Lord Krishna, after such a long separation, and he embraced the Lord again and again. The eternal form of Lord Krishna is the everlasting residence of the goddess of fortune. As soon as King Yudhisthira embraced Him the King became free of all the contamination of material existence. He immediately felt transcendental bliss and merged in an ocean of jubilation. There were tears in his eyes, and his body trembled due to ecstasy. He completely forgot that he was living in this world. Then Bhima, his eyes brimming with affectionate tears, laughed with joy as he embraced his maternal cousin, Krishna. Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva also joyfully embraced their dearest friend, the infallible Lord and tears of love fell profusely from their eyes.

After Arjuna had embraced Him once more and Nakula and Sahadeva had offered Him their obeisances, Lord Krishna bowed down to the brahmanas and elders present, thus properly honoring the respectable members of the Kuru, Shrinjaya and Kaikaya dynasties. Sutas, Magadhas, Gandharvas, Vandis, jesters and brahmanas all glorified the lotus-eyed Lord--some reciting prayers, some dancing and singing--as mridangas, conchshells, kettledrums, vinas, panavas and gomukhas resounded. Thus surrounded by His well-wishing relatives and praised on all sides, Lord Krishna, the crest jewel of the justly renowned, entered the decorated city.

The roads of Indraprastha were sprayed with fragrant water sprinkled from the trunks of intoxicated elephants, and colorful flags, golden gateways and full waterpots enhanced the city's splendor. Men and young girls were beautifully arrayed in fine, new garments, adorned with flower garlands and ornaments, and anointed with aromatic sandalwood paste. Every home displayed glowing lamps and respectful offerings, and from the holes of the latticed windows drifted incense, further beautifying the city. Colorful banners waved in the breeze, and the roofs

were a series of finely carved golden domes situated on broad silver bases. Thus Lord Krishna saw the royal city of the Kuru King, Maharaja Yudhisthira.

When the young women of Indraprastha heard that Lord Krishna, the reservoir of pleasure for every eye, had arrived, they hurriedly went onto the royal streets to see Him. They abandoned their household duties and even left their husbands in bed, and in their eagerness, the knots of their hair and garments came loose. The royal streets being quite crowded with elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers, the women climbed to the top of their houses, where they caught sight of Lord Krishna and His queens. The city ladies scattered flowers upon the Lord, embraced him in their minds and expressed their heartfelt welcome with broadly smiling faces. Observing Lord Mukunda's wives passing on the well paved and ornately designed streets like stars accompanying the moon, the women exclaimed, "What pious activities and austerities have these ladies executed that grant them the joy of Lord Keshava's generous smiles and playful sidelong glances?"

Along the well decorated avenues of Indraprastha, citizens came forward holding auspicious offerings for Lord Krishna, and sinless leaders of occupational guilds came forward to worship the Lord. With wide-open eyes, the members of the royal household rushed forward in a flurry to lovingly greet Lord Mukunda, and thus the Lord entered the royal palace of King Yudhisthira. When Queen Kunti saw her nephew Krishna, the master of the three worlds, her heart filled with loving devotion. Rising from her couch with her daughter-in-law, Draupadi, Kunti embraced the Lord and all feelings of anxiety disappeared from her heart. King Yudhisthira respectfully brought Lord Govinda, the Supreme God of gods, to his personal quarters. The King was so overcome with joy that he could not remember all the rituals of worship.

Encouraged by Queen Kunti, Draupadi worshiped all of Lord Krishna's wives, including Rukmini, Satyabhama, Bhadra, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Nagnajiti, Lakshmana and the other queens of Lord Krishna who were present. Draupadi honored all of them with such gifts as clothing, flower garlands and jewelry. King Yudhisthira personally made arrangements for Krishna's comfort and saw to it that all who came along with Him--namely His queens, soldiers, ministers and secretaries--were comfortably situated. He arranged that they would experience a new feature of reception every day while staying as guests of the Pandavas.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Third Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Lord Krishna Journeys to Indraprastha City.

## Chapter Commentary

Lord Krishna displayed such opulence that only He could manifest. Parashara Muni has defined the Lord as full in six opulences: all wealth, all fame, all knowledge, all renunciation, all power and all beauty. These days we have trouble maintaining one wife, but here we see the Lord arranged a procession of 16,108 queens along with His children and servants. The Lord manifests such opulence, and He doesn't have to labor to do it. By His divine potency and will everything is arranged. In the ninth chapter of Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "The whole cosmic order is under Me. By My will it is manifested again and again, and by My will it is annihilated at the end." The Lord simply desires and everything takes place.

The living beings in this world have to struggle hard to survive. They cannot simply desire and get what they want. It is said in the Bible that the Lord cursed Adam to work by the sweat of his brow for the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge. This world is a prison house for those who have rebelled in the kingdom of God. We have to work hard to gain little. In the Lord's Kingdom there are desire trees from which a person can choose whatever he likes to serve the Lord, chintamani prakara sadmansu kalpa vriksha. (B.S. 5.22) The word kalpa vriksha means desire tree from which one can choose anything that he likes. These trees do not exist in this world. However, when the Lord descends to this world, they are present in places like Vrindavana, Mathura and Dvaraka. The Lord manifests such opulences encouraging us to leave this world of woe and come back to the kingdom of God, our eternal home.

## Chapter Four

### King Jarasandha Slain

In the great assembly of respectable persons, citizens, friends, relatives, brahmanas, kshatriyas and vaishyas, King Yudhisthira, in the presence of all, including his brothers, directly addressed Lord Krishna as follows, "O Krishna, I desire to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. That sacrifice, however, cannot be performed without the sanction of higher authorities. You know, O Krishna, everything about the means by which this sacrifice may be accomplished. That person alone can perfect this sacrifice in whom everything is possible, who is worshiped everywhere and who is the king of kings. My friends and counsellors have said that I should perform that sacrifice. However, My Lord, I desire to worship Your auspicious, opulent expansions by the Rajasuya sacrifice, the king of Vedic ceremonies. Please make our endeavor a success, my Lord. Purified persons who constantly serve, meditate upon and glorify

Your shoes, which destroy everything inauspicious, are sure to obtain freedom from material existence, O lotus-aveled one. Even if they desire something in this world, they obtain it, whereas others-those who do not take shelter of You-are never satisfied, O Lord. Therefore, O Lord of lords, let the people of this world see the power of devotional service rendered to Your lotus feet. Please show them, O almighty one, the position of those Kurus and Shrinjayas who worship You, and the position of those who do not. Within Your mind there can be no such differentiation as "This one is mine, and that is another's," because You are the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Soul of all beings, always equipoised and enjoying transcendental happiness within Yourself. Just like the heavenly desire tree, You bless all who properly worship You, granting their desired fruits in proportion to the service they render You. There is nothing wrong in this.

"My dear Govinda, as far as the execution of this sacrifice is concerned, Your words of wisdom shall be my guide. Those who give me counsel, out of friendship, do not know the difficulties that are to be encountered. Others, from motives of self interest, say only what is agreeable. Men are seen to counsel according to their motivations. However, You, O Krishna, are above material motivation. You are Hrishikesha, the controller of desire and anger. It behoves You to tell me what will most benefit the world."

"O great king," Lord Krishna replied, "your decision is perfect, and thus your noble fame will spread to all the worlds, O tormentor of the foes. Indeed, for the benefit of the great sages, the forefathers and the heavenly gods, for Our well-wishing friends and, indeed, for all living beings, the performance of this king of Vedic sacrifices is desirable. First conquer all kings, bring the earth under your control and collect all the required paraphernalia; then execute this great sacrifice. These brothers of yours, O king, have taken birth as partial expansions of the various ruling heavenly gods. And you are so self controlled that you have conquered even Me, who am unconquerable for those who cannot control their senses. No one in this world, even a demigod--what to speak of an earthly king--can defeat My devotee with his strength, beauty, fame or riches.

"My dear King, you possess the proper qualifications essential to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. However, there is one impediment of which you must be informed. The numerous royal lines all represent themselves as descendants of Aila and Ikshvaku. These descendants are divided into a hundred separate dynasties. In this line the descendants of Yayati and Bhoja and numerous. At the present, O monarch, King Jarasandha, has subjugated many of these kshatriyas and incarcerated them. Jarasandha is now enjoying sovereignty over the middle portion of the earth. He has resolved to create disunion among the different dynasties.

"O Monarch, only a King who is the king of all kings can properly be called an emperor. Many Kings and princes have voluntarily taken his shelter. They include Shishupala, the mighty Vaka, who waits upon Jarasandha as his disciple. There is also Hansa, Dimvaka, Dantavakra, Karusha, Karava, and Meghavahana. King Bhagadatta, who is the old friend of your father, has bowed his head before Jarasandha. In his heart he has affection for you, but he regards you as a father

regards his son, and not as a subordinate king looks upon an emperor. Paundraka, who represents himself as a divine personality and falsely bears My symbols of the conch, disc, lotus and mace, has also espoused the side of Jarasandha. Even King Bhishmaka, My father-in-law, has become a servitor of Jarasandha. Eighteen clans of the Bhojas have fled to the west out of fear of Jarasandha. So have the Surasenas, the Bhadrakas, the Vodhas, the Salwas, the Patachcharas, the Susthalas, the Kukuttas, the Kulindas, along with the Kuntis and many others have also fled their countries alarmed at the power of Jarasandha. The King of Magadha has conquered many lands and has imprisoned eighty-six kings. When the total of kings incarcerated reaches one hundred, he will sacrifice these noblemen before his deity, Lord Shiva. O King, before the Rajasuya sacrifice can be performed, Jarasandha must be slain and the imprisoned Kings released. Only then can one be truly called an emperor, one who rules over all other kings."

"O Janardana," Yudhisthira said, "we have also been frightened by the wickedness of this monarch. O infallible one, the might of Your arms is our refuge and strength. I am repeatedly depressed at the thought that Jarasandha cannot be slain. But what shall I say, O Keshava? You are my highest authority on everything. Please tell me, O Krishna, the history of this Jarasandha, his birth and how he obtained so much power. How is it that although You have conquered him eighteen times, he is still living?"

Lord Krishna replied, "Hear, O Monarch, the history behind this Jarasandha and his great power. There was a mighty King of the Magadhas named Brihadratha. He owned three Akshauhini divisions of troops and was very puffed up over his strength. He had married the two daughters of the King of Kashi. Many years passed, however, without obtaining a son.

"One day he went to the great sage named Chandra Kausika and served the rishi with great care. The sage became pleased with him and asked him to take a benediction. King Brihadratha then asked for a son who could continue his dynasty. While they were talking, a mango dropped from the tree into the muni's lap. The muni then said to the King, "Your desire shall be fulfilled." He then chanted mantras and handed over that mango to the King telling him to give half to each queen. The muni then went away. King Brihadratha cut the fruit in half and gave each queen a portion. In due course of time the queens became pregnant. The King was overjoyed and waited for the birth of the children.

"It so happened that both queens gave birth to fragmental children. A half of a child took birth from each of them. The queens were disgusted and arranged that the king throw the portions of the children in the forest. After this had been accomplished, a witch named Jara happened to come to the spot where the two halves were thrown. She loved human flesh and desired to take the newly found meal home with her. To make it easier to carry the halves, she joined them, and when she did, the two halves united and became one child. She was unable to carry the child because of its great weight. The child began to roar like a monsoon cloud, and she could not stop it. It so happened that the King was in the area, and hearing the crying of the child, he came to that spot. The Rakshasa woman then informed

the monarch, 'O Brihadratha, here is your child that has been cast into the forest. I have found the child in two parts and, joining them, the child has become one. I have been living in your kingdom, and I am pleased with your rule. Take this child back for he is destined to become King.' The Rakshasa woman then gave the child to the King and disappeared from sight. Because the child was brought to life by this she-witch, he was given the name Jarasandha, which means one who was joined by the witch Jara."

Lord Krishna continued: "The child grew up to be as powerful as ten thousand elephants. When King Brihadratha saw the power and influence of his son, he crowned his son king and then entered the forest to perform austerities and penances. Jarasandha offered his two daughters, Asti and Prapti, to King Kamsa of Mathura. When I killed King Kamsa, I created an enmity with the powerful Jarasandha. Overcome with anger, Jarasandha took up his mace and released it a distance of ninety-nine yojanas (792 miles). It landed just outside the city of Mathura. Understanding his intentions, we prepared the city of Mathura for attack. We defeated him eighteen times, but still he persisted in fighting. On his eighteenth attempt, I was already engaged in obtaining Rukmini for My wife. I, therefore, ordered the city of Dvaraka built so that no other powerful kings could attack the Yadu dynasty while I was away. The time has now come for his death."

Upon hearing these nectarean words from the lotus mouth of the Supreme Lord, King Yudhisthira became joyful, and his face blossomed like a lotus. Lord Krishna then informed King Yudhisthira of the plan explained by Uddhava for conquering King Jarasandha. Bhimasena, Arjuna and Lord Krishna then started together for Girivraja, the capital city of Jarasandha. Attired in the dress of brahmanas, they looked wonderful and radiant. When the people saw them walking on the road, they regarded Jarasandha as already slain.

Upon reaching the region of Magadha, Lord Krishna exclaimed, "Behold, O Partha, the great capital of Girivraja, standing in all its splendor. Just see outside the city walls the vast ocean of cows and sheep. This majestic town has a water source that is inexhaustible. Just see the fine mansions symmetrically aligned. Indeed, it appears that this city is free from any kind of calamity. Just behold the five large hills that surround the city. They are covered with cooling shade trees, bearing flowers of every scent and color. It was here that the great sage Gautama had his ashrama for some time. Due to his presence, this place has become almost a heavenly abode. Even Manu has ordered that the land of Magadha never be afflicted with drought. Owing such a city, Jarasandha desires to become the emperor of the entire earth. We shall, however, humble his pride by slaying him in single combat."

Before entering the city, Bhima and Arjuna decided to pulverize Chaityaka peak near the city gate. This hill was one of the five that surrounded the city and it was dear to the inhabitants and also to King Jarasandha. On this hill King Brihadratha had once slain a cannibal named Rishava and made three drums from the Rakshasa's skin. When those drums were beaten, the reverberating sound echoed for one full month. With their mighty arms only, Bhima and Arjuna leveled the hill to the point where the drums were beaten, indicating their desire to place their feet on the head of

their foe. With the power of their arms they broke down the peak, which was worshipped by the citizens of Girivraja.

Lord Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna then joyfully entered Girivraja in the guise of brahmanas. As they walked down the main road, they beheld the extraordinary arrangement of shops full of various edibles, hand crafted items and floral wreaths. Some of the shops were supplied with intricately carved articles of various qualities that any person might desire. The shop owners and other citizens of Magadha, beholding those heroes looking like elephants, with broad necks and chests, began to wonder about them. Lord Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna then chose garlands from the shop of one fortunate flower merchant and decorated their bodies with them. Their arms, which were broad like the trunks of trees, were then smeared with sandalwood paste by one merchant whose pious activities had now fully fructified. Attired in robes of various colors and decked in garlands and earrings, the heroes approached King Jarasandha's palace. Those bulls among men passed through three gates that were heavily guarded with soldiers and men. They cheerfully entered the palace of King Jarasandha, and the King, seeing these extraordinary personalities approaching, exclaimed, "You are welcome in my kingdom." He rose to offer them proper sitting places. He washed their feet with honey and water, and offered them gifts of cows and wealth.

Partha and Bhima remained silent during the reception. Therefore, Lord Krishna informed King Jarasandha, "O monarch, these two brahmanas are in observance of a vow. Therefore, they will not speak until midnight when their vow will be completed. You may talk with them at that time." King Jarasandha then gave his guests comfortable quarters and retired to his own chambers.

King Jarasandha was famous for honoring brahmanas. Even if a brahmana requested an audience at midnight, he would grant it. Therefore, he rose at midnight and approached the quarters of his guests. Despite the strange attire of these brahmanas, he waited on them respectfully. He asked them to take their seats and then inquired from them, "It is well known to me that brahmanas observing vows of silence never attire themselves with garlands, and fragrant paste. Who are you? You are dressed as brahmanas, but your arms bear the marks of bowstrings. You lead me to believe that you are brahmanas, but you exude kshatriya energy. Tell me truly who you are. You have broken the peak of Chaityaka hill, and you have entered my city without fear of royal wrath. The quality of a brahmana dwells in his speech and not in his physical prowess. This destruction of Chaityaka hill is not suited to the order you profess. What is your motive for coming to me?"

Lord Krishna, in the dress of a brahmana, replied to the King: "O King, know us to be needy guests who have come to you from afar. We wish all good fortune to you. Please grant us whatever we desire. What can the tolerant not bear? What will the wicked not do? What will the generous not give in charity? And who will those with equal vision see as an outsider? He, indeed, is to be censured and pitied who, though able to do so, fails to achieve with his temporary body the lasting fame glorified by great saints. Harischandra, Rantideva, Unchavritti Mudgala, Bali, Shibi, the legendary hunter and pigeon, and many others have attained the permanent by

means of the impermanent." Lord Krishna, in the garb of a brahmana, thus informed Jarasandha that fame is imperishable, but the body is perishable. If one can attain imperishable name and fame by sacrificing his perishable body, he becomes a very respectable figure in the history of human civilization.

While Lord Krishna was speaking in the garb of a brahmana, Jarasandha became convinced that the three of them were not actual brahmanas. The signs on their bodies indicated that they were kshatriyas. Their shoulders were marked with an impression due to carrying bows; they had beautiful bodily structure, and their voices were grave and commanding. Thus he definitely concluded that they were not brahmanas, but kshatriyas. He was also thinking that he had seen them somewhere before. Although these three persons were kshatriyas, they had come to his door begging alms like brahmanas. Therefore, he decided that he would fulfill their desires, in spite of their being kshatriyas. He thought in this way because their position had already been diminished by their appearing before him as beggars.

"Under the circumstances," he thought, "I am prepared to give them anything. Even if they ask for my body, I shall not hesitate to offer it to them." In this regard, he began to think of Bali Maharaja. Lord Vishnu in the dress of a brahmana appeared as a beggar before Bali, and in that way He snatched away all of his opulence and kingdom. He did this for the benefit of Indra, who, having been defeated by Bali Maharaja, was bereft of his kingdom. Although Bali Maharaja was cheated, his reputation as a great devotee who was able to give anything and everything in charity is still glorified throughout the three worlds. Bali Maharaja could guess that the brahmana was Lord Vishnu Himself and that He had come to him just to take away his opulent kingdom on behalf of Indra. Bali's spiritual master and family priest, Sukracharya, repeatedly warned him about this, and yet Bali did not hesitate to give in charity whatever the brahmana wanted, and at last he gave up everything to that brahmana.

"It is my strong determination," thought Jarasandha, "that if I can achieve immortal reputation by sacrificing this perishable body, I must act for that purpose; the life of a kshatriya who does not live for the benefit of the brahmana is certainly condemned."

Actually King Jarasandha was very liberal in giving charity to the brahmanas, and thus he informed Lord Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna, "My dear brahmanas, you can ask from me whatever you like. If you so desire, you can take my head also. I am prepared to give it."

After this, Lord Krishna addressed Jarasandha as follows: "My dear King, please note that we are not actually brahmanas, nor have we come to ask for foodstuffs or grains. We are all kshatriyas, and we have come to beg a duel with you. We hope that you will agree to this proposal. You may note that here is the second son of King Pandu, Bhimasena, and the third son of Pandu, Arjuna. As for Myself, you may know that I am your old enemy Krishna, the cousin of the Pandavas."

When Lord Krishna disclosed their disguise, King Jarasandha began to laugh very loudly, and then in great anger and in a grave voice he exclaimed, "You fools! If you want to fight with me, I immediately grant your request. But, Krishna, I know that You are a coward. I will not fight with You because You refused to face me in fighting and have left the battlefield. Out of fear of me You left Your own city, Mathura, and now You have taken shelter within the sea; therefore, I must refuse to fight with You. As far as Arjuna is concerned, I know that he is younger than I and is not an equal fighter. I refuse to fight with him because he is not in any way an equal competitor. But as far as Bhimasena is concerned, I think he is a suitable competitor to fight with me." After speaking in this way, King Jarasandha immediately handed a very heavy club to Bhimasena, and he himself took another, and thus all of them went outside the city walls to fight.

Bhimasena and King Jarasandha engaged themselves in fighting, and with their respective clubs, which were as strong as thunderbolts, they began to strike one another very severely, both of them being eager to fight. They were both expert fighters with clubs, and their techniques of striking one another were so beautiful that they appeared to be two dramatic artists dancing on a stage. The citizens of Magadha, consisting of thousands of brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudras, women and the aged, all came out of the city to witness the combat. The crowd became so great that there was a solid mass of humanity with no space between bodies.

When the clubs of Jarasandha and Bhimasena loudly collided, they sounded like the impact of the big tusks of two fighting elephants, or like a thunderbolt in a flashing electrical storm. When two elephants fight together in a sugarcane field, each of them snatches a stick of sugarcane and, by catching it tightly in its trunk, strikes the other. Each elephant heavily strikes his enemy's shoulders, arms, collarbones, chest, thighs, waist, and legs, and in this way the sticks of sugarcane are smashed. Similarly, all the clubs used by Jarasandha and Bhimasena were broken, and so the enemies prepared to fight with their strong-fisted hands. Both Jarasandha and Bhimasena were very angry, and they began to smash each other with their fists. The striking of their fists sounded like the striking of iron bars or like the sound of thunderbolts, and they appeared to be like two elephants fighting. Unfortunately, however, neither was able to defeat the other because both were very expert in fighting, both were of equal strength, and their fighting techniques were equal also. Neither Jarasandha nor Bhimasena became fatigued or defeated in the fighting, although they struck each other continually. At the end of a day's fighting, both lived at night as friends in Jarasandha's palace, and the next day they fought again. In this way they passed twenty-seven days in fighting.

On the twenty-eighth day, Bhimasena told Krishna, "My dear Krishna, I must frankly admit that I cannot conquer Jarasandha." Lord Krishna, however, knew the mystery of the birth of Jarasandha. Jarasandha was born in two different parts from two different mothers. When his father saw that the baby was useless, he threw the two parts in the forest, where they were later found by a black-hearted witch named Jara. She managed to join the two parts of the body of the baby from top to bottom. Knowing this, Lord Krishna, therefore, also knew how to kill him. He gave hints to

Bhimasena that since Jarasandha was brought to life by the joining of the two parts of his body, he could be killed by the separation of these two parts. Thus Lord Krishna transferred His power into the body of Bhimasena and informed him of the device by which Jarasandha could be killed. Lord Krishna immediately picked up a twig from a tree and, taking it in His hand, bifurcated it. In this way He hinted to Bhimasena how Jarasandha could be killed. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is omnipotent, and if he wants to kill someone, no one can save that person. Similarly, if He wants to save someone, no one can kill him.

Informed by the hints of Lord Krishna, Bhimasena immediately took hold of Jarasandha's legs and threw him to the ground. When Jarasandha fell to the ground, Bhimasena immediately pressed one of Jarasandha's legs to the ground and took hold of the other leg with his two hands. Catching Jarasandha in this way, he tore his body in two, from the anus up to the head. As an elephant breaks the branches of a tree in two, so Bhimasena separated the body of Jarasandha. The citizens of Magadha who were standing nearby saw that the body of Jarasandha was now divided into two halves, so that each half had one leg, one thigh, one testicle, one breast, half a backbone, half a chest, one collarbone, one arm, one eye, one ear and half a face.

As soon as the news of Jarasandha's death was announced, all the citizens of Magadha began to cry, "Alas, alas," while Lord Krishna and Arjuna embraced Bhimasena to congratulate him. Although Jarasandha was killed, neither Krishna nor the two Pandava brothers made a claim to the throne. Their purpose in killing Jarasandha was to stop him from creating a disturbance against the proper discharge of world peace. A demon always creates disturbances, whereas a godly person always tries to keep peace in the world. The mission of Lord Krishna is to give protection to the righteous persons and to kill the demons who disturb a peaceful situation. Therefore Lord Krishna immediately called for the son of Jarasandha, whose name was Sahadeva, and with due ritualistic ceremonies He asked him to occupy the seat of his father and reign over the kingdom peacefully. Lord Krishna is the master of the whole cosmic creation, and He wants everyone to live peacefully and execute Krishna consciousness. After installing Sahadeva on the throne, He released all the kings and princes who had been imprisoned unnecessarily by Jarasandha.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata summation to the Fourth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, King Jarasandha Slain.

## Chapter Commentary

King Yudhisthira consistently shows the true qualities of a King. He did not want perform the Rajasuya sacrifice without consulting with the Supreme Lord. This is the example set by this great king. No leader should make important decisions without consulting with the Supreme Lord. The leader of a nation is supposed to be so pious as to have direct contact with the Lord for instituting the will of the Lord. Sainly kings like Dasaratha, Janaka, Yudhisthira, David, Solomon and others had direct communication with the Lord due to their being obedient servants of the Lord. The Lord reveals Himself to one who is surrendered and obedient.

King Yudhisthira was actually afraid to act for his personal sense gratification. To perform this sacrifice would mean that he would be the emperor of the world. It would mean that kings from all subordinated kingdoms would come and bow their heads at his feet. King Yudhisthira did not want this position unless the Supreme Lord sanctioned it. Maharaja Yudhisthira was a self realized soul. He had no need to be emperor of the world. He simple wanted to glorify Lord Krishna and surrender to His supreme will.

Lord Krishna again saved the Pandavas by instructing Bhima how to kill Jarasandha. Jarasandha was undefeatable by a mortal being. Even Bhima, the son of the Wind God, Vayu, had a difficult time killing Jarasandha. Lord Krishna entered Bhima's body by His personal strength and empowered him to kill Jarasandha, who was otherwise undefeatable. No one can thwart the will of the Lord. Lord Krishna and Balarama had descended on a mission to kill those who were opposed to religiosity. Jarasandha and demons like him were opposed to Krishna's plan and thus destined to be destroyed.

## Chapter Five

### Lord Krishna Benedicts the Imprisoned Kings

The kings and the princes released by Lord Krishna after the death of Jarasandha were rulers of different parts of the world. When they were released by the grace of Lord Krishna, they all looked very unhappy; their garments were dirty and torn, and their faces were almost dried up due to insufficient food and water. They were very weak due to hunger, and their faces had lost all beauty and luster. Because of the kings' long imprisonment, every part of their bodies had become slackened and invalid. But although suffering in that miserable condition of life, they had the opportunity to pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu.

Now before them they saw the color of the transcendental body of Lord Krishna, exactly like the hue of a newly arrived cloud in the sky. He appeared before them nicely covered with yellow colored silken garments, with four hands like Vishnu, and carrying the different symbols of the club, the conchshell, the disc and the lotus flower. There were marks of golden lines on His chest, and the nipples of His breast appeared to be like the whorl of a lotus flower. His eyes appeared to be spread like the petals of a lotus flower, and His smiling face exhibited the symbol of eternal peace and prosperity. His glittering earrings were set beautifully, and His helmet was bedecked with valuable jewels. The Lord's necklace of pearls and the bangles and bracelets nicely situated on His body all shone with a transcendental beauty. The Kaustubha jewel hanging on His chest glittered with great luster, and the Lord wore a beautiful flower garland.

After so much distress, when the kings and princes saw Lord Krishna, with His beautiful transcendental features, they looked upon Him to their hearts' content, as if they were drinking nectar through their eyes, licking His body with their tongues, smelling the aroma of His body with their noses, and embracing Him with their arms. Just by dint of their being in front of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all reactions to their sinful activities were washed away. Therefore, without reservation, they surrendered themselves at the lotus feet of the Lord. It is stated in the Bhagavad-gita that unless one is freed from all kinds of sinful reactions, one cannot fully surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord. All the princes who saw Lord Krishna forgot all their past tribulations. With joined palms and with great devotion, they began to offer prayers to Lord Krishna, as follows.

"Dear Lord, O Supreme Godhead, master of all heavenly beings, You can immediately remove all Your devotees' pangs because Your devotees are fully surrendered unto You. O dear Lord Krishna, O eternal deity of transcendental bliss and knowledge, You are imperishable, and we offer our respectful obeisances unto Your lotus feet. It is by Your causeless mercy that we have been released from the imprisonment of Jarasandha, but now we pray unto You to release us from the imprisonment with the illusory energy of this material existence. Please, therefore, stop our continuous cycle of birth and death. We now have sufficient experience of the miserable material condition of life in which we are fully absorbed, and having tasted its bitterness, we have come to take shelter under Your lotus feet.

"Dear Lord, O killer of the demon Madhu, we can now clearly see that Jarasandha was not at fault in the least; it is actually by Your causeless mercy that we were bereft of our kingdoms because we were very proud of calling ourselves rulers and kings. Any ruler or king who becomes too puffed up with false prestige and power does not get the opportunity to understand his real constitutional position and eternal life. Such foolish so-called rulers and kings become falsely proud of their position under the influence of Your illusory energy; they are like a foolish person who considers a mirage in the desert to be a reservoir of water. Foolish persons think that their material possessions will give them protection, and those who are engaged in sense gratification falsely accept this material world as a place of eternal enjoyment. O Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, we must admit that, before this, we were puffed up with our material opulences. Because we were all envious of

each other and wanted to conquer one another, we all engaged in fighting for supremacy, even at the cost of sacrificing the lives of many citizens."

The kings continued: "O Lord, we were simply engaged in the abominable task of killing citizens and alluring them to be unnecessarily killed, just to satisfy our political whims. We did not consider that Your Lordship is always present before us in the form of cruel death. We were so fooled that we became the cause of death for others, forgetting our own impending death. But, dear Lord, the retaliation of the time element, which is Your representative, is certainly insurmountable. The time element is so strong that no one can escape its influence; therefore, we have received the reactions of our atrocious activities, and we are now bereft of all opulences and stand before You like street beggars. We consider our position to be Your causeless, unalloyed mercy upon us because now we can understand that we were falsely proud and that our material opulences could be withdrawn from us within a second by Your will.

"By Your causeless mercy only, we are now able to think of Your lotus feet. This is our greatest gain. Dear Lord, it is known to everyone that the body is a breeding ground of diseases. Now we are sufficiently aged, and instead of being proud of our bodily strength, we are getting weaker day by day. We are no longer interested in sense gratification or the false happiness derived through the material body. By Your grace, we have now come to the conclusion that hankering after such material happiness is just like searching for water in a desert mirage. We are no longer interested in the results of our pious activities, such as performing great sacrifices in order to be elevated to the heavenly planets. We now understand that such elevation to a material standard of life in the heavenly planets may sound very relishable, but actually there cannot be any happiness within this material world.

"We pray for Your Lordship to favor us by instructing us how to engage in the transcendental loving service of Your lotus feet so that we may never forget our eternal relationship with Your Lordship. We do not want liberation from the entanglement of material existence. By Your will we may take birth in any species of life; it does not matter. We simply pray that we may never forget Your lotus feet under any circumstances. Dear Lord, we now surrender unto Your lotus feet by offering our respectful obeisances unto You because You are the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. You are the Supersoul in everyone's heart, and You are Lord Hari, who can take away all miserable conditions of material existence. Dear Lord, Your name is Govinda, the reservoir of all pleasure. One who is engaged in satisfying Your senses automatically satisfies his own senses also, and therefore You are known as Govinda. Dear Lord, You are ever famous, for You can put an end to all miseries of Your devotees. Please, therefore, accept us as Your surrendered servants."

After hearing the prayers of the kings, Lord Krishna, who is always the protector of surrendered souls and the ocean of mercy for the devotees, replied to them as follows in His sweetly transcendental voice, which was grave and full of meaning. "My dear kings," He said, "I bestow upon you My blessings. From this day forth you will have firm devotion to me, the Supreme Self and the Lord of all that be. I assure

you this will come to pass, just as you desire. Fortunately you have come to the proper conclusion, my dear kings, and what you have spoken is true. I can see that human beings' lack of self restraint, which stems from their intoxication with opulence and power, simply leads to madness. Haihaya, Nahusha, Vena, Ravana, Narakasura and many other rulers of demigods, men, and demons fell from their elevated positions because of infatuation with material opulence. Understanding that this material body and everything connected with it have a beginning and an end, worship Me by Vedic sacrifices, and with clear intelligence protect your subjects in accordance with the principles of religion. As you live your lives, begetting generations of progeny and encountering happiness and distress, birth and death, always keep your minds fixed on Me. Be detached from the body and everything connected to it. Remaining self-satisfied, steadfastly keep your vows while concentrating your minds fully on Me. In this way you will ultimately attain Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth."

After delivering His instructions to the kings and princes, Lord Krishna immediately arranged for their comfort and asked many servants and maidservants to take care of them. Lord Krishna requested Sahadeva, the son of King Jarasandha, to supply all necessities to the kings and also asked him to show them all respect and honor. In pursuance of the order of Lord Krishna, Sahadeva offered them all honor, and presented them with ornaments, garments, garlands, and other paraphernalia. After taking their baths and dressing very nicely, the kings appeared happy and gentle. Then they were supplied food fit for kings. Lord Krishna supplied everything for their comfort, as was befitting their royal positions.

Since the kings were so mercifully treated by Lord Krishna, they felt great happiness, and all their bright faces appeared just like the stars in the sky after the end of the rainy season. They were all nicely dressed and ornamented, and their earrings glittered. Each one was then seated on a chariot bedecked with gold and jewels and drawn by decorated horses. After seeing that each was taken care of, Lord Krishna, in a sweet voice, asked them to return to their respective kingdoms. By His very liberal behavior, unparalleled in the history of the world, Lord Krishna released all the kings who had been in the clutches of Jarasandha, and being fully satisfied, the kings began to engage in chanting His holy name, thinking of His holy form, and glorifying His transcendental pastimes as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

So engaged, they returned to their respective kingdoms. The citizens of their kingdoms were very greatly pleased to see them return; and when they heard of the kind dealings of Lord Krishna, they all became very happy. The kings began to manage the affairs of their kingdoms in accordance with the instructions of Lord Krishna, and all those kings and their subjects passed their days very happily.

After thus causing the annihilation of Jarasandha by Bhimasena and after being properly honored by Sahadeva, the son of Jarasandha, Lord Krishna, accompanied by Bhimasena and Arjuna, returned to the city of Hastinapura. When they reached the precincts of Hastinapura, they blew their respective conchshells; and by hearing the sound vibrations and understanding who was arriving, everyone immediately became cheerful. But upon hearing the conchshells, the enemies of Krishna became

very sorry. The citizens of Indraprastha felt their hearts become joyful simply by hearing the vibration of Krishna's conchshell because they could understand that Jarasandha had been killed. Now the performance of the Rajasuya sacrifice by King Yudhisthira was almost certain. Bhimasena, Arjuna, and Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, arrived before King Yudhisthira and offered their respects to the King. King Yudhisthira attentively heard the narration of the killing of Jarasandha and the setting free of the kings. He also heard of the tactics which were adopted by Krishna to kill Jarasandha. The king was naturally affectionate toward Krishna, but after hearing the story, he became even more bound in love for Krishna; tears of ecstasy glided from his eyes, and he became so stunned that he was almost unable to speak.

After the slaying Jarasandha, King Yudhisthira sent his brothers to conquer the other kings of the earth. He sent Arjuna to the north, Bhima to the east, Sahadeva to the south and Nakula to the west. The intention of the brothers was not to claim the thrones of these kings, but to defeat them, extract tribute and make them agree to King Yudhisthira's domination. After being subjected, the defeated kings were invited to Maharaja Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice.

Arjuna, the mighty bowman, first of all subjugated King Bhagadatta, who accepted subordination under King Yudhisthira. Arjuna then marched against King Vrihanta, and one kingdom after another was brought under the sway of Maharaja Yudhisthira. Arjuna conquered Modapura, the Northern Ulukas, the kshatriyas of Kashmira and the seven tribes called Utsava-sanketa. The mighty son of Kunti then defeated King Viswagaswa of the Puru race. He then conquered the Trigartas, the Daravas, the Kokonadas and various other kshatriyas. The prince of the Kuru race then took the delightful town of Avisari, and then brought under his sway the king of Uraga named Rochamana. The exalted son of Pandu then defeated the Daradas along with the Kambhojas. In a terrible battle Arjuna subjugated the Rishikas. At last having conquered all the land of the Himalayas and the Nishkuta mountains, that bull among men encamped at the white mountains.

Arjuna then subjugated the Kimpurushas ruled by Durmaputra. He then defeated the Guhakas from a country called Harataka. The Kuru prince then beheld the Manasa Ganga lake and other lakes sacred to the Rishis. At last the son of Pandu arrived in the country north of Harivarsha and desired to conquer it. Thereupon certain frontier guards endowed with huge bodies approached him with gallant hearts and advised him, "O son of Pritha, this tract of land can never be conquered by you. If you value your well being, please return to your kingdom, for any human who enters this region, will surely perish. We are satisfied with your prowess; O hero, your conquest must stop here. This is where the northern Kurus live, and war does not exist here. Even if you were to enter this region, you could not see anything for human eyes cannot perceive the subtle forms that exist here. If, however, you desire something, please tell us so that we may do your bidding."

"If your land cannot be seen by human beings," Arjuna said, "then I shall not enter it. However, I desire that some offering be paid to King Yudhisthira as tribute." Immediately, guards brought celestial cloths made of the finest silk, and they also

brought dazzling jeweled ornaments and skins. After conquering all countries of the north and extracting tribute and subordination from those kings, Arjuna brought back the enormous wealth to King Yudhisthira. The wealth consisted of unseen jewels and gems, and horses from the species called Tittiri and Kalmasha, whose color was like that of parrot wings and peacocks, and who were endowed with the speed of the wind.

As ordered by King Yudhisthira, Bhima marched toward the east with a great army. Within a short time that bull of the Bharata race conquered the Gandakas, Videhas and the Dasarnas. The king of the Dasarnas was named Sudharman. He fought a fierce battle with Bhima using only his mighty arms. Bhima was so pleased with the King that he made him commander in chief of his forces. Bhima then defeated Rochamana, the king of Aswamedha. Bhima then marched into Pulinda and brought Sukumara and King Sumitra under his sway. Bhima then challenged Shishupala and the Chedis. However, Shishupala treated Bhima with great respect and offered him his kingdom. Bhima requested Shishupala to be present for the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira. Bhima then subjugated the Koshalas, the northern Koshalas, and the king of Ayodhya. The mighty son of Kunti then defeated the warriors from Vatsabhumi and the king of the Bhargas. He defeated Janaka, the king of the Videhas, then the Kiratas, then the son of Jarasandha, Sahadeva. Bhima encountered Karna and defeating him made him pay tribute to Maharaja Yudhisthira. Paundraka, who was later killed by Lord Krishna, was also subjugated by Bhima. After defeating innumerable monarches and exacting tribute from them all of them, he marched back to Indraprastha. The illustrious son of Kunti brought back a downpour of wealth consisting of coins and gems counted in hundreds and millions. He offered the entire wealth at the feet of Yudhisthira, the great.

Sahadeva, on the order of Maharaja Yudhisthira, marched toward the southern countries. He defeated the Surasenas, the Matsyas and brought under his sway Dantavakra, the mighty king of Adhirajas. He conquered the Nishadas and the kings of Avanti, Vinda and Anuvinda. He brought under Maharaja Yudhisthira's rule, King Bhishmaka and the king of the Koshalas. Sahadeva then fought with Mainda and Dvidida, the kings of Kishkinda. Then Sahadeva encountered his toughest challenge at Mahismati; he fought with king Nila, who was aided by Agni, the fire god. The encounter between the two forces was fierce, terrible and bloody, and before long Agni, the fire god, was scorching the front line of chariots, elephants and soldiers in Sahadeva's army. Witnessing the possible extinction of his army, Sahadeva did not know what to do.

Agni had taken the side of King Nila because of the King's beautiful daughter. When the girl was young, she used to stay near the sacrificial fire causing it to blaze forth. As it came to pass, King Nila's sacrificial fire, even if fanned, would not blaze up till agitated by the gentle breath from the girl's fair lips. It came to be known that Agni desired the beautiful young girl for his wife. The girl also accepted a proposal from Agni. One day the deity assuming the form of a brahmana was happily enjoying the company of the young girl when he was discovered by the King. The King was enraged and ordered the brahmana to be punished according to law. However, Agni flamed up in wrath, and the King, struck with wonder, immediately offered his

daughter to the fire god. Accepting the King's daughter for his wife, Agni requested the king to take a benediction. The King asked that his troops would never panic while engaged in battle. From that time on any king who was foolish enough to attack Mahismati had his troops consumed by fire. Now the same thing was happening to Sahadeva's troops.

The mighty son of Pandu, however, stood his ground like an unmovable mountain. He purified himself and touched water. He then pacified the fire god with sweet words. Agni approached Sahadeva and gave him assurance, "O thou of the Kuru race, cease from offering prayers. I was only testing you. I know your purpose for subjugating the kings of the earth. However, O best of the Bharata race, as long as there is a descendant of King Nila's line, I will protect this town of Mahismati. I will, however, satisfy your desire." Agni then disappeared and soon King Nila appeared at Agni's request and paid tribute to King Yudhisthira.

Sahadeva then continued his conquest and soon received tribute from King Rukmi of Bhojakata and conquered all the kings of the south. He even exacted tribute from Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana and ruler of Lanka. Sahadeva, after accumulating vast hordes of wealth, returned to King Yudhisthira and presented all that he had collected.

Nakula, the heroic son of Pandu, went toward the east and collected tribute from those monarchs who accepted King Yudhisthira's rule. He conquered the Dasarnas, the Karnatas, the Amvasthas, the Malavas and the Mlechcha tribes of the East. When Nakula came to Dvaraka, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Lord, gladly accepted the subjugation of King Yudhisthira, for the Lord is always conquered by the devotion of devotees. He is known as Ajita, unconquerable, but He is conquered by the love of His devotees. Nakula then approached his uncle, King Salya, who gladly accepted subordination under King Yudhisthira. King Salya bestowed upon Nakula large amounts of jewels and gold coins. So great was the treasure that Nakula exacted from various kings that ten thousand camels could carry it only with great difficulty. He entered Indraprastha and offered all that wealth at the feet of his brother, the magnanimous King Yudhisthira.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Fifth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Lord Krishna benedicts the Imprisoned Kings.

## Chapter Commentary

The imprisoned kings could easily see the result of misusing political power. As soon as a king or a nation becomes rich in material opulences, it wants to dominate other nations by military aggression. Similarly, mercantile men want to monopolize a certain type of business and control other mercantile groups. Degraded by false prestige and infatuated by material opulences, human society, instead of striving for Krishna consciousness, creates havoc and disrupts peaceful living. Thus men naturally forget the real purpose of life: to attain the favor of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is unfortunate that living beings have to learn the hard way. If we simply by follow the instructions of Lord Krishna, peaceful living automatically follows.

In Lord Krishna's instructions to the imprisoned kings, he gives the perfect example of a Krishna conscious society. If the people of the world divide the whole society, into four orders for material and spiritual progress, and following the instructions of Krishna as stated in Bhagavad-gita, the entire human society will undoubtedly be happy. Presently people don't know how to be happy. Because, by ignoring the instructions of the Lord and guided by their personal motivations, they have created hell on earth. Five thousand years ago the earth needed a cleansing of evil kings, and so also, today, the earth needs a thorough cleansing of the ungodly. Once this is done, the earth will again begin to prosper under God conscious leadership.

## Chapter Six

### Shishupala's Liberation

The kingdom of Maharaja Yudhisthira continued to prosper, and he was able to give full protection to his citizens, both materially and spiritually, because he always spoke of the Absolute Truth. His humble nature and his devotion to truth always kept his would be enemies in check. The citizens happily engaged in their respective occupational duties. Due to the rule of the pious monarch, there was as much rain in the kingdom as the citizens desired. All cities and towns in Maharaja Yudhisthira's kingdom became highly prosperous. Indeed, cow protection, farming and trading flourished beyond the expectations of the vaishya class. During the reign of Maharaja Yudhisthira, robbers and thieves never cheated anyone because there was plenty for all. There were no droughts, floods, plagues, earthquakes, famine, fires, or premature deaths in the kingdom of Maharaja Yudhisthira. In order to please Maharaja Yudhisthira, the kings of the earth used to serve him, worship him or offer tribute to that king of kings. The large treasure house of the emperor was so filled with hoards of wealth that it could not be emptied by a hundred years of charity.

Seeing the state of his treasury, Maharaja Yudhisthira set his heart on performing the Rajasuya sacrifice.

Maharaja Yudhisthira's friends, ministers and officers, separately and together, approached him and advised, "The time has come, O exalted one, for the performance of the Rajasuya sacrifice. All arrangements should be made as soon as possible."

While these discussions were going on, Lord Hari (Krishna), the omniscient and oldest person of all, arrived in the kingdom of Maharaja Yudhisthira. That Supreme Lord has been described by those possessing knowledge as the omniscient Supersoul of every being, as the soul of the Vedas, as the foremost of all existences in the universe, as the origin of all things, as the cause of all causes, as that in which all things come to be resolved, and as the lord of the past, present and future. He has been called Keshava, the slayer of the Keshi demon, the dispeller of all fear in times of distress and the annihilator of all foes. That Supreme Personality of Godhead, being pleased by the devotion of Maharaja Yudhisthira, entered the pious city of Indraprastha, bringing with Him a large mass of treasure, including an inexhaustible ocean of gems that would be the envy of any enemy.

The capital of the Bharata dynasty was gladdened by Lord Krishna's presence just as a dark region becomes joyful by the sun's rising, or as one feels a cool gentle breeze on a hot summer day. The citizens of Indraprastha greeted that Lord of Lords with all the devotion in their hearts. Approaching Him lovingly and with due respect, Maharaja Yudhisthira inquired of His welfare. Offering Lord Krishna a seat of honor, Maharaja Yudhisthira, who was accompanied by Dhaumya, Vyasadeva, the sacrificial priests and Bhima and Arjuna, addressed Lord Krishna as follows, "My dear Lord Krishna, it is by your grace that this entire earth has been brought under my sway. And it is through your mercy that I have obtained the vast wealth in my treasury. I desire to devote that wealth according to scripture unto the direction of superior brahmanas and the carrier of the sacrificial libations. I am asking Your permission, O thou of the Dasarha race, to perform this sacrifice along with my brothers. My dear Krishna, O eternal form of bliss and knowledge, all the exalted directors of the affairs of this material world, including Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and King Indra, are always anxious to receive and carry out orders from You; and whenever they are fortunate enough to receive such orders, they immediately obey them in their hearts. O Krishna, You are unlimited, and although we sometimes think of ourselves as royal kings and rulers of the world and become puffed up over our paltry positions, we are very poor in heart. Actually, we are fit to be punished by You, but the wonder is that instead of punishing us, You so kindly and mercifully accept our orders and carry them out properly. Others are very surprised that Your Lordship can play the part of an ordinary human, but we can understand that You are performing these activities just like a stage actor. Your real position is always exalted, exactly like that of the sun, which always remains at the same temperature both during the time of its rising and the time of its setting. Although we feel the difference in temperature between the rising and the setting sun, the temperature of the sun never changes. You are always transcendently equipoised, and thus You are neither pleased nor disturbed by any condition of material affairs. You are the Supreme Brahman, the

Personality of Godhead, and for You there are no relativities. My dear Madhava, You are never defeated by anyone. Material distinctions - 'This is me.' 'This is you.' 'This is mine.' 'This is yours.'--are all conspicuous by dint of their absence in You. Such distinctions are visible in the lives of everyone, even the animals, but those who are pure devotees are freed from these false distinctions. Since these distinctions are absent in Your devotees, they cannot possibly be present in You."

After satisfying Lord Krishna in this way, King Yudhisthira arranged to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. He invited all the qualified brahmanas and sages to take part and appointed them to different positions as priests in charge of the sacrificial arena. He invited the most expert brahmanas and sages, whose names are as follows: Krishna-dvaipayana Vyasadeva, Bharadvaja, Sumantu, Gautama, Asita, Vashistha, Chyavana, Kanva, Maitreya, Kavasa, Trita, Visvamitra, Vamadeva, Sumati, Jaimini, Kratu, Paila, Parasara, Garga, Vaisampayana, Atharva, Kasyapa, Dhaumya, Parasurama, Sukracharya, Asuri, Vitihotra, Madhucchanda, Virasena, and Akritavrana. Besides all these brahmanas and sages, he invited such respectful senior members of the Kuru Dynasty as Dronacharya, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, Kripacharya, and Dhritarastra. He also invited all the sons of Dhritarastra, headed by Duryodhana, and the great devotee Vidura was also invited. Kings from different parts of the world, along with their ministers and secretaries, were also invited to see the great sacrifice performed by King Yudhisthira, and the citizens, comprising learned brahmanas, chivalrous kshatriyas, well-to-do vaishyas, and faithful shudras, all visited the ceremony.

The kings who came for the Rajasuya sacrifice were received by Maharaja Yudhisthira and treated to heavenly opulence. All those monarches were assigned to mansions that equaled the abodes of the heavenly gods. The mansions were white as clouds and high as mount Kailasa. There were beautifully designed and filled with ornate furniture. They were enclosed with high boundary walls and surrounded by gardens and water tanks filled with lotus flowers. The lattice windows were covered with gold, and the walls were covered with rows of pearls and other valuable gems. The floors, too, were made of gems, and some were covered with costly carpets. Flower garlands hung here and there, and scented perfumes filled the air. These mansions were covered in white marble and looked like the the snow capped mountains of the Himalayas. The doors and entrances were uniformly set and were wide enough to admit a crowd. Adorned with various costly articles and built with various metals, they looked like the peaks of Mount Himavat. The kings of the earth were very satisfied with the reception of Maharaja Yudhisthira.

The brahmana priests and sages in charge of the sacrificial ceremony broke the sacrificial ground with a golden plow, and they initiated King Yudhisthira as the performer of the great sacrifice, in accordance with Vedic rituals. Long years ago, when Varuna performed a similar sacrifice, all the sacrificial utensils were made of gold. In the Rajasuya sacrifice of King Yudhisthira, all the utensils required for the sacrifice were also golden.

In order to participate in the great sacrifice performed by King Yudhisthira, all the exalted demigods like Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, and Indra the King of heaven,

accompanied by their associates, as well as the predominating deities of higher planetary systems like Gandharvaloka, Siddhaloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Nagaloka, Yakshaloka, Rakshasaloka, Pakshiloka and Charanaloka, as well as famous kings and their queens, were all present by the invitation of King Yudhisthira. All the respectable sages, kings and demigods who assembled there unanimously agreed that King Yudhisthira was quite competent to take the responsibility of performing the Rajasuya sacrifice; no one was in disagreement on this fact. All of them knew thoroughly the position of King Yudhisthira; because he was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, no accomplishment was extraordinary for him.

Maharaja Yudhisthira requested certain persons to help him with the sacrifice. He appointed Bhima to superintend the food department and other enjoyable things. He asked Ashvatthama to wait on and serve the needs of any brahmana who came to the sacrifice. Sanjaya was appointed to serve and offer worship to all kings who came to the sacrifice. Bhishma and Drona were appointed to see that no detail of the reception was neglected. Kripa was appointed to look after the diamonds, pearls, other gems and gold that was offered to King Yudhisthira. He was also in charge of distribution of gifts to brahmanas. Balhika, Dhritarastra, Somadatta, and Jayadratha went about enjoying themselves as lords of the sacrifice. Duryodhana was requested to become the receiver of tributes that were brought by kings. Whatever was offered to King Yudhisthira as gifts was counted by Duryodhana and stored properly. Vidura was put in charge of distributing charity at the right time and to proper persons. Lord Krishna, the center of all worlds and round whom every creature moved, was engaged by His own will in washing the feet of the brahmanas.

King Yudhisthira, himself, brought a large amount of wealth to the sacrificial arena. Everyone honored Maharaja Yudhisthira with large presents of jewels. And each king made a present of his wealth, flattering himself with the proud belief that the jewels he gave would enable King Yudhisthira to complete his sacrifice.

The learned brahmanas and priests saw to it that the sacrifice by Maharaja Yudhisthira was performed in exactly the same way as in bygone ages by the demigod Varuna. According to the Vedic system, whenever there is an arrangement for sacrifice, the members participating in the sacrifice are offered the juice of the soma plant. The juice of the soma plant is a kind of life-giving beverage. On the day of extracting the soma juice, King Yudhisthira very respectfully received the special priest who had been engaged to detect any mistake in the formalities of sacrificial procedures. The Vedic mantras must be enunciated perfectly and chanted with the proper accent; if the priests who are engaged in this business commit any mistake, the referee priest immediately corrects the procedure, and thus the ritualistic performances are perfectly executed. Unless it is perfectly executed, a sacrifice cannot yield the desired result.

Another important procedure is that the most exalted personality in the assembly of such a sacrificial ceremony is first offered worship. After all arrangements were made for Yudhisthira's sacrifice, the next consideration was who should be worshipped first in the ceremony. This particular ceremony is called Agrapuja. Agra means first, and puja means worship. In the sacrificial assembly, all the members

were very exalted. Some proposed to elect one person as the perfect candidate for accepting Agrapuja, and others proposed someone else.

Then Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, spoke giving his opinion, "As the sun is the center of all luminescing objects, so Krishna is the center of all living beings. Our sacrificial altar is illuminated and blessed by His presence as a sunless region is blessed by the sun. Therefore, I feel that Krishna should be the first worshiped in this assembly."

Bhishma, the great grandsire of the Kurus, then ordered Sahadeva to offer the Agrapuja to Lord Krishna. However, Shishupala could not bear to see that worship offered to Lord Krishna. He spoke up influenced by envy and hatred, "O descendant of the Kuru race, this Krishna does not deserve royal worship as if he were a king. You sons of Pandu are acting like children. Bhishma, the son of Ganga, obviously, possesses little knowledge. He deserves to be censured amongst the honest and wise. How does this one of the Yadu dynasty, who is not even a king, deserve worship before all the exalted kings present? Krishna is not certainly the oldest in age, for here is His father, Vasudeva. If you regard Krishna as a well wisher, there is a greater well wisher present here as King Drupada. When Drona is present, how could you regard Krishna as a greater preceptor? Do you regard Krishna as greater in wisdom than Dvaipayana Vyasa? Amongst the warriors present, the great Bhishma, who can die only at his will, stand supreme. How could Krishna receive worship before him? When Ashvatthama, the knower of every branch of knowledge is present, how could you worship Krishna? When Duryodhana, the bull of the Bharata race, is present how could Krishna be worshipped first? Passing over Kripa, the preceptor of the Bharata princes, why have you worshiped Krishna? When Bhishmaka, Rukmi, Ekalavya, Salya or Karna are present, how could you worship Krishna? This slayer of Madhu is neither a sacrificial priest, nor a preceptor, nor a king. With what understanding have you worshiped Krishna? O chief of the Kurus, you have rejected qualified persons to be first worshiped from motives for gain. If you had planned to worship this Krishna, then why have you brought all these kings here to be insulted? This wretch born of the Vrishni race has caused the slaying of King Jarasandha by unrighteous means. O Yudhishthira, you have abandoned righteousness today."

Then turning to Lord Krishna, Shishupala, who was bringing death upon his head, spoke the following death knell of words, "O Janardana, why have You accepted the position of being first worshiped? You have acted like a dog that laps up clarified butter stolen from the sacrifice. O slayer of Madhu, as a wife is to one without virile power, as a fine play is to one who is blind, so this royal worship is to thee who are not even a king."

Having spoken these words, Shishupala rose from his seat, and accompanied by many kings, attempted to leave the assembly. King Yudhishthira hastily ran after Shishupala and tried to correct his wayward mentality, "O Lord of the earth, what you have said is scarcely proper for you. It is improper and highly sinful. Do not insult Bhishma by saying that he does not know what virtue is. Behold these many kings, older than you, who approve of the worship of Krishna. It behoves you to

follow their example. O ruler of Chedi, Bhishma knows Lord Krishna in truth. You must learn from him the glory of Krishna."

Bhishma then spoke up in the assembly of kings, "He who does not approve of the worship of Krishna, the oldest person in the universe, deserves no soft words of conciliation. Any warrior of the Kshatriya race, who defeats all other warriors in battle and then sets his opponent free, becomes the preceptor of his opponent. I do not behold in this assembly of kings even one ruler who has not been subdued in battle by Krishna. The whole universe without limit can be found in Krishna. He deserves, not only the worship of all kings here, but of every living being. Therefore we worship Krishna as the oldest, but who remains ever fresh and as the foremost of all living beings. I have, O Shishupala, waited upon many sages experienced in knowledge. These wise men have explained to me in detail the glory of Krishna. I have heard many times the divine acts performed by Janardana since His birth. We do not, O King of Chedi, worship Krishna in hope of obtaining material benefits. All good men on earth worship that one who has no origin and who is the source of happiness for every creature. We have offered to Him the first worship because in Him resides all beauty, knowledge, power, renunciation, fame and glory.

"There is none in this assembly who we have not taken into consideration. Lord Krishna is the foremost among the brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. As far as knowledgeable persons are concerned, He is the most learned in Vedas; indeed, He is the source of all Vedic knowledge. In this eminent person resides liberality, cleverness, knowledge of the Vedas, bravery, modesty, achievements, infinite intelligence, humility, beauty, firmness, contentment and prosperity. All these dwell in Achyuta, the infallible one. Therefore, O Kings, it behooves you to offer first worship to Krishna, the Lord of all beings.

"Hrishikesha is the sacrificial priest, the guru, the king, the best friend; and therefore He has been offered first worship. Krishna is the source of this universe and into who this universe will dissolve. Indeed this universe of mobile and immobile creatures has sprung into existence by the grace of Krishna only. He is the unmanifest primal cause, the creator, the eternal Lord and protector of all creatures. Therefore, why doesn't He of unfading glory deserve to be worshiped first. This Shishupala is a mere child, because he doesn't not know this Supreme Lord of all lords."

When Bhishma had stopped speaking, Sahadeva responded to the offensive words of Shishupala, "If there be any king amongst you who cannot bear to see Keshava, the killer of the Keshi demon, as the first person worshiped, I will place my foot on his head." When Sahadeva lifted his foot, no king challenged him. Suddenly, a shower of flowers fell on Sahadeva and an unembodied voice exclaimed, "Excellent! Excellent!"

Then Narada, clad in black deerskin and speaking of both the past and future, spoke the following words with the clearest import, "Those men who will not worship the lotus-eyed Krishna should be regarded as dead although life may reside in the body.

In fact, one who does not regard Krishna as the first person to be worshiped should not be seen or spoken to."

When there was grumbling among the followers of Shishupala and the matter remained undecided, Sahadeva again began to speak in favor of Lord Krishna. He said, "Lord Krishna, the best amongst the members of the Yadu dynasty and the protector of His devotees, is the most exalted personality in this assembly. Therefore I think that He should without any objection be offered the honor of being worshiped first. Although demigods such as Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Indra, the King of the heavenly planets, and many other exalted personalities are present in this assembly, no one can be equal to or greater than Krishna in terms of time, space, riches, strength, reputation, wisdom, renunciation or any other consideration. Anything which is considered opulent is present originally in Krishna. As an individual soul is the basic principle of the growth of his material body, similarly Krishna is the Supersoul of this cosmic manifestation. All kinds of Vedic ritualistic ceremonies, such as the performance of sacrifices, the offering of oblations in the fire, the chanting of the Vedic hymns and the practice of mystic yoga--all are meant for realizing Krishna. Whether one follows the path of fruitive activities or the path of philosophical speculation, the ultimate destination is Krishna; all bona fide methods of self-realization are meant for understanding Krishna. O respectable persons present, it is superfluous to speak about Krishna, because every one of you exalted personalities know the Supreme Brahman, Lord Krishna, for whom there are no material differences between body and soul, between energy and the energetic, or between one part of the body and another. Since everyone is a part and parcel of Krishna, there is no qualitative difference between Krishna and all living entities. Everything is an emanation of Krishna's energies, the material and spiritual energies. Krishna's energies are like the heat and light of the fire; there is no difference between the quality of heat and light of the fire itself.

"Also, Krishna can do anything He likes with any part of His body. We can execute a particular action with the help of a particular part of our body, but He can do anything and everything with any part of His body. And because His transcendental body is full of knowledge and bliss in eternity, he doesn't undergo the six kinds of material changes--birth, existence, growth, fruitive action, dwindling and vanishing. Unforced by any external energy, He is the supreme cause of the creation, maintenance and dissolution of everything that be. By the grace of Krishna only, everyone is engaged in the practice of religiousness, the development of economic conditions, the satisfaction of the senses and, ultimately, the achievement of liberation from material bondage. These four principles of progressive life can be executed by the mercy of Krishna only. He should therefore be offered the first worship of this great sacrifice, and no one should disagree. As by watering the root, the watering of the branches, twigs, leaves and flowers is automatically accomplished, or as by supplying food to the stomach, the nutrition and metabolism of all parts of the body are automatically established, so by offering the first worship to Krishna, everyone present in this meeting--including the great demigods--will be satisfied. If anyone is charitably disposed, it will be very good for him to give in charity only to Krishna, who is the Supersoul of everyone, regardless of his particular body or individual personality. Krishna is present as the Supersoul in every living

being; and if we can satisfy Him, then automatically every living being becomes satisfied."

After this speech was delivered, all the members present in that great sacrificial assembly applauded, confirming his words continuously by saying, "Everything that you have said is completely perfect. Everything that you have said is completely perfect." King Yudhisthira, after hearing the confirmation of all present, especially of the brahmanas and learned sages, finished worshiping Lord Krishna according to the regulative principles of the Vedic injunctions. First of all, King Yudhisthira--along with his brothers, wives, children, other relatives and ministers--washed the lotus feet of Lord Krishna and sprinkled the water on their heads. After this, Lord Krishna was offered various kinds of silken garments of yellow color, and heaps of jewelry and ornaments were presented before Him for His use.

King Yudhisthira felt such ecstasy by honoring Krishna, who was his only lovable object, that tears glided down from his eyes; and although He wanted to, he could not see Lord Krishna very well. Lord Krishna was thus worshiped by King Yudhisthira. At that time all the members present in that assembly stood up with folded hands and began to chant, "Jaya! Namah! Namah!" When all joined together to offer their respectful obeisances to Krishna, there were showers of flowers from the sky.

After the Agrapuja had been completed, King Shishupala could not tolerate such honor being offered to Krishna nor hear the glorification of His qualities. Instead of being happy to hear the glories of the Lord, he became very angry. When everyone offered respect to Krishna by standing up, Shishupala remained in his seat; but when he became angry at Krishna's being honored, Shishupala stood up suddenly, and raising his hand, began to speak very strongly and fearlessly against Lord Krishna. He spoke in such a way that Lord Krishna could hear him very distinctly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I can appreciate now the statement of the Vedas that, after all, time is the predominating factor. In spite of all endeavors to the contrary, the time element executes its own plan without opposition. For example, one may try his best to live, but when the time for death comes, no one can check it. I see here that although there are many stalwart personalities present in this assembly, the influence of time is so strong that they have been misled by the statement of a boy who has foolishly spoken about Krishna. There are many learned sages and elderly persons present, but still they have accepted the statement of a foolish boy. This means that by the influence of time, even the intelligence of such honored persons as are present in this meeting can be misdirected. I fully agree with the respectable persons present here that they are competent enough to select the personality who can be first worshiped, but I cannot agree with the statement of a boy like Sahadeva, who has spoken so highly about Krishna and has recommended that Krishna is fit to accept the first worship in the sacrifice. I can see that in this meeting there are many personalities who have undergone great austerities, who are highly learned and who have performed many penances. By their knowledge and direction, they can deliver many persons who are suffering from the pangs of material existence. There are great rishis here whose knowledge has no bounds, as well as

many self- realized persons and brahmanas also; and therefore, I think that any one of them could have been selected for the first worship because they are worshipable even by the great demigods, kings and emperors. I cannot understand how you could have selected this cowherd boy, Krishna, and have left aside all these other great personalities. I think Krishna to be no better than a crow! How can He be fit to accept the first worship in this great sacrifice?

"We cannot even ascertain as yet to which caste this Krishna belongs or what His actual occupational duty is. Krishna does not belong to a respectable family. He is so independent that no one knows His principles of religious life. It appears that He is outside the jurisdiction of all religious principles. He always acts independently, not caring for the Vedic injunctions and regulative principles. Therefore He is devoid of all good qualities." Shishupala indirectly praised Krishna by saying that He is not within the jurisdiction of Vedic injunction. This is true because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That He has no qualities means that Krishna has no material qualities; and because He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He acts independently, not caring for conventions or social or religious principles.

Shishupala continued: "Under these circumstances, how can He be fit to accept the first worship in the sacrifice? Krishna is so foolish that He has left Mathura, which is inhabited by highly elevated persons following the Vedic culture, and He has taken shelter in the ocean, where there is not even talk of the Vedas. Instead of living openly, He has constructed a fort within the water and is living in an atmosphere where there is no discussion of Vedic knowledge. And whenever He comes out of the fort, He simply harasses the citizens like a dacoit, thief or rogue."

Shishupala went crazy because Krishna was elected the supreme first- worshiped person in that meeting, and he spoke so irresponsibly that it appeared that he had lost all his good fortune. Being overcast with misfortune, Shishupala continued to insult Krishna further, and Lord Krishna patiently heard him without protest. Just as a lion does not care when a flock of jackals howl, Lord Krishna remained silent and unprovoked. Krishna did not reply to even a single accusation made by Shishupala, but all the members present in the meeting, except for a few who agreed with Shishupala, became very agitated because it is the duty of any respectable person not to tolerate blasphemy against God or His devotee. Some of them, who thought that they could not properly take action against Shishupala, left the assembly in protest, covering their ears with their hands in order not to hear further accusations. Thus they left the meeting condemning the action of Shishupala. It is the Vedic injunction that whenever there is blasphemy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one must immediately leave. If he does not do so, he becomes bereft of pious activities and is degraded to the lower condition of life.

All the kings present, belonging to the Kuru dynasty, Matsya dynasty, Kekaya dynasty and Shrinjaya dynasty, became very angry and immediately took up their swords and shields to kill Shishupala. Bhimasena became overwhelmed with rage and stood up to fight with Shishupala. However, Bhishma grabbed him and would not let him proceed further. Bhishma then spoke to Bhima to pacify his anger, "This Shishupala is not destined to be killed by you. The force, under which the King of

Chedi boasts so foolishly, is scarcely of his own, but the Lord of the universe. O Bhima, what king is there who would dare abuse me as this wretch, already possessed by death, has done today. This king of Chedi is without doubt under the influence of Lord Hari's energy. And surely the Lord desires to take him back to Vaikuntha. Due to the Lord's influence, Shishupala roars like a lion caring little for all kings present.

"Listen as I relate his history. Shishupala was born with four hands and three eyes, and upon his birth, he screamed like an ass. His parents were intently thinking of abandoning him for fear that he was a demon. Just when they were about to rid themselves of the child, a voice from the heavens spoke, 'Do not abandon this child. He will prove to be a powerful warrior and will obtain all good fortune. He is not destined to die in his childhood. The person that will kill him has been born into this world already.'

Bhishma continued, "Hearing the unembodied voice, the mother inquired, 'Who will be the slayer of my son?' The invisible being replied, 'The child will lose his two extra arms and eye when he is placed on the lap of a certain guest, and it will be that person who will slay your son.' Although the child was placed upon the lap of thousands of kings and princes, still the prophecy did not come true. One day Lord Krishna and Balarama came to the kingdom of the Chedis. They worshipped Their aunt and were given a fitting reception. When They took their seats, the queen brought the child to Krishna and placed it in His lap. The child immediately lost his two extra arms and the third eye. The queen in great anxiety then begged a benediction from Lord Krishna, 'O mighty armed Krishna, please grant me that You will excuse the offences of my son Shishupala.' Lord Krishna replied, 'O my aunt, I say that I will pardon one hundred offences committed by your son. Do not grieve for his life.' O Bhima, this King is not destined to be killed by you. He has already committed over one hundred offences, and he will soon be killed by the Lord of the universe, Himself."

Shishupala did not become even slightly agitated by Bhishma's words. Many of the kings present were ready to kill him for his offenses to Lord Krishna and others. He did not care to think of the pros and cons of his foolish talking; and when he saw that all the kings were ready to kill him, instead of stopping, he stood to fight with them and took up his sword and shield. When Lord Krishna saw that they were going to engage in fighting in the arena of the auspicious Rajasuya yajna, He personally pacified them. Out of His causeless mercy He Himself decided to kill Shishupala. When Shishupala was abusing the kings who were about to attack him, Lord Krishna took up His disc, which was as sharp as the blade of a razor, and immediately separated the head of Shishupala from his body.

When Shishupala was thus killed, a great roar and howl went up from the crowd of that assembly. Taking advantage of that disturbance, the few kings who were supporters of Shishupala quickly left the assembly out of fear of their lives. But despite all this, the fortunate Shishupala's spirit soul went to Krishna and worshiped him and then immediately merged into the body of Lord Krishna in the presence of all members, exactly as a burning meteor falls to the surface of the globe.

Shishupala's soul merging into the transcendental body of Krishna fulfilled the the four Kumara's curse of Jaya and Vijaya, who fell to the material world from the Vaikuntha planets. For their return to the Vaikuntha world, it was arranged that both Jaya and Vijaya for three consecutive births would act as deadly enemies of the Lord, and at the end of these lives they would again return to the Vaikuntha world and serve the Lord as His associates.

After the salvation of Shishupala, King Yudhisthira rewarded all the members present in the sacrificial assembly. He sufficiently remunerated the priests and the learned sages for their engagement in the sacrifice. After the sacrifice, King Yudhisthira stood in the midst of all the learned sages and brahmanas, and he seemed exactly like the King of heaven and thus looked very beautiful. King Yudhisthira sufficiently rewarded all the demigods who participated in the sacrifice, and being greatly satisfied, all of them left praising the King's activities and glorifying Lord Krishna.

Lord Krishna thus enabled the performance of the Rajasuya yajna arranged by King Yudhisthira to be successfully completed, and, being requested by His cousins and relatives, He remained in Hastinapura for a few months more.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Sixth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Shishupala's Liberation.

## Chapter Commentary

In this day and age it is not possible to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. No one has sufficient wealth nor does anyone have complete sovereignty of the world. The demigods will not attend a sacrifice in Kali yuga, and there are no learned brahmanas or priests available; therefore, all such sacrifices are forbidden by the shastras. The only sacrifice recommended in the shastras is the chanting of the Holy Names of God, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare\ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This simple sacrifice has been enunciated by the incarnation for this age of Kali, Shree Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He is not different from Lord Krishna Himself. The Lord has given this easy process to the fallen people of this age, because no one can perform sacrifices like the Rajasuya or ashvamedha. This easy sacrifice of chanitng the holy names can be performed by anyone; and when the Holy Names are chanted without offense, the Supreme Lord becomes as pleased as when opulent sacrifices were performed in previous ages.

We should try to better understand the position of Shishupala. Although Shishupala acted as the enemy of Krishna, he was not for a single moment out of Krishna consciousness. He was always absorbed in thought of Krishna, and thus he got first the salvation of sayujya-mukti, merging into the existence of the Supreme, and finally became reinstated in his original position of personal service. The Bhagavad-gita corroborates the fact that if one is absorbed in the thought of the Supreme Lord

at the time of death, he immediately enters the kingdom of God after quitting his material body. The story of the fall of Jaya and Vijaya from the Vaikuntha planets to the material world is described in the Seventh Canto of the Shrimad-Bhagavatam. The killing of Shishupala has a direct link with that narration of Jaya and Vijaya, but the most important instruction that we get from this incident is that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, being absolute, can give salvation to everyone, whether one acts as His enemy or as His friend. It is, therefore, a misconception that the Lord acts with someone in the relationship of a friend and with someone else in the relationship of an enemy. His being an enemy or friend is always on the absolute platform. There is no material distinction.

Another point to be found in this chapter is that Shishupala's blasphemy of Lord Krishna was actually glorification. Shishupala made the statement that Lord Krishna does not belong to any caste. Actually, Krishna does not belong to any caste, nor does He have to perform any occupational duty. It is stated in the Vedas that the Supreme Lord has nothing to do as His prescribed duty. Whatever has to be done on His behalf is executed by His different energies. He is transcendental to the caste system. Indeed, he is the cause of the Varnashrama system as stated in Bhagavad-gita, "The four orders of occupation were created by Me according to quality and work." (B.g. 3.14) Since Krishna is the creator of this system, He is not subject to it. Therefore, Shishupala was correct when he said, "We do not know to what caste this Krishna belongs."

Shishupala was also correct when he said that Krishna was not a king of this world. Krishna is much greater than a worldly king. He is the Supreme Godhead. There is no need for Him to become a worldly king in order to show His divinity. His kingdom is not of this world, but of the kingdom of God. The president of the United States very rarely visits a prison, although he controls it, because of the rebelliousness of the inmates. The Supreme Lord is very kind in that He sometimes visits this world to encourage the living beings to come back to the kingdom of God. Some of the inhabitants of this world of birth and death do not recognize the Lord and rebel against Him.

## Chapter seven

### Duryodhana Embarrassed at the Palace of King Yudhisthira

King Yudhisthira was known as Ajatrashatru, or a person who has no enemy. Therefore, when all men, all demigods, all kings, sages and saints saw the successful termination of the Rajasuya sacrifice performed by King Yudhisthira, they became very happy. King Yudhisthira, was a great soul. His congenial disposition attracted everyone as his friend, and therefore he was known as Ajatrashatru, one who never created an enemy.

After Shishupala had died by the mercy of Lord Krishna and had become merged in the spiritual existence, and after the end of the Rajasuya sacrifice, when all friends, guests and well-wishers had been sufficiently honored and rewarded, King Yudhisthira went to bathe in the Ganges. While traveling in procession, different musical instruments, such as mridangas, conchshells, drums, kettledrums and bugles, vibrated. In addition, the ankle bells of the dancing girls jingled. Many groups of professional singers played vinas, flutes, gongs and cymbals, and thus a tumultuous sound vibrated in the sky. The princely guests from many kingdoms, like Shrinjaya, Kambhoja, Kuru, Kekaya and Kosala, were present with their different flags and gorgeously decorated elephants, chariots, horses and soldiers. All were passing in a procession to the Ganges, and King Yudhisthira was in the forefront.

The sacrificial heads, such as the priests, religious ministers and brahmanas, were all loudly chanting the Vedic hymns. The demigods, the inhabitants of the Pitriloka and Gandharvaloka, as well as many sages, showered flowers from the sky. The men and women of Indraprastha, their bodies smeared with scents and floral oils, were nicely dressed in colorful garments and decorated with garlands, jewels and ornaments. They were all enjoying the ceremony, and they threw other liquid substances like water, oil, milk, butter and yogurt. Some even smeared these on each other's bodies. In this way, they were enjoying the occasion. The professional prostitutes were also engaged by jubilantly smearing these liquid substances on the bodies of the men, and the men reciprocated in the same way. All the liquid substances had been mixed with turmeric and saffron, and their color was lustrous yellow.

In order to witness the avabhrita bath of King Yudhisthira, many wives of the demigods had come in different airplanes, and they were visible in the sky. Similarly, the queens of the royal family arrived on different palanquins. There were gorgeously decorated and protected by bodyguards. During this time, Lord Krishna, the maternal cousin of the Pandavas, and His special friend Arjuna, were both throwing the liquid substances on the bodies of the queens. The queens became bashful, but at the same time their beautiful smiling brightened their faces. Because of the liquid substances thrown on their bodies, the saris covering them became completely wet. The different parts of their beautiful bodies, particularly their breasts and waists, became partially visible because of the wet cloth. The queens also

brought in buckets of liquid substances and sprinkled them on the bodies of their husbands. As they engaged in such jubilant activities, their hair fell loose, and the flowers decorating their bodies began to fall. When Lord Krishna, Arjuna and the queens were thus engaged in these jubilant activities, persons who were not clean in heart became agitated by lustful desires. Such behavior between pure males and females is enjoyable, but persons who are materially contaminated become lustful.

King Yudhisthira, in a gorgeous chariot yoked by excellent horses, was present with his queens, including Draupadi and others. The festivities of the sacrifice were so beautiful that it appeared as if Rajasuya was standing there in person with the functions of the sacrifice.

Following the Rajasuya sacrifice, there was the Vedic ritualistic duty known as patnisamyaja. This sacrifice was performed along with one's wife, and it was also performed by the priests of King Yudhisthira. When Queen Draupadi and King Yudhisthira were taking their avabhrita bath, the citizens of Hastinapura as well as the demigods began to beat on drums and blow trumpets out of feelings of happiness, and there was a shower of flowers from the sky. When the King and the Queen finished their bath in the Ganges, all the other citizens, consisting of all the varnas or castes--the brahmanas, the kshatriyas, the vaishyas, and the shudras--took their baths in the Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges is recommended in the Vedic literature because by such bathing one becomes freed from all sinful reactions.

After taking his bath, King Yudhisthira dressed in a new silken cloth and chaddar and decorated himself with valuable jewelry. The King not only dressed himself and decorated himself, but he also gave clothing and ornaments to all the priests and to the others who had participated in the yajnas. In this way, they were all worshiped by King Yudhisthira. He constantly worshiped his friends, his family members, his relatives, his well-wishers and everyone present, and because he was a great devotee of Lord Narayana, or because he was a Vaishnava, he therefore knew how to treat everyone well.

When everyone was refreshed after bathing and was dressed in silken clothing with jeweled earrings, flower garlands, turbans, long chaddars and pearl necklaces, they looked, altogether, like the denizens from heaven. This was especially true of the women who were very nicely dressed. Each wore a golden belt around the waist. They were all smiling. Spots of tilaka and curling hair were scattered here and there. This combination was very attractive.

Persons who had participated in the Rajasuya sacrifice--including the most cultured priests, the brahmanas who had assisted in the performance of the sacrifice, the citizens of all varnas, kings, demigods, sages, saints and citizens of the Pitri-loka--were all very much satisfied by the dealings of King Yudhisthira, and at the end they happily departed for their residences. While returning to their homes, they talked of the dealings of King Yudhisthira, and even after continuous talk of his greatness they were not satiated, just as one may drink nectar over and over again and never be satisfied. After the departure of all others, Maharaja Yudhisthira restrained the inner circle of his friends, including Lord Krishna, by not allowing them to leave. Lord

Krishna could not refuse the request of the King. He therefore sent back all the heroes of the Yadu dynasty, like Samba and others. All of them returned to Dvaraka, and Lord Krishna personally remained in order to give pleasure to the King.

In the material world, everyone has a particular type of desire to be fulfilled, but one is never able to fulfill his desire to his full satisfaction. But King Yudhisthira, because of his unflinching devotion to Krishna, could fulfill all his desires successfully by the performance of the Rajasuya yajna. From the description of the execution of the Rajasuya yajna, it appears that such a function is a great ocean of opulent desires. It is not possible for an ordinary man to cross over such an ocean; nevertheless, by the grace of Lord Krishna, King Yudhisthira was able to cross over it very easily, and thus he became freed from all anxieties.

When Duryodhana saw that Maharaja Yudhisthira had become very famous after performance of the Rajasuya yajna and was fully satisfied in every respect, he began to burn with the fire of envy because his mind was always poisonous. For one thing, he envied the imperial court which had been constructed by the demon Maya for the Pandavas. The court was excellent in its puzzling artistic workmanship and was befitting the position of great princes, kings or leaders of the demons. In that great palace, the Pandavas were living with their family members, and Queen Draupadi was serving her husbands very peacefully. And because in those days Lord Krishna was also there, the palace was also decorated by His thousands of queens. When the queens, with their heavy breasts and thin waists, moved within the palace, and their ankle bells rang very melodiously with their movement, the whole palace appeared to be more opulent than the heavenly kingdoms. Because a portion of their breasts was sprinkled with saffron powder, the pearl necklaces on their breast appeared to be reddish. With their full earrings and flowing hair, the queens appeared very beautiful.

After looking at such beauties in the palace of King Yudhisthira, Duryodhana became envious. He became especially envious and lustful upon seeing the beauty of Draupadi because he had cherished a special attraction for her from the very beginning of her marriage with the Pandavas. In the marriage selection assembly of Draupadi, Duryodhana had also been present, and with other princes he had been very much captivated by Draupadi's beauty, but he had failed to achieve her.

Shortly after the completion of the Rajasuya sacrifice, King Yudhisthira was sitting on the golden throne in the palace constructed by the demon Maya. His four brothers and other relatives, as well as his great well-wisher, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, were present and the material opulence of King Yudhisthira seemed no less than that of Lord Brahma.

While he was sitting on the imperial throne surrounded by his friends, and the reciters were offering prayers to him in the form of nice songs, Duryodhana, and his younger brother were marveling over the opulence of the palace created by the demon Maya. While wandering through the palace they came upon a crystal floor. The king mistaking it for a pool of water lifted up his royal robes. He appeared foolish for doing so, and when he learned the floor was not actually water, he

appeared embarrassed and angry. Nonetheless, he continued to inspect the palace and suddenly came upon a crystal pool adorned with lotus flowers with crystal petals. This time he was convinced it was land; and as he walked forward, he fell into the lake and all his clothes became wet.

By the craftsmanship of the demon Maya, the palace was so decorated in different places that one who did not know the tricks would consider water to be land and land to be water. Duryodhana was also illusioned by this craftsmanship; and when he was crossing water thinking it to be land, he fell down. When Duryodhana, out of his foolishness, had thus fallen, Lord Krishna's queens enjoyed the incident by laughing. King Yudhisthira could understand the feelings of Duryodhana, and he tried to restrain the queens from laughing, but Lord Krishna indicated that King Yudhisthira should not restrain them from enjoying the incident. Krishna desired that Duryodhana might be fooled in that way and that all of them might enjoy his foolish behavior. Seeing Duryodhana fallen into the lake, Bhima laughed loudly. Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva also laughed at the foolishness of Duryodhana. When everyone laughed, Duryodhana felt very insulted, and his hair stood up in anger. Being thus insulted, he started to leave the palace, bowing his head. He was silent and did not protest. He again lifted up his clothes to pass over what he thought was water. Again it was only land and everyone laughed. Becoming more and more indignant, the king attempted to leave through a crystal door that he thought was open. When he bumped into the crystal door, he backed off with his brain reeling. He then went to another door and thinking it was a crystal door attempted to open it with his outstretched hands. The door was actually open and he fell down in his attempt. And coming upon another door that was really open, Duryodhana thought it was closed and went away from it.

When Duryodhana left in such an angry mood, King Yudhisthira regretted the incident, and became very sorry. But despite all occurrences, Krishna was silent. He did not say anything against or in favor of the incident. It appeared that Duryodhana had been put into illusion by the supreme will of Lord Krishna, and this incident increased the enmity between the two sects of the Kuru dynasty. It appeared that it was a part of Krishna's plan in His mission to decrease the burden of the world.

Thus Ends Mahabharata Summation to Chapter Seven of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Duryodhana Embarrassed at the Palace of King Yudhisthira.

## Chapter Commentary

Maharaja Yudhisthira was able to treat everyone equally. The Mayavadi philosophers' endeavor to see everyone as God is an artificial way towards oneness, but a Vaishnava or a devotee of Lord Narayana sees every living entity as part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, a Vaishnava's treatment of other living entities is on the absolute platform. Since one cannot treat one part of his body differently from another part because they all belong to the same body, so a Vaishnava does not see a human being as distinct from an animal because in both of them he sees the soul and the Supersoul seated simultaneously. Maharaja Yudhisthira was endowed with such a spiritual vision, and, therefore, seeing Lord Krishna in everyone's heart, he treated everyone kindly.

One may wonder why Lord Krishna allowed everyone to laugh at Duryodhana's foolishness if the Lord is equal to everyone. Although Duryodhana is also part and parcel of Krishna, he was acting enviously of the Pandavas. The Lord had descended to protect His devotees and to kill the envious. However, both groups got liberation. The Pandavas and other devotees got liberation by favorable devotion. Shishupala, Duryodhana, Kamsa and others got liberation by being envious of the Lord and thus being killed by the Lord. When the demons are killed by the Lord, they attain to favorable devotion and enter the kingdom of God. Thus the Lord is truly equal to all.

## Chapter Eight

### The Evil Plan

After Duryodhana left Indraprastha, he was burning with envy. He could not stand to see the opulence of the Pandavas. After the incident of falling into the pond and hearing Bhima laugh at him, Duryodhana was determined to destroy the Pandavas. He confided in his uncle Shakuni, "O uncle, the Kings of the earth are now subordinate to Yudhisthira due to the strength of Arjuna's Gandiva bow, given to him by Agni, the fire god. After completing the Rajasuya sacrifice, the Pandavas have brought all the kings of the world under their sway. This envy is burning my heart day and night. Did you see how Shishupala was killed by Krishna? Shishupala had no one to support him in that fight. The Pandavas are supported by Krishna and Balarama, and the whole Yadu and Vrishni dynasties. King Drupada and his sons have also taken their side. I cannot live seeing the Pandavas prosper. I will take poison or throw myself in fire, but I will not maintain my life while the Pandavas grow in opulence. With Karna, Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, and my brothers, I will attack them and take away their wealth. Let us quickly organize our troops and exterminate them."

Shakuni, who was evil from birth, then gave the following foolish advice, "Krishna, Arjuna, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva and Drupada and his sons can never be subjugated in battle even by the heavenly gods themselves. However, listen, O King, to the means by which Yudhisthira may be defeated. The son of Kunti, Yudhisthira, is very fond of playing dice, although he does not play well. If he is challenged, he will not refuse. I am skillful at dice, and there is no one on earth who is my equal. If I play for you, I can win the kingdom of the Pandavas with out shedding any blood. The dice will prove to be more deadly than the sword."

"Let us present our plan to my father," Duryodhana joyfully responded, "and then take the necessary action."

When Duryodhana returned to Hastinapura, he informed his father through Shakuni that he was very morose and unhappy. Dhritarastra then called for Duryodhana and inquired from him, "My dear son, why are you so unhappy. This vast wealth of mine is under your control. No one in this court opposes your desires. You have an opulent treasury, the finest food, the finest bed, the fastest horses and all these servants wait at your command. Therefore, do not be unhappy."

Duryodhana replied to his father, "I eat the finest foods and dress in the most opulent clothes, but these do not satisfy me for my heart is full of jealousy. Having seen Yudhisthira's prosperity, whatever I enjoy brings me no happiness. The opulence of Pandu's sons diminishes my pride, and I have become pale. Yudhisthira is supporting 88,000 brahmanas, and at his palace he is feeding them daily off golden plates. The King of Kambhoja has sent to him hundreds and thousands of she elephants and thirty thousand she-camels. O my father, the lords of the earth brought for Yudhisthira's pleasure heaps of jewels and gems, and unlimited amounts of gold. Thousands of chariots and horses of the finest quality were brought to the Rajasuya sacrifice. Never before have I seen or heard of such wealth. Even the heavenly gods do not possess such wealth. I think that Lord Brahma and Yudhisthira are now equal in their opulence. There was so much wealth brought to the Rajasuya sacrifice that it could not be brought into the Palace. It was left outside the palace to be dealt with at a later time. Seeing the great opulence of Yudhisthira, my heart burns and I cannot enjoy peace."

At this time Shakuni, who possessed a wicked heart, offered ill advice to the King, "My dear King, I know a way by which Duryodhana's heart may be pacified. I am very expert in gambling and throwing dice. Yudhisthira also likes to play, but doesn't play well. If Duryodhana challenges him to play at dice, I will throw the dice and secure their kingdom from them. Without any bloodshed the kingdom of the Pandavas will belong to Duryodhana."

"I will consult Vidura, the possessor of great wisdom," Dhritarastra replied. "After talking with him, I will inform you of the judgement in respect to this affair. However, I warn you not to be jealous of the Pandavas. He who becomes envious of another's wealth suffers the pangs of death. Yudhisthira does not know about deception, and therefore, always treats you as a friend. If he is not jealous of you, why should you be jealous of him? One who covets the possessions of others is

never remembered in the records of history, but on other hand, one who strives to acquire his own wealth by honest means attains lasting fame. I look on both of you as my own sons, therefore give up this jealousy."

"The Kings of Hastinapura are the Kings of the world," Duryodhana angrily replied. "Is it not right to bring every direction under our rule? Isn't one who gives pain to another considered to be one's enemy? While I was walking in the assembly hall built by the demon Maya, I slipped and fell into the water. At that time Bhima laughed at me, and anger sprung up in my heart; and if Krishna had not been there, I would have slain Vrikodara. It is natural to have enemies and friends. They have been chosen by providence. The Pandavas are my determined enemies, and I will destroy them. I will not be content until I have accomplished this, O Bharata; do not let the opulence of the enemy increase. If you consult with Vidura, he will advise you to desist. And if you do not carry out this plan, I will kill myself. And when I am dead, you and Vidura can be happy without me."

Hearing these painful words, Dhritarastra, through affectionate weakness for his son, gave the following order, "Let an assembly house be constructed at Jayanta immediately. It must be built of the finest quality. The columns must be made of gold and the walls studded with the most precious gems. Report to me when it is complete."

Dhritarastra then sent for Vidura and in private informed him of the deceptive scheme. The intelligent Vidura, when he heard of Shakuni's plan, knew that the age of Kali had arrived. He tried to persuade the blind King, "O exalted King, I do not approve of this idea of a gambling match. You should act in such a way that no quarrels arise between your sons and the sons of your brother."

"O Vidura," Dhritarastra replied, "if the demigods are merciful to us nothing will happen in the gambling match. Besides it is a friendly gesture between cousins. As long as I am there along with Bhishma, Drona and Yourself, what harm can come? Therefore, go to Indraprastha and invite the Pandavas to Hastinapura. This is my resolution, and I do not want to hear anything more. I regard fate as supreme." Hearing the words of the blind King, Vidura concluded that his dynasty was doomed and in great sorrow went to Bhishma to inform him of the affair.

Following Dhritarastra's order, Vidura went to Indraprastha, where he was received warmly by Yudhisthira and the others. After being given a comfortable seat, Yudhisthira inquired, "You do not seem to be very happy. Are you not well? Is there someone in Hastinapura who is not in good health? Please tell us what is within your mind." Vidura repeated the order given by Dhritarastra, the order to come and visit the new assembly hall built in Jayanta and to engage in game of dice.

"If we engage in a game of dice," Yudhisthira replied, "we might quarrel. What do you think is the best policy for us to follow? We will pursue the counsel that you offer."

"I know that gambling is the root of all evil," Vidura said. "I tried to persuade the King to desist from this action, but he would not heed my advice. Shakuni, the King of Gandhara, is ready to play for Duryodhana. He is a great wizard at this game, and you will certainly lose. Knowing all this, judge for yourself what action to take."

"It would seem" Yudhisthira replied, "that Duryodhana is determined to win our wealth by deceitful means. This whole cosmic manifestation is under the the control of higher authorities. No one is free to act in the way he pleases. I do not desire to gamble; however, it is the duty of a kshatriya to accept challenges in the matter of gambling and fighting. I cannot refuse them."

After making his decision, Yudhisthira made arrangements for their journey to Hastinapura. The next day Yudhisthira, along with his brothers, set out for the capital of the Kurus, taking with them their queens and servants.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Eighth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, The Evil Plan.

#### Chapter Commentary

Duryodhana could not be satisfied even with the immense wealth of his father. This is the nature of materialistic persons. The heart burns with lust and greed, and they are never satisfied. Duryodhana thought Yudhisthira to be his enemy, but the actual enemy was in his heart. In the third chapter of Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "It is lust only, Arjuna, born out of the mode of passion, and later transformed into wrath, which is the all devouring sinful enemy of this world." (B.g. 3.37) Lusty desires can never be satisfied. Once one desire is fulfilled, another arises like a blazing fire. These desires whip the living being and don't allow him to be content. Only when this enemy is defeated within can there be real peace.

In this age the way to conquer the internal enemy is to slay him with the chanting of the Holy Names of God. This process will stop the blazing fire of lust within the heart and conquer the real foe. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has given us this sublime process to stop the repetition of birth and death. He has requested everyone to chant the Maha-mantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. The translation of this is, "O energy of the Lord, O my Lord, please engage me in Thy loving service." Lord Chaitanya left no hard and fast rules on which name of God you may chant for the Lord has hundreds and thousands of names. However, everyone He met He requested them to chant the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra, for this great mantra would deliver everyone in the age. The important point is to chant the holy name dear to you and conquer the enemy within.

At present nations are forming peace conferences to pacify the warring factions of the world, but until there is internal peace, there can be no external peace. In the name of God and religion, people perform greedy and lusty acts, because they have not subdued the real enemy within--lust and greed. Duryodhana could never be contented as long as he could not recognize his real enemy. Yudhisthira had conquered this enemy, and because he was at peace within, he was at peace without. His name is Ajatashatru, one whose enemy was never born. That means that he never saw anyone as an enemy, even though others looked at him differently. His heart was completely situated on the transcendental platform of love for God.

When Vidura heard the evil plan to steal the wealth of the Pandavas, he knew the age of Kali had arrived. Kali Yuga means the age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Before the age of Kali, kings were rajarshis, godly men in the dress of kings. Duryodhana was the first king to exhibit the qualities of Kali Yuga: envy, lust, greed, anger, etc. Therefore, Vidura, due to his vast knowledge and realization, could immediately understand that the age of Kali was here because Duryodhana envied the godly and pious Pandavas. Although Kali Yuga is an iron age of bad qualities, where the people are sunk in ignorance, still there is great mercy in this age. Just by chanting the Holy Names of God, one can stop the repetition of birth and death and go back to the kingdom of God.

## Chapter Nine

### The Gambling Match

The Pandavas soon arrived at Hastinapura, the Kuru capital, where they were offered a superficial welcome by Dhritarastra and supplied rooms that were beautifully furnished. They spent the night in those apartments, and the next day they were taken by Dhritarastra to the new imperial court at Jayanta. Following them were Duryodhana and his one hundred brothers, Shakuni and the other members of the Kuru race such as Bhishma, Somadatta and Bhurishravas. The Pandavas were shown the assembly hall, and out of courtesy the Pandavas expressed appreciation for the beauty of the royal assembly court. However, it did not measure up to the beauty of the imperial court built by the demon Maya. Duryodhana and his followers were indifferent to the assembly house; their minds were fixed on the gambling match.

After the hall had been inspected, Shakuni suggested that they sit down and play a game of dice. However, Yudhisthira advised, "Gambling is deceitful, sinful, and there is no kshatriya prowess in it. When there is no morality in such action, why do you praise gambling in this way? The wise do not advise playing with one who is expert in dice. O Shakuni, do not try to subjugate us by deceitful means. Victory in battle without deception and wickedness is the mark of a true warrior."

"It is from a desire to be victorious" Shakuni replied, "that one person approaches another for gambling. But such a desire is not really dishonest. One who is expert in gambling approaches another to defeat that person. Similarly, one who is the expert in the use of weapons approaches a weaker enemy with the idea of defeating him. This is the practice in every contest. The motive is victory. If you think that my intentions are deceptive, then you may desist from play."

"Since you have challenged me," Yudhisthira said, "I will not withdraw. This is my established vow. We are all under the control of destiny. Who in this assembly shall be my opponent? Who will match their skill against mine? Let the play begin."

The scheming Duryodhana joyfully suggested, "O monarch, I shall supply gems and jewels and every kind of wealth. However, my uncle Shakuni shall roll the dice for me."

Not agreeing with the terms, Yudhisthira replied, "Gambling for one's own sake is allowed, but a substitute is never sanctioned."

"I see nothing wrong in this arrangement," Shakuni spoke up. "It is evident that you want to avoid playing by offering some excuse. If you do not want to play, then tell us frankly." Yudhisthira could not reply, and the game of dice began.

When the gambling match commenced, the hall filled up with princes and kings. Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Vidura took their seats, but their hearts were not in this game. It was unprincipled and started with a sinister intention. King Dhritarastra also took his seat along with many others. They were anxious for the game to begin.

"O King," Yudhisthira said, "here I have an excellent wealth of pearls, originated from the churning of the milk ocean. They are set in gold and radiant in beauty. What will you wager?"

"I have many jewels and own a great fortune," Duryodhana replied, "but I am not proud of it. Throw the dice, and we will see who is the winner."

Then Shakuni, a past master in the art of gambling, took up the dice and threw them exclaiming, "Look, I have won!"

Yudhisthira then wagered, "I have many dazzling jars of jewelry in my treasury, inexhaustible gold, and a mountain of silver and other minerals. This, O King, is the wealth that I will wager."

Shakuni threw the dice and exclaimed, "Look I have won!" Time after time Yudhisthira would stake his wealth, and time after time Shakuni would win, and the only sound that could be heard was, "Look I have won!" Yudhisthira lost his jewels, his gold, his silver, his army, his chariots, his horses, his slaves and his kingdom. Yudhisthira kept losing steadily watching everything being devoured by the demon Shakuni.

During the course of the gambling, Vidura could see that the Pandavas were about to lose everything. He, therefore, tried to advise Dhritarastra, "Dear brother, listen to my words, even if they are not pleasing to your ears. A sick man will not relish the medicine the doctor prescribes. Do you remember the time when this son of yours was born and brayed like a jackal. A jackal is living in your house in the form of Duryodhana. He will bring about the destruction of the Bharata race. At the time of his birth, I told you to cast him aside and save the Kuru dynasty, but you did not take my advice, and now you will have to pay heavily. This injustice in the form of a gambling match will not go unpunished. You will suffer greatly in old age because of the deaths of your sons at the hands of the Pandavas. Gambling is the foundation of all sin, and leads one to hellish life. Your son does not have the strength to fight with the Pandavas in a manly war. He is cheating them with the help of this prince of the cheaters. Please do not allow gambling match to continue, or it will have gruesome results. I urgently request you to stop this game." This advice was bitter medicine the King did not want to take, and, therefore, he did not respond to Vidura.

However, Duryodhana heard Vidura's advice and responded harshly, "O Vidura, you are always glorifying the sons of Pandu and neglecting us. You do not regard us as your children. Your tongue and mind are reflecting what is in your heart. You have been maintained by us like a serpent in our lap. The wise have said that there is no greater vice than to injure one's master. Why do you not fear this sin? We are now prevailing over our enemies, and we have now acquired great riches. Therefore, O parasite, why do you try to obstruct us? Do not imagine that you are our master. We did not ask you for your counsel, so why give it? One should not give shelter to another who is the friend of foes."

Vidura then tried again to persuade his brother, "I have always been a well wishing friend to you and your family, but this injustice will not be tolerated. I am not partial to any section of the family-either the sons of Pandu or your sons. However, I am partial to those who are honest and just, and indifferent to those who are dishonest and crooked. Your son, O King, is dishonest, and his actions are proving it. If you allow impious actions to continue, you will have to reap the impious repercussions that will come in the future. We have never seen in the history of the world honest kings acting like your son. On the contrary, only the most vindictive of wicked kings act in the way Duryodhana is acting. He is an enemy in your own camp. Therefore, at your command, O King, allow Arjuna to kill this unscrupulous person." Again these words of wisdom fell on deaf ears and the gambling match continued.

By this time Shakuni had exploited everything and inquired of Yudhisthira, "What now will you wager?"

"Here is my brother Nakula" Yudhisthira replied, "who is a powerful warrior. He is what I shall now stake in this gambling match."

Saying this much Shakuni rolled the dice and said, "Look, I have won. Now what will you bet?"

"Here is my brother Sahadeva," Yudhisthira replied, "who knows all the principles of morality. He is my wager in this gambling match."

Shakuni then rolled the dice exclaiming, "Look Yudhisthira, I have won. Now what will be your wager? You still have Arjuna and Bhimasena."

"O wretched person," Yudhisthira replied, "you are cheating by playing a game of crooked dice. You are trying to create disunion between us who are of one heart. However, I am not the controller of destiny, and, therefore, I will wager this brother of mine Arjuna, who is the foremost archer in the world."

Shakuni then rolled the dice and laughingly exclaimed, "Look, I have won! Now what will you wager?"

"I have Bhima," Yudhisthira replied, "who is capable of subduing all warriors on the field of battle. I will wager this brother of mine."

Shakuni then pitched the dice and said, "Look Yudhisthira, I have won. Now what is there left to wager?"

Yudhisthira then replied to the sinful Shakuni, "I have myself who am the oldest of my brothers and who is the King of Indraprastha. I will wager myself."

After saying this much, Shakuni rolled the dice and exclaimed, "You have permitted yourself to be won, O King. Is there anything left for you to wager? I think you still have one thing left in your possession. Why don't you stake Draupadi in this gambling match. By her you can win yourself back."

"The beautiful Draupadi" Yudhisthira replied, "is still in my possession. Making her as my wager, I will play with you, O best of the charlatans."

When King Yudhisthira had made this last wager, there was a cry of anguish among the elders present. Bhishma, Drona and Kripa were covered with perspiration, and Vidura, holding his head between his hands, sat like one who had lost all reason. He sat with his face downward and was breathing heavily like a snake. Dhritarastra was the only one of the elders who was elated at heart. He repeatedly asked, "What has been won? What now has been won?" He could not conceal his emotions. Karna and Duhshasana were laughing loudly, but others were crying in the assembly. Picking up the dice that were loaded in his favor, Shakuni rolled them and exclaimed, "Look, I have won everything!" With these words the entire assembly hall was shocked into silence.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Ninth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, The Gambling Match.

## Chapter Commentary

Those who are demoniac by nature are always envious of those who are godly. The Pandavas were great devotees of the Lord and possessed divine qualities. They appeared to be temporarily defeated in the wicked gambling match arranged by the sinful son of Dhritarastra. Because the cause of the Pandavas was just and because they were always taking shelter of Lord Krishna, they were destined to have their wealth returned and the offenders were to be punished. As stated in the final verse of Bhagavad-gita, "Wherever there is Krishna, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion." (B.g. 18.78) In summary, one who has taken shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord can never be vanquished in his struggle for existence in this material world.

As stated by Vidura, gambling is the root of all evil. There are four pillars of sinful life: illicit sex, gambling, meat eating and intoxication. When living beings take shelter of these four sinful activities, they are under the influence of Kali yuga. At the time of Maharaja Yudhisthira, there was no adultery, no gambling casinos, no slaughter houses and no LSD, cocaine, crack, whiskey, beer or other forms of intoxication. These types of sinful activities are indulged in by persons in the modes of passion and ignorance, but were unknown in Maharaja Yudhisthira's kingdom.

When Vidura heard of the plan for the gambling match, he knew that Kali yuga had begun. This type of cheating was just unheard of amongst the royal order. Before the age of Kali, the monarchial regimes were anxious to be known in the history books for their morality and honesty. Dishonest rulers were marked down and cursed. The only reason this sinister gambling match didn't succeed was because of the presence of Lord Krishna on Earth. However, the day Lord Krishna left this world, Kali began his nefarious work with full force. We are only 5,000 years into the Kali yuga and already the four sinful pillars are taken for granted and are in full swing. No one is shocked by them. Practically every corner has a bar; adultery is no longer looked upon as sinful; 99% of the population eats meat; and a vast majority of people drink intoxicating beverages. Vidura told Dhritarastra that there would be a heavy reaction to cheating at dice. However, Dhritarastra was blind to what was right and what was wrong. Similarly, saintly persons have repeatedly warned human society of the reactions to sinful life. Nonetheless, people do not listen. When there are earthquakes, world wars, incurable diseases, famine, floods, depressions, tornadoes, hurricanes, and other disturbances, people cannot understand that these are reactions to sinful life. However, human beings are too absorbed in sinful life to want to renounce it and be happy. Sinful life and their concomitant reactions are destined to increase as the Kali yuga progresses.

## Chapter Ten

### Lord Krishna Protects Draupada

After obtaining Draupadi in the crooked game of dice, Duryodhana turned to Vidura and proudly said, "Come, Vidura, bring Draupadi, the dear wife of the Pandavas. Let her enter the chambers meant for the serving maids. She must now sweep the palace floors and take the position suited for a menial servant."

Outraged, Vidura replied, "Do you not know, O fiend, that by speaking such words, you are strangling yourself with a rope? Do you not understand that you are standing on the edge of a cliff? You are like a deer trying to provoke tigers to rage. If you provoke the Pandavas further, you will certainly enter the regions of Yamaraja. It is my judgement that you cannot take Draupadi as a slave, for she has been won after Yudhisthira ceased to be his own master. Draupadi is not your slave, and you should not insult her. Yudhisthira had no right to use Draupadi as a wager when he had already lost himself. I am warning you against the terrible wrath of the Pandavas. If you do not heed my words, you will experience your demise, along with all your brothers and friends. Hell is already preparing to receive the host of the Kuru House."

These words which were well spoken fell on deaf ears, and in unhappiness, Vidura said, "What can I do? There is none so blind as one who will not see, and there is none so deaf as he who refuses to hear." Vidura said no more.

Intoxicated with pride Duryodhana, the lowest among men ordered, "We have heard enough from Vidura. Bring Draupadi here immediately!"

He then commanded the door guard, "Bring Draupadi here. You have nothing to fear from the Pandavas. It is just Vidura who speaks like a madman, but who has no power. He is not in truth our well wisher."

The doorguard then went to the chambers of Draupadi and informed her of the events that transpired, "My dear queen of the Pandavas, your husband Yudhisthira, in the fever of gambling, has lost you in a bet with Duryodhana. You have now become the slave of Dhritarastra's son, and he wishes to see you in court to be put to work as a menial maidservant."

Draupadi anxiously inquired, "What kind of folly are you speaking? What King is there that would wager his own wife. He must certainly have been intoxicated with gambling or else how could he have done such a thing!"

"Yudhisthira, while gambling with Shakuni, lost all his wealth and kingdom," The doorguard replied. "He then lost his brothers and then himself, and finally he lost you in the gambling match."

"Go to the assembly hall," Draupadi requested, "and ask Yudhisthira whom he lost first, himself or me. After finding this out, you may take me to the assembly hall."

The messenger then came back to the assembly hall and repeated what Draupadi had said. He then addressed Yudhisthira, "Draupadi has asked, 'Whose lord were you when you lost me in the gambling match? Did you lose yourself first or me?'" Yudhisthira simply lowered his head and could not say anything like a person who had lost all reason.

"Let the princess of Panchala," Duryodhana ordered, "come here and ask the question herself. Let everyone hear the words that are spoken between the queen and her husband."

The doorkeeper then went again to Krishna (Draupadi) and told her all that was said. She then requested the guard, "Go back again to the court and ask my husband what I should do. I will obey him and no one else."

The servant then went to the assembly and repeated the request to Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira then ordered, "Tell Draupadi that she should come here and ask her question to the elders present."

Duryodhana then commanded the servant to go to the quarters and bring the princess at once. The doorkeeper, however, was afraid of Draupadi's wrath and was hesitant to go. Duryodhana then turned to Duhshasana and ordered him, "O Duhshasana, this servant is afraid of these orders. Therefore, go yourself and forcibly bring her to our presence."

Hearing the command of his brother, which was unknowingly meant for his death, Duhshasana went to chambers of the queen and taunted her, "Come, come, O Krishna, princess of Panchala, you have been won by us. Come and accept the Kurus for your lords. You have been won fairly in a gambling match."

Draupadi was distraught by the words of Duhshasana, and rising from her seat, she ran towards Gandhari's quarters. Duhshasana ran after her and grabbed her by her long black curly hair that had been sanctified by the Rajasuya sacrificial waters. He then forcibly dragged Draupadi by her hair into the assembly hall while she was crying out, "My dear Lord Krishna, please save me! O my Lord, there is no shelter other than You!"

Duhshasana brought her into the assembly. Her clothes had been loosened, and her hair was no longer braided. She was terribly angry and screamed at Duhshasana, "In this assembly there are persons who are conversant with all the branches of the Vedas and are equal to Indra. I cannot stand before them in this state. O wretched person, do not drag me before them. My husbands will not pardon you. The others in this assembly will not rebuke you, and therefore, they possess the same mentality. Surely there is no more virtue in the Bharata dynasty, nor are the codes of kshatriya practice any longer in use or else how could these so-called kshatriyas

tolerate this action. Both Drona and Bhishma have lost their prowess, for this crime is going unpunished."

Thus Draupadi cried in distress in the assembly, and casting a glance upon her enraged husbands, inflamed their hearts further. The Pandavas were not so distressed by the loss of their kingdom or wealth, as by that glance of Draupadi that was filled with anger and helplessness. And seeing Draupadi looking at her lords, Duhshasana dragged her more forcibly and addressed her, "slave!, slave!" and laughed aloud. Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni also laughed to see Draupadi being pulled into the assembly.

Looking in the direction of the Kuru elders, she addressed Bhishma in the following words, "You are the residence of learning and morality. They say there is none wiser than you. Can you tell me whether or not I am a slave?"

"I am, indeed, at a loss to give you a proper answer," Bhishma replied. "Morality is very difficult to understand, and its laws are subtle. A man cannot wager something once he has lost himself. Therefore, Yudhishthira had no right to lose you. But then again a woman is always under the orders of her husband in all circumstances. He can call her his property even after he has lost himself. Accordingly, I can not surely say that you are free. Yudhishthira knew that Shakuni was a pastmaster in the art of gambling, and yet he played with him willingly enough. Though he was being defeated, Yudhishthira continued to play, and he used you as the wager. I am not able, therefore, to answer your question."

Draupadi's eyes were red with anger, and she angrily said to Shantanu's son, "The King was ordered to come to this charlatan's assembly, and he was made to play with this vicious, spineless Shakuni. How can it be said that he voluntarily chose to play? The chief of the Pandavas was deprived of his wealth by deceitful conduct. Here in this assembly are the elders of the Kurus. Let them decide what is to be done in this connection."

Looking at Draupadi whose words were like fire, Duhshasana laughed loudly and called her names. He bellowed, "You are the slave of Duryodhana; there is no need to consider the laws of Dharma. Your Dharma is to please your master Duryodhana."

Seeing the Pandavas in such a distraught condition, Vikarna, one of Dhritarastra's sons, said to all assembled, "Why is it that no one can answer Draupadi's question? If we do not judge the matter properly then we shall surely go to hell for our wrongdoing. How is it that Bhishma and Dhritarastra, who are the elders of the Kurus, do not say anything about this injustice? Why is it that Kripa and the son of Bharadvaja, Drona, do not say anything? If you will not say anything, then I will give my opinion in this regard. It is a well known fact that there are four vices of kings. That is hunting, drinking, gambling and too much attachment for women. The man that is addicted to these lives a life forsaking virtue. And people do not respect a King who is attached to sinful life. This son of Pandu, while forced to engage in one of these sinful acts, made Draupadi a wager. The King, having lost himself first, made Draupadi a wager, and the unscrupulous Shakuni with wicked intentions said

that she could be made a wager. Reflecting on all these circumstances, I regard Draupadi a free woman and not a slave."

Hearing these truthful words, a loud roar rose from those present in the assembly, and they applauded Vikarna for his clear thinking. However, Karna, deprived of his senses through anger, rebuked Vikarna as follows, "Vikarna, you are only a boy, and your wisdom is childish. All the elders here are in agreement that Draupadi is a slave of the Kurus. If she were not a slave, do you think that her husbands would allow her to be brought into the royal court. You say that it is not right to call her a slave, but there is no need to consider Dharma in the case of the Pandavas. O son of the Kuru race, the sages have ordained only one husband for one woman. This Draupadi, however, has many husbands, and is certainly considered unchaste. Therefore, to bring her into this assembly in front of many men and see her stripped naked will not embarrass her. She is a slave just like her lords. They do not deserve the clothes they are wearing. Duhshasana, take off the upper garments of these men and also those of Draupadi." Hearing the order of Karna, the Pandavas took off their upper garments and threw them on the floor.

The shameless Duhshasana then began to pull at the upper garments of Draupadi, and Draupadi tried to stop him while looking in the direction of her husbands. When she saw that they could do nothing to help her, she took shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the only one who can give shelter in all circumstances. She threw her hands into the air praying, "O Govinda, O all pervading Lord of the universe, O Krishna, O Keshava, do You not see that I am being humiliated by the Kauravas. O husband of the goddess of fortune, O Lord of Vraja, You are present wherever Your devotees are singing Your glories. I surrender myself unto you! Please save me!" Upon hearing the words of Draupadi, Lord Krishna, the Supersoul in everyone's heart, immediately offered protection to His devotee.

Draupadi stopped trying to resist the advances of Duhshasana and fixed her mind at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna. As Duhshasana pulled on the upper portion of her sari, the horrified audience looked on. The sinful demon was pulling at her clothes, but each time he pulled, the cloth was getting longer. The more he pulled, the more cloth there was, and soon there was a huge pile of cloth on the floor, enough for hundreds of saris. The kings present in the assembly began to applaud Draupadi and chastised the son of Dhritarastra with harsh words.

Seeing Draupadi in this humiliated condition, Bhima addressed the assembled kings, "Please hear the words I have to say. I shall in battle tear open by force the chest of this sinful Duhshasana and drink his life blood. I take this oath, and if not accomplished, I shall not attain the regions of my ancestors." All the warriors present acclaimed Bhima's vow and began to condemn Duryodhana and his followers. At that time Vidura spoke to those present in the assembly. He tried to convince them that the Vikarna's statements were truthful and that Draupadi was not a slave. No one responded to the words of Vidura for fear of Duryodhana.

When there was again silence in the assembly hall, Karna ordered Duhshasana, "Take away this maidservant to the inner chambers." Duhshasana forcibly grabbed Draupadi and began dragging her on the ground while she was crying and trembling. Draupadi broke away from him and addressed Bhishma again with the same question, "I am the wedded wife of the Pandavas. Please answer my question. Am I a servant maid or otherwise? This cruel Duhshasana is treating me harshly. I cannot bear this any longer. I will accept your decision, whatever it may be."

Hearing these lamentable words, Bhishma answered, "I have already said, O blessed lady, that the answer to this question of morality is equivocal. I am unable to answer the question that you have put forward. However, it is certain that all the Kauravas have become slaves to greed and deceitfulness. Because of this offensive act, the end of the Kuru race is close at hand. The other Kuru elders who sit with their heads down, like persons who have left their bodies, cannot answer your question. However, if you ask Yudhishthira, he will answer your question about whether you are a slave or not."

With a smirk on his face Duryodhana addressed Draupadi, "The answer to your question depends on your husbands. Let them declare in the midst of respectable persons whether Yudhishthira is their lord."

Bhima then spoke to the assembled warriors of the earth, "If this great King of the earth, Yudhishthira, were not our lord, we would never have forgiven the Kuru race for this incident. If he says that he has become a slave, then we too have become slaves. If this were not so, then I would have already crushed to death the one who has touched the hair of the princess Draupadi. I am restraining myself due to respect for my older brother and the requests of Arjuna. However, If Yudhishthira commands me, I will kill all of Dhritarastra's sons immediately."

Hearing the anger of Bhimasena, Duryodhana began to make fun of him. Laughing all the while, Duryodhana said to Yudhishthira, "O King, your brothers and Draupadi are waiting for an answer to this question. Please state whether Draupadi is my slave or still your wife."

After taunting him with these words and not receiving a reply, Duryodhana said, "Draupadi, I will answer your question. You are free and you may chose any amongst the great warriors for your husband." Duryodhana then laughed loudly; and when he saw that he had the attention of Bhima, he lifted his cloth and showed his naked thigh to Draupadi.

Seeing this, Bhima was overcome with an animosity that resembled universal devastation. He expanded his red eyes and declared to all assembled, "I say to all present that I shall break the thighs of Duryodhana, or else I shall never attain the higher regions after this life!"

Karna laughed at Bhima and said to Duhshasana, "Do not wait any longer. Take this maidservant Draupadi to the inner chambers." Duhshasana began to drag her away while she appealed to all the elders in the Kuru house, but it was no use.

Then Bhima again took a vow, "I am going to kill this sinful Duryodhana, and my brother Arjuna is going to kill Karna. This deceitful Shakuni will be killed by my brother Sahadeva. I take a vow that this will happen. I will kill Duryodhana and place my foot upon his head. I will also surely drink the blood of Duhshasana."

Arjuna then confirmed Bhima's vow, "Bhima, those who are living secure in their homes can never understand the danger that awaits them outside. Your words will come true. The earth will drink the blood of these four: Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Shakuni and Karna. There is no doubt about it."

Arjuna then took an oath, "I declare in the presence of all the kings assembled: I will kill this Karna and all his followers in a future war. I will kill all who are foolish enough to support him. The Himalayan mountains may move from their place, or the sun may fall out of its orbit, or the moon may lose its coolness, but I will never give up this vow until it is accomplished."

Sahadeva then addressed the assembly with his vow, "Shakuni, you are the lowest of men and a disgrace to the good name of the Gandharas. Because of your deception at dice, I swear that I will kill you and all your kinsmen. I hope that you will have the same courage on the battlefield that you have exhibited here in this gambling match."

Nakula then made his vow, "My brothers have sworn to kill their opponents. I promise in the presence of all assembled that I will kill the son of Shakuni, Uluka. All these persons mentioned will die on the battlefield."

After the Pandavas said this much, a jackal began to cry loudly in the assembly hall of Dhritarastra's palace. And when the jackal howled, the asses began to bray in response, indicating the loss of all good fortune to the Kauravas. All the elders present understood the meaning of those evil omens. To late in the day Dhritarastra, realizing the seriousness of the situation, admonished his son, "You have a wicked mind Duryodhana, and your downfall is sooner than you think. You have insulted the Pandava's wife, and certainly there is no hope for you."

Dhritarastra then spoke to Draupadi, hoping to console her and save the life of his relatives, "Please ask of me, O princess of Panchala, any benediction that you desire."

Draupadi replied, "I ask that my husband Yudhisthira be freed from slavery."

Dhritarastra granted the request and said, "You may take another benediction from me."

Draupadi said, "Please grant me that my husbands: Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva be freed from their bondage and their kingdom returned."

Dhritarastra granted the benediction and asked Draupadi to take a third benediction. Draupadi replied, "I will not ask for a third benediction. It has been said that a

vaishya may ask one boon, a warrior two, and a brahmana may ask a hundred. Now that my husbands have been released from their bondage, they will be able to achieve prosperity by their own virtuous acts."

Karna then snickered and said to all assembled, "Fortunately for the Pandavas, Draupadi has become like a boat to save them from drowning in the ocean. They are indeed fortunate to be saved by a woman."

Ignoring the taunts of Karna, Yudhishthira approached Dhritarastra with joined palms requesting, "O King, you are our master. Command us as to what we should do. We desire to remain always obedient to you."

"O Ajatrashatru," Dhritarastra replied, "you are a blessed person. Go in peace to your kingdom and be happy. Take with you all your wealth. I am pleased with you humility and meekness. Where there is intelligence, there is tolerance. They are the best of men who do not remember the hostility of their enemies, that see the merits and not the faults of their foe. O child, do not remember the harsh words of Duryodhana. It was for seeing who were my friends and examining the weaknesses of my sons, that I allowed this gambling match to go on. O King, those among the Kurus, who have you for their ruler and Vidura for their counsellor, have, indeed, nothing to grieve for. Please, return now to Indraprastha, and let their be brotherly love between yourself and my sons."

After receiving permission from King Dhritarastra, that crest jewel of the Bharatas, King Yudhishthira, took leave of the Kuru elders and left the city of Hastinapura. He was accompanied by his brothers and the beautiful Draupadi.

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Tenth Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, Lord Krishna Protects Draupadi.

### Chapter Commentary

Offences against devotees never go unpunished. When one offends great souls, one loses his opulence, life span and family, and he suffers greatly. The seed of the offense was planted during the gambling match. That seed later sprouted and bore its fruit on the Kurukshetra plain. Duryodhana lost everything because of his hatred for the Pandavas. All actions bear their fruit in due course. As stated in all scriptures, "Pride cometh before a fall." Duryodhana was full of false pride and not fit to rule. His downfall was only a matter of time.

A pious action will bear a pious result; an impious action will bring forth suffering. Sometimes people criticize God for allowing one person to be born in a suffering condition and another in an affluent condition. Actually, God has nothing to do with it. The Supreme Lord sends the holy scriptures and holy people to request everyone to follow His law. If people do not follow His law, they must suffer. The living being creates his own happiness and distress. God has stated, "Thou shalt not kill." Still people open slaughter houses and kill innocent animals. Jesus Christ opened the cages of the doves and lambs, and turned over the tables of the money changers declaring, "My father's house shall not be made a den of thieves." If he didn't allow animals to be sacrificed before God, then surely a slaughter house would be condemned. We have to learn to take seriously what the Lord wants of us. If we don't then we have to suffer.

One may rightly ask why Bhishma and Drona did not defend the Pandavas while the offenses were being committed. Bhishma could have stopped the whole affair at that moment. He could have killed Duryodhana and anyone else who opposed religiosity. For his failure to defend the Pandavas, he had to die during the Kurukshetra war. Was it because he was dependent on Duryodhana that he didn't speak out? No, the answer is that it was actually the Lord's desire. Many purposes were served by this one incident. One, Krishna wanted to show Draupadi and the world that He is the only shelter. If Bhishma had spoken out, then Draupadi could not have realized this, but would have become dependent on Bhishma instead of Lord Krishna. Secondly, because Bhishma ultimately chose the side of Duryodhana, Lord Krishna wanted to show the world that if even you are the greatest warrior in the world, if you oppose religious principles, you are destined to die.

Yudhisthira did not have to engage in gambling. He was intelligent and knew what was right and what was wrong. He was a pure devotee of the Lord. However, he felt the situation to be the desire of the Lord for a higher purpose. Pure devotees know the will of the Lord and act accordingly in all circumstances. He could have challenged Duryodhana to battle or he could have just refused to gamble with Shakuni. These things all seem the logical thing to do. However, Lord Krishna is not under the law of logic. We cannot figure out His divine plan. We can only submit to His divine will. No one will argue that the Pandavas or Bhishma were not pure devotees. Bhishma is one of the twelve mahajanas or authorities on devotional service. That is a rarely attained position. Therefore, it is concluded that Bhishma was bewildered by Lord Krishna's internal potency so that he could not take action to defend the Pandavas.

## Chapter Eleven

### The Pandavas Lose Their Kingdom

After the sons of Pandu had returned to their kingdom, Duhshasana went to his brother Duryodhana and complained, "After we had won the kingdom and made slaves of the Pandavas, our father has thrown it away. Call them back for another dice game and take their kingdom, before they have time to organize their forces and challenge us." Hearing Duhshasana agreeable words, Duryodhana, Shakuni and Karna, who were guided by lust and greed, united together and went to Dhritarastra with another dice match in mind.

Sitting respectfully before his father, Duryodhana spoke, "If, with the wealth of the Pandavas, we satisfy the Kings of the earth, then the Pandavas cannot harm us. The Pandavas are now like hot-tempered venomous serpents, and they are surely arranging to challenge us to battle. Upon leaving Hastinapura, Arjuna was grasping his bow, fiercely looking in all directions. Vikrodara, after ascending his chariot, was seen leaving the city whirling his mace. Nakula was holding a sword and shield and was prepared for war. Sahadeva and Yudhisthira have ascended their chariots with an anger like that of Yamaraja. Having been persecuted, they will not forgive us. Who among them can forget the insult to Draupadi? Therefore, before they become too powerful, we should again call them for a gambling match and exile them to the forest. Whoever wins at the game of dice must enter the forest for twelve years, and the thirteenth year must be spent in concealment. If they are recognized in the thirteenth year, they must again go to the forest for another twelve years. Either we or they shall live so. Shakuni will again throw the dice and win for us. Even if they succeed in observing the vow, we shall, in the meantime, have won the citizen's favor and the respect of the worldly kings. Having gathered a vast army, we will defeat them in battle. This plan we present before you, O King."

Dhritarastra, under the influence of all-devouring time, agreed with their proposal, and said, "Call back the Pandavas and let them again play for the sake of the kingdom."

Upon hearing Duryodhana's plan, Drona, Bhishma, Somadatta, Bahlika, Vidura, Bhurishravas and the son of Dhritarastra, Vikarna all said, "Do not agree with this plan, O King. Let there be peace between your sons and the sons of Pandu." Dhritarastra did not listen to their wisdom and summoned Pandu's sons to again gamble at dice.

It was at this time that the virtuous Gandhari approached her husband pleading, "When Duryodhana was born, the wise Vidura advised you, 'It would be better to kill this child than let him live, for he will spoil the whole Kuru race.' This son of ours cried upon his birth just like a jackal. It is not too late, even now, to cast him aside. The kingdom that you will obtain by crooked means will soon be wrenched from you."

When addressed in truthful words by his queen, Dhritarastra replied to her, "If the devastation of our dynasty has come, let it take place. I have not the power to control providence. Rather destiny is my master, and I am its servant. Let the Pandavas return and again gamble with my sons."

A messenger then approached Indraprastha, and in the presence of the Pandavas, gave the command of Dhritarastra. Yudhisthira could not refuse the order and again prepared to go to Hastinapura, knowing well the outcome of the gambling match. They again entered Hastinapura and sat down in the assembly hall to play another game of dice. The conniving Shakuni then said, "The King has given back your property and that is all well. But this time, O bull of the Bharata race, we will wager in the following manner. Who ever wins at one throw of the dice will see his opponent enter the forest for twelve years and a final year spent in disguise. If discovered in the thirteenth year, one has to again enter the forest for another twelve years. O Yudhisthira, with this as the wager, play with us at dice."

Yudhisthira, knowing well that a great karmic destruction of the Kuru dynasty was at hand, agreed with the proposal saying, "O Shakuni, how can a King like myself refuse when challenged to play dice? Therefore, let the play begin." Shakuni then took up the dice and cast them saying, "I have won."

When the Pandavas were defeated, they took off their royal dress and were given deer-skins as their garments. Duhshasana was very pleased with Shakuni's victory and announced to all assembled, "The absolute sovereignty of King Duryodhana has now begun. The sons of Pandu have been defeated and our goal has now been achieved. O Draupadi, what will you gain by following these men into the forest. Now is the time to pick a husband from among those heroes of the Kuru race. Why wait upon these poor men any longer?"

Upon hearing Duhshasana's distasteful words, Bhima approached him like a tiger chasing a deer and boldly said, "As you are piercing my ears with these arrow like words, I will pierce your heart on the field of battle and drink your blood. O spineless person, you have won only by the cheating methods of the Gandhara King. When I return from the forest, I will make good my vow."

Duhshasana laughed at Bhima's anger and began to dance around him saying, "O cow! O cow!" Bhima was forced to hold back his fury, but he did so being bound by the cord on proper behavior.

Yudhisthira then approached the blind King and said, "I bid farewell to you as well as Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the others. I will again return after the thirteen year exile is finished."

Overcome with shame, none of those men could look at Yudhisthira or say anything to him. However, within their hearts they prayed for his welfare. Vidura then said, "Kunti is a princess by birth, and she should not go to the forest. I will keep her here in Hastinapura and protect her from any harm just as if she were my mother. O Yudhisthira, know that one who has been vanquished by sinful means need not be

pained by such defeat. You also know every law of morality. Dhananjaya will be victorious in battle; Bhimasena will kill his enemies; Nakula will gain great wealth; and Sahadeva will obtain his goals. With learned brahmanas accompanying you to the forest, you need not fear anything. Draupadi will also assist you in your exile. You are all attached to one another and feel happiness in each others association. Go now, and we will again see you returned here safely and crowned with success." The Pandavas then left Hastinapura much to the distress of the citizens and those relatives who loved them very much.

Now that the Pandavas has had left for the forest, Dhritarastra could not find peace of mind. He called for Vidura and questioned him, "Please tell me in what state of mind the Pandavas left Hastinapura. I desire to hear everything, O Ksatta [Vidura]."

Vidura then replied to the King, "Yudhishthira, though robbed of his kingdom and wealth, he has not deviated from the path of virtuous kings. He has left Hastinapura blindfolded, or else with the anger of his eyes, he would have burned the whole city to ashes. Bhima has left the city stretching his mighty arms indicating to everyone that upon his return he will destroy your sons with his prowess. And Arjuna, the son of Kunti, has left Hastinapura scattering grains of sand indicating that upon his return he will rain arrows from the might of his Gandiva bow. Sahadeva has left the city smearing his body with dirt so that none will recognize his plight and take action against your sons, O King. Nakula has left the city in the same way. Draupadi has left the city Hastinapura dressed in one cloth and her hair unbraided indicating that upon her return, her husbands will destroy the Kuru host, and the wives of those who insulted her will have to dress in the same way. The learned Dhaumya has left the city walking in front of the Pandavas holding kusha grass and chanting mantras from the Sama Veda which relate to Yamaraja. This indicates that when the host of the Kurus are slain in battle, the priests of the Kurus will chant the Soma mantras for the benefit of the deceased. And also, O King, the citizens seeing the Pandavas leaving are cursing you and your family. Upon their leaving many evil omens appeared: flashes of lightning in the cloudless sky, the earth trembled, and Rahu began to devour the sun. Meteors fell from the firmament, and jackals began to howl. Birds like the crows began to shriek, indicating the destruction of the Kuru house."

While Dhritarastra and Vidura were thus talking with one another, the great sage Narada Muni appeared on the scene. He appeared in the Kuru's imperial court and spoke the following omen, "On the thirteenth year from today, on account of Duryodhana's offenses, the Kauravas will be crushed by the prowess of Bhima and Arjuna." Having said this much, the great sage Narada ascended by the airways; and the Kurus, who were left speechless, contemplated the awesome words of the rishi.

Fearful upon hearing the prophecy of Narada, Duryodhana along with Shakuni and Karna approached Drona and offered him the kingdom, considering him their protector. Drona then instructed them, "The brahmanas have said that the Pandavas, being of celestial origin, are incapable of being slain. However, because you have sought my shelter, I will act as your protector, but know that the cause is doomed. I have formerly deprived Drupada of his kingdom, and in revenge he has

performed a sacrifice with the help of the brahmanas, Yaja and Upayaja, and thus he has received a son who will kill me. It is already known that the fire-born Dhristadyumna will slay me in battle. His birth is celestial, and he was born with golden armor and weapons. I am but a mortal of this world. Drupada and his followers have taken up the Pandava's cause. Enjoy your kingdom for a short while, O Duryodhana. When the Pandavas return from the forest, a great catastrophe will befall you."

Thus Ends the Mahabharata Summation to the Eleventh Chapter of the Sabha Parva, Entitled, The Pandavas Loose Their Kingdom.

Thus Ends the Sabha Parva section to the Summary Study of the Mahabharata.

### Chapter Commentary

From the day Dhritarastra exiled the Pandavas, the blind King knew no peace. He spent his days and nights in anxiety thinking about the day when the Pandavas would return from the forest. When he turned his back on the ways of righteousness, he came face to face with anxiety and grief. Those who are attached to material possessions can never be happy. Here we see that although Dhritarastra was the king of the world, he was not content. He was worried that some day the Pandavas would come back from the forest and take his wealth and kill his sons. This is the nature of material attachment; it can never bring peace.

The only peaceful person is a devotee of Lord Krishna. In the Chaitanya Charitamrita, it is stated, "Because a devotee of Lord Krishna is desireless, he is peaceful. Fruitive workers desire material enjoyment, jnanis desire liberation, and yogis desire material opulence; therefore, they are all lusty and cannot be peaceful." Although the Pandavas were robbed of their wealth and had to reside in the forest for so many years, still they were quite happy because they had the association of Lord Krishna. They accepted Him as their friend, guide, spiritual master, and their only protector. They did not desire an opulent kingdom or great riches. They were perfectly satisfied in their friendship with the Supreme Lord Krishna. Thus the forest became like the spiritual world, and the court in Hastinapura became like a hellish planet because of offences committed against the pure devotees of the Lord.

Peace can only be found inwardly. Material possessions can never bring one peace. We come into this world with nothing, and we leave with nothing. Material possessions, if not used in the service of the Lord, simply are a source of anxiety. We constantly worry about who is going to take our material possessions. A rich person must constantly worry about the motivations of persons who try to become his friends. Real peace must be found by cleansing the heart. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "One whose happiness is within, who is active within, who rejoices within and is illumined within, is actually the perfect mystic. he is liberated in the Supreme, and ultimately he attains the Supreme." (B.g. 5.24) In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means to attain peace is to chant the Holy Names of God, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Because Dhritarastra tried to find peace in material wealth, friends and family, he was in constant anxiety. The real wealth is hidden inside the heart.

## Vana Parva

### Chapter One

#### The First Days of Exile

After leaving the city of Hastinapura, the Pandavas traveled north and eventually came to the bank of the Ganges. They were being followed by many pious citizens who could not bear separation from those saintly kings. The citizens of Hastinapura did not want to live in a kingdom where Duryodhana and his followers ruled. They thus petitioned the Pandavas, "All blessings upon the sons of Pandu! Where will you now go, leaving us in grief? We are distressed learning that your kingdom has deceitfully been taken away by the conniving Duryodhana. It behooves you not to forsake us, because we are your loving subjects. Deterioration of good qualities will certainly manifest by living in the kingdom of the Kuru king, Duryodhana. Please listen as we describe the merits and demerits from association with what is good and what is bad. As cloth, water, earth, and sesame seeds are scented by association with flowers, similarly we are endowed with good qualities as a product of your association. Association with fools produces an illusion that entangles the mind; but daily communion with the pious and wise leads one toward the path of liberation. Therefore, those that desire emancipation should associate with those who are devoted to God, and are wise, honest, pure in conduct and prone toward asceticism. Those persons should be served whose knowledge and actions are all pure, and this association is superior to study of the scriptures. Devoid of religious acts as we are, we shall gain religious merit by association with the righteous, just as one would engage in sin by associating with the sinful. The very sight, touch, association, or conversation with the dishonest causes one to lose purity of mind. Association with base persons impairs spiritual growth, whereas association with self-realized souls exalts it. Those attributes found in the Vedas pertaining to religious qualities and extolled by the wise exist simultaneously in you. O sons of Pandu, because we desire our own welfare, and because you possess all exalted qualities, we wish to live with you in the forest."

King Yudhisthira knew that the citizens could not follow his term of exile in the forest, and compassionately he addressed them, "Dear citizens, we are certainly blessed that you, who are moved by affection and compassion, credit us with merits we do not possess. Your affection for us can never be forgotten, and we also are always thinking of your welfare. We request one thing from you, and we hope you will consent to our desire. You should not, through affection and pity, act otherwise. Our nearest relatives are very much aggrieved by our absence. Bhishma, Drona, the King, my mother Kunti and many others are overwhelmed by separation and need solace. Therefore, if you are inclined to please us, serve their every need. Grieved at our departure, you have come a far distance. Please go back, and set your hearts towards serving these great souls. This, above all other things, is the one thing that

causes me anxiety; and by showing concern for the Kuru elders, you would bestow upon me peace of mind and pay me the highest regard."

Thus requested in such a humble way by King Yudhisthira, the citizens cried loudly, exclaiming, "Alas, O King, how will we live without you!" Afflicted and overwhelmed with certain separation, the pious citizens, tears of love falling from their eyes, remembered the virtues of Kunti's sons, and unwillingly retraced their steps back to Hastinapura. The citizens were unwilling to leave King Yudhisthira's association, but out of love for the King, they did what he asked.

Almost all the citizens returned to Hastinapura with the exception of certain brahmanas who could not be persuaded to go back. They spent that night with the Pandavas in the forest by the bank of the celestial Ganges. Yudhisthira felt that he could not fulfill the needs of those pious brahmanas to his satisfaction, and therefore, he humbly requested them, "Our kingdom has been plundered in gambling, and we do not possess anything. We are inhabitants of the forest and are dependent on begging for our sustenance. This forest is also full of dangers. Myself and my brothers are distressed at the loss of our kingdom and the insults to our queen Draupadi. I cannot say that we would be able to support you with food on a daily basis."

"There should be no anxiety on your part, O King," the brahmanas replied, "for we shall find our own food in the forest. We cannot give up your company for you are religion personified. We are devoted to saintly persons, and we wish to help you in every way."

"Without doubt, it must be as you say," Yudhisthira said, "for I am ever pleased with the association of saintly persons. However, how will I be able to see such worshipful persons, who do not deserve to endure any kind of hardship, subsisting on food found in the forest? O shame upon the wicked sons of Dhritarastra!"

After contemplating the situation, Yudhisthira went to his priest, Dhaumya and inquired "These brahmanas are following us to the forest out of affection. At the present moment we are burdened with many calamities, and I am unable to support them. Tell me, O holy one, what should I do in this circumstance?"

"The sun god Vivasvan is the source of all food grains and vitality on earth," Dhaumya replied. "If you worship and pray to him, he will certainly show you his favor."

Yudhisthira, desiring the brahmanas welfare, followed the instructions of Dhaumya, and sat down to begin his meditation upon the Sun God Vivasvan. He fasted from any food or drink. After some time he entered the Ganges and remained in that position, half submerged in the water. He worshiped the sun god with prayers and survived only on air. Very soon the Sun God Vivasvan was pleased with Yudhisthira and appeared before him. The Sun God offered a boon, "O King Yudhisthira, all your desires will be fulfilled. I shall provide you with food for this thirteen year period. Accept this copper pot which shall fulfill your needs. Whatever little amount is

cooked in this pot in the form of fruits, vegetables, milk products and grains will become inexhaustible. It will last only as long as Draupadi has not eaten her meal from it. All good fortune to you, King Yudhisthira. After your term of exile is finished, I shall see you regain your kingdom." Vivasvan then disappeared.

After receiving this benediction from the Sun God, Yudhisthira rose from the water, touched the feet of Dhaumya and embraced his brothers. He went to Draupadi and told her the potency of the copper pot bestowed upon him by the Sun God. Yudhisthira then personally prepared the evening meal consisting of four different kinds of food. With only a little food prepared, he fed the entire host of brahmanas. By the mystic power of the copper pot the small amount of food multiplied. There was also enough to satisfy the hungry Bhima, his other brothers and himself. When Draupadi had finally eaten her portion, the pot became exhausted.

After the Pandavas had entered the forest, the blind King Dhritarastra called for his brother Vidura, and inquired from him, "O Vidura, you are conversant with the laws of morality, and you look on all the Kauravas with an equal eye. Please give advice on the proper course of action for myself and my sons. According to providence things have now taken their course. What should we do now? How may I secure the goodwill of the citizens so that they may not destroy us at the roots?"

"The three purposes of life: profit, pleasure and salvation have their foundation in virtue," Vidura replied. "Therefore, O monarch, to the best of your ability treat equally the sons of Pandu and your own sons. You should return to the Pandavas what was taken away by the sinful Duryodhana. If you do this, your son may again take his position among honest men. A king should be content with what he has acquired by his own endeavors and never desire another's possessions. Your prime duty is to chastise Shakuni and to reinstate the Pandavas in their proper status. If you do not do this, then certainly this dynasty will meet with disaster. Abandon this child of yours, Duryodhana, for the good of your dynasty. Putting Duryodhana aside, coronate Yudhisthira as the King of the earth. Yudhisthira is known as Ajatashatru or one who was born without an enemy. He will be able to rule this world free from passion. Duryodhana, Shakuni and Karna should be subordinate to the the Pandavas, and Duhshasana, in open court, should beg forgiveness from Draupadi and Bhimasena. If you follow this course of action, then all the citizens of the earth will offer homage to the Kuru dynasty. You have asked me how to counsel you, and I have given the proper answer."

"This counsel favors the Pandavas over my son," Dhritarastra said. "My mind does not approve of this. How can I abandon my son for the sons of Pandu? The Pandavas are certainly to be protected like my sons, but Duryodhana has come from my body. How can I renounce my body for the sake of others. O Vidura, your counsel is crooked. You may either stay or go as you like. I have no more affection for you." Dhritarastra then rose and left. Vidura thought, "The dynasty is doomed." He decided to join the Pandavas in the forest.

The Pandavas had left the banks of the Ganges and proceeded to the Yamuna River. After crossing that sacred river, which was the play area of Lord Krishna in His youth, the Pandavas headed in a westerly direction. On the banks of the Saraswati river they saw the forest of Kamyaka. They decided to spend some time there. Vidura learned about their location and followed their path through the forest; soon, he found them. Yudhisthira was excited to see his uncle. Vidura was moved with compassion at the sight of the Pandavas, and Yudhisthira had to comfort him with sweet words. Vidura then told Yudhisthira about the argument he had with his brother, which caused him to come to the forest. Yudhisthira was happy to have Vidura with him, and immediately made arrangements for his comfort.

Meanwhile, in Hastinapura King Dhritarastra began to regret the argument he had with Vidura. He felt keen separation from Vidura, whom he loved much and who always gave him good counsel. Feeling as if he could not live without Vidura, he ordered Sanjaya to find Vidura and bring him back to the palace. Following the instructions of the King, Sanjaya ascended a chariot and began his search for Vidura. He found him in the Kamyaka forest and humbly begged him on behalf of his blind brother to return to the palace. Vidura felt it was his duty to try to save Dhritarastra, and thus he returned to Hastinapura.

Hearing that Vidura had returned and that the King had pacified him, Duryodhana began to burn in grief. He called for Shakuni, Karna and Duhshasana, and expressed his evil intentions, "The learned Vidura has returned to the palace. He is always seeking the welfare of my enemies. If he again induces the King to call the Pandavas back to this city, I will take poison and kill myself. I will never again see the Pandavas in opulence."

Wanting to comfort Duryodhana, Shakuni said, "O King, do not think in this way. The Pandavas will never come back from the forest for they are righteous men and always keep their vows. Even if the King calls them back, they will not come, for they are bound by the cord of the thirteen year exile."

Karna then advised Duryodhana in a way that bolstered his heart, "Please hear my opinion, O kings of the earth. Now is the time to put on armor, and taking up our weapons, kill the sons of Pandu as they live in the forest. When they are dead, then all in the palace will find peace." These sinful men, overcome by the influence of time, applauded Karna's words, and thus they started to execute their evil plan.

While these unprincipled men were conniving to kill the Pandavas, the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the father of Dhritarastra, came to the palace. He immediately ordered them to desist from the heinous act in which they were about to engage. Vyasa then went to Dhritarastra and informed him, "O wise King, hear what I have to say! I will tell you what is salutary for the whole Kuru dynasty. I am not pleased that Pandu's sons have gone to the forest after being dishonestly defeated in gambling. O descendent of Bharata, when the end of the thirteenth year comes, the sons of your brother will shower death-dealing weapons like virulent poison. Why does your son, who has a wicked heart, seek to kill the Pandavas? He is a fool and should be restrained. In attempting to kill the Pandavas while they are in

the forest, he will lose his own life. You should stop him from executing any further actions such as this one. Better let Duryodhana accompany the Pandavas in the forest, and if by chance they become attached to your son, then there will be good fortune in your family."

"O holy one," Dhritarastra replied to his father, "I did not like the idea of this gambling match, but I think I was made to consent to it by the will of providence. None of the members of the court agreed with what happened. And yet knowing everything and its consequence, I am unable to throw away my senseless son, because of my fatherly affection. If, however, you offer words of chastisement, maybe he will listen."

"The great sage Maitreya has come from the forest after visiting the Pandavas," Vyasadeva said. "He desires to talk with you, and also to influence your son. If you follow his advice, you will prosper, but if you neglect his words of wisdom, he will curse your son." Having said this much, Vyasadeva left the palace.

There then arrived at the entrance of the imperial court the great sage Maitreya. Dhritarastra greeted him warmly and worshiped him according to his position. Hearing that he had come from the Kamyaka forest, Dhritarastra inquired about the Pandavas. The great sage Maitreya replied, "Yes, I have seen the Pandavas in my travels on pilgrimage. I was surprised to see the great King Yudhishthira dressed in deerskin and wearing matted hair. I was shocked to see this and to hear what had happened because of this dice game. How could this have happened in your presence and in the presence of Bhishma? Because of this unscrupulous act, you have lost your reputation."

Then turning to Duryodhana, the great sage spoke compassionately, "O mighty armed prince, listen to my words. O King, do not seek a quarrel with the Pandavas. Those tigers among men are great heroes on the battlefield. Do you not remember that Bhima killed the powerful Jarasandha, who possessed the strength of ten thousand elephants? Bhima has also killed the very powerful Hidimva and Baka, and recently he has killed the great Rakshasa Kirmira. The Pandavas are related to Lord Krishna and have as their allies King Drupada and his followers. Do not think you can win such a war. It is better to make peace with the Pandavas and live happily in your kingdom."

While Maitreya was speaking beneficial words, Duryodhana listened with a smirk on his face. He hit his thigh again and again, and scratched the floor with his toes, not caring for the words of the Rishi. Maitreya, seeing the insolent behavior of the prince, thought of cursing him. With angry red eyes, he touched water and spoke the following condemnation, "Since you have ignored my advice, you will suffer the result. In a great war that will come after the term of exile, I say that Bhima will fulfill his vow and smash your thighs with a single stroke of his mace." When the muni had spoken this curse, Dhritarastra tried to pacify him, but his attempts were futile. Maitreya finally relented, "If Duryodhana makes peace with the Pandavas, my curse will not take effect; otherwise, it will act just as I have said."

The blind King, desirous of knowing Bhima's strength, wanted to hear about Kirmira's death, but the sage was angry and refused, "Vidura knows about how Bhima killed Kirmira. He will inform you of this event." After cursing Dhritarastra's son, the eminent sage left the palace.

Dhritarastra was very anxious to hear about the death of the powerful Rakshasa, Kirmira. He then inquired from Vidura, "O Vidura, I want to hear how the Rakshasa Kirmira, who had no equal, was slain by Bhima."

"Listen, O King," Vidura replied, "as I relate these events. Formerly blessed sages and brahmanas inhabited the forest of Kamyaka, but due to the presence of the Rakshasas, they could not live there peacefully. When the Pandavas attempted to enter the forest of Kamyaka, a frightful Rakshasa appeared before them blocking their path. There were eight teeth protruding out of his mouth, and his eyes were the color of flaming copper. The hair on his head was red like fire and stood erect in a fearful way. He was roaring loudly, petrifying all living creatures in the forest. The movements of his steps caused the very earth to tremble, and all the animals in the forest fled in terror. A violent wind arose, and dust scattered in all directions. Seeing the Pandavas were fearless in his presence, he obstructed their path, appearing like a huge mountain before them. Draupadi closed her eyes in horror, and her husbands surrounded her for protection. Dhaumya, who possessed great mystic power, chanted various mantras, destroying the fearful illusion created by the demon. With the illusion dispelled, the mighty Rakshasa expanded his eyes in rage, seeming like death personified to all living creatures. King Yudhishthira then inquired from the demon, 'Who are you and tell us why you are obstructing our path?' I am the brother of Baka' Kirmira replied, 'and the friend of Hidimva. My name is Kirmira. I am the lord of this Kamyaka forest, and I obtain my food by daily subjugating men in battle. By killing all of you, I shall feast on your flesh and blood. Who are you, and for what reason have you come to the Kamyaka forest?' Yudhishthira then informed the man eater, 'I am King Yudhishthira, the son of Pandu, and these are my brothers, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. I have been deprived of my kingdom and have now entered the forest for the period of thirteen years.'

Vidura continued, "Kirmira said to Yudhishthira, 'It is by good luck that fate has fulfilled all my desires. With my upraised weapons, I have been searching the earth to revenge the death of my brother Baka. I have been searching for Bhima, but now I see that he is present before me in the dress of a brahmana. Bhima has slain my brother, but truly I say that he is a coward, for he killed my brother Baka when he was hungry and weak. Bhima also killed Hidimva in the same way, and then by force he stole his sister. This fool has now come into the forest in the middle of the night when the Rakshasas are most powerful. By slaying this cruel Bhima, I will be freed from the debt I owe to my brother and my friends. I will kill Bhima and devour him before your very eyes!'

"When threatened by Kirmira, the pious Yudhishthira exclaimed, 'It can never be as you say.' The first son of Kunti then began to chastise the Rakshasa with strong words. Provoked by Kirmira's words, the mighty armed Bhima uprooted a tree thirty feet in height, clipping it of its branches and leaves. In a twinkling of an eye, Arjuna

strung his Gandiva bow and stood ready for action. Bhima told Arjuna to stand aside and approached the Rakshasa challenging, 'Stand your ground! Do not flee!' Bhima then brought the tree down upon the head of the Rakshasa. Kirmira, however, did not move nor did he seem affected by that blow. The Rakshasa also uprooted a tree and approached Bhima, swinging it with all his might. It appeared like the mace of Yamaraja, but had no effect on Bhima. Bhima and the Rakshasa uprooted all the trees in that area with the intent of killing each other. When neither of those mighty armed heroes could defeat the other with trees, Kirmira tore up a huge boulder and flung it at Bhima. The boulder, however, bounced off Bhima's head, not harming him in the least. The Rakshasa then rushed at Bhima with his outstretched arms, intending to crush him to death. Bhima and the Rakshasa wrestled one another and struck one another with their fists that were as strong as thunderbolts. Remembering his hatred for Duryodhana and looking for some way to release that anger, Bhima seized the Rakshasa with his robust arms, throwing him on the ground with great ferocity. He then grabbed him by the waist and began to whirl him around till he became senseless. Lifting Kirmira up, he bounced him off the ground. The Rakshasa had become weak, and Bhima, grabbing him by the arms, squeezed him with all his strength. In great anxiety the Rakshasa screamed with his mouth wide open, causing the whole earth to tremble. He began to vomit blood, and his whole body was a mass of broken bones. Bhima then threw him on the ground, and placing his knee on his stomach and his hands around his neck, he strangled the Rakshasa to death. Upon witnessing the superhuman strength of Bhima, his brothers were struck with wonder and glorified his prowess. After the death of this terrible ogre, they then set out along with the brahmanas for the Dwaitavana forest.

Vidura said, "Thus Kirmira was slain by that king of the warriors, Bhimasena. As I was passing through the forest I saw the broken body of that fearless Rakshasa. I have heard of this achievement from the brahmanas present with Yudhishthira." Hearing the account of Kirmira's slaughter, King Dhritarastra sighed in sorrow and became absorbed in fearful thought.

Thus Ends The First Chapter of the Vana Parva, Entitled, The First Days of Exile.

### Chapter Commentary

This feeling of intense separation that the citizens of Hastinapura felt for the Pandavas reminds one of when the great Lord Ramachandra was exiled to the forest by his father. Lord Rama is one of the incarnations of Lord Krishna, who appeared in the Treta yuga many millennia ago. At the time of Lord Rama's exile the citizens of Ayodhya also accompanied Lord Ramachandra to the forest unable to bear the separation of that great king. They considered the forest a better place to reside as long as Lord Ramachandra was there. They did not think living in Ayodhya with Kaikeyi to be of any value. The citizens of Ayodhya considered Ayodhya uninhabitable as long as Lord Ramachandra was there.

The value of association with the Lord and His devotees can never be minimized. Therefore, the holy scriptures state that one moment's association with a pure devotee of the Lord can guarantee one's success in life. Why is that? The reason is that hearing about the holy name, form and pastimes of the Supreme Lord Krishna from a pure devotee can give one the seed of pure devotional service by which one can attain pure love of God, the necessary item for entering the kingdom of God. If a fortunate person gets the seed of pure devotion and waters the seed, it will fructify into a creeper that will take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord and bear the fruit of loving devotion.

Real association with a devotee means to follow his instructions. There are two kinds of association with the spiritual master. One is by vapu or personal association and the other is by vani or instructions. Of the two, following the instructions of the spiritual master is the most important, for by this process, one will come to realize the personal presence of the spiritual master. The citizens of Hastinapura were right in following King Yudhisthira's order to return to Hastinapura and give solace to Kuru elders.

When Lord Chaitanya was traveling through south India, he met the Kurma brahmana. This brahmana was a householder who came to love Lord Chaitanya very much. In fact when the Lord left his village, he wanted to renounce everything and follow the Lord. However, the Lord instructed him, "Whoever you meet and whoever you see, instruct them in the message of Bhagavad-gita and Shrimad-Bhagavatam. In this way you will always have my association." (C.C. Madhya lila) Lord Chaitanya gave this same instruction to all those whom He met on His South Indian tour. Personal association is not as important as following the instructions of the spiritual master.

The Pandavas were always under the protection of Lord Krishna. They were blessed whether they were in the forest or their opulent kingdom. A devotee can live anywhere and always think of Krishna. When a devotee always keeps the Lord in his heart, he can turn hell into heaven. A devotee of the Lord is actually a holy place personified, because he has realized the presence of the Lord in his heart and in the heart of all living beings. This is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita, "The yogi who knows that I and the Supersoul in all creatures are one worships Me and remains always within me in all circumstances." (B.g. 6.31)

The cause of Duryodhana was doomed. Just as one receives the seed of devotion and it fructifies into love of God in due course, so also one can plant the seed of offenses and sins; and in due course the seed will fructify and produce the sour fruits of suffering, misfortune and misery. Duryodhana had planted the seed of offenses already by trying to poison Bhima, by trying to burn the Pandavas in a house of lac, by stealing away their kingdom, and by offending Draupadi. He kept watering the original seed of sin by more offenses. In this chapter Duryodhana has offended Maitreya Rishi, for which act Duryodhana is cursed by the Rishi to die by Bhima's mace. He has also displeased Shрила Vyasadeva and been labeled a fool. In a previous chapter Narada also cursed the cause of Duryodhana. Although it appears that Duryodhana has won sovereignty of the whole world, his plant of sin will soon

fructify into the fruits of suffering when he faces the Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war.

## Chapter Two

### Lord Krishna Visits the Pandavas

When Lord Krishna heard that the Pandavas had been cheated out of their kingdom by gambling, He went to the Kamyaka forest. He was accompanied by Dhristadyumna, Dhristaketu, the Bhojas, the Vrishnis and the Andakas. They were angered about the deceitful gambling match in Hastinapura and were ready to help Yudhishthira regain his kingdom. They offered respect to Yudhishthira that was due to an emperor. Seated in that assembly like the moon amongst the stars, Lord Krishna addressed the assembled kings, "The earth shall drink the blood of Duryodhana, Karna, Duhshasana, and the wicked Shakuni. After slaying these men in battle along with their allied soldiers, we will make Yudhishthira the emperor of this earth. The wicked deserve to be slain. My reason for being on earth is to establish the proper religious principles for all human beings."

Lord Krishna's anger increased as He thought of the offenses committed by the Kurus. He seemed bent upon annihilating the miscreants. Understanding the anger of Lord Krishna, Arjuna spoke to pacify Him, "O slayer of Madhu, material qualities like anger, envy, and cruelty can never exist in You. O Supreme Lord, who knows no deterioration, all saintly persons and rishis seek Your protection. It is only You who exists after the annihilation when this universe is drawn into Your own self. O thou of the Vrishni race, at the beginning of the millennium Brahma was born from Your navel on a lotus flower. He in turn created all mobile and immobile things. When the dreadful demons Madhu and Kaitava were bent on slaying Brahma, You became angry; and from Your forehead, Shambu (Lord Shiva) took his birth. Thus those two foremost deities have sprung from Your body in order to execute Your order. O Lord of all lords, I know this to be truth because it was Narada who instructed me. O Narayana, O God, O thou with eyes like lotus petals, the deeds You have performed while still a boy testify to Your unlimited power. Baladeva and Yourself have executed super human activities that have never been performed by others, nor in the future will they be performed by others."

Thus Arjuna glorified Lord Krishna, and the lotus eyed Lord, glancing lovingly at His devotee, responded, "My dear Arjuna, you are Mine, and I am also yours. All that belongs to Me also belongs to you. He that hates you, hates Me as well, and he that follows you also follows Me. O great soul, you are Nara, and I am Narayana. We are the rishis Nara and Narayana born in this mortal world for a special purpose. O Partha, we are inseparable, and no one can understand the difference that is between us."

When Draupadi heard Lord Krishna's words of love for Arjuna, she broke down in tears. Remembering how He had saved her from an embarrassing situation, she fell at His feet and offered humble prayers, "O Krishna, the great sages such as Asita and Devala have spoken of You as the cause of all causes and the creator of this manifested world. The great sage Jamadagni, the father of Parasurama, has said that You are Vishnu, the Lord of all created beings, both human and celestial. You are sacrifice, the performer of the sacrifice and the object of sacrifice. O foremost of all beings, O Lord of Lords, the great sage Narada has spoken of You as the master of all other deities, including Shiva and Brahma, whom You sport with as children sport with toys. O exalted one, the firmament is Your head and the lower planets are Your feet. The three worlds are in Your womb and this entire universe is Your body. You are the object of meditation and worship by all the great sages and brahmanas. O chief of all male beings, You are the only shelter for royal sages, who are devoted to virtuous acts, who never turn their backs in battle, and who have fulfilled their religious obligations. You are omnipresent, the soul of all things, and the active power pervading everything. The heavenly lords, heaven itself, the stellar conjunctions, the ten points of the horizon, the firmament, the moon and the sun are all established in You. All immoral and moral activities emanate from You.

"O slayer of Madhu, impelled by the affection You bear towards me, I will relate to You my grief. O Krishna, how could one like me, the wife of the Pandavas, the sister of Dhristadyumna and Your friend, be dragged into that assembly of sinful men. Those despicable men in the court at Hastinapura dragged me into their presence and attempted to strip me. The sinful Duhshasana touched my sanctified hair and pulled on my sari. None of the Kuru elders would help me, nor would my husbands do anything. O fie on the strength of Bhima and the Gandiva of Arjuna! They suffered me to be disgraced by small minded men. My husbands never forsake persons who ask their protection, and yet they abandoned me who requested it. Why do those who are gifted with strength in this assembly sit indifferently, beholding my afflicted state? Why do I have to burn in grief for so long? O my Lord, it was by Your causeless mercy that I was saved from that embarrassing situation. By remembering Your lotus feet, I was saved from the greatest danger. You are truly the only shelter in this dangerous material world, and You, my Lord, are the only one who can give all beings protection. You are the father, mother, grandsire, husband, and worshipable deity. O Krishna, we are now in another dangerous situation, having been exiled to the forest. Please give us Your protection."

Having spoken these words full of devotion and grief, Draupadi hid her face in her soft hands and began to weep. Tears fell from her lotus-like eyes, and the Supreme Lord, who is very kind to His devotees, pacified her with sweet words, "O chaste lady, the wives of those who have insulted you, shall weep. Soon you will see those men who have offended you lying on the ground, filled with Arjuna's arrows. Do not cry, O princess. You will soon see Yudhisthira crowned king, and the sinners punished for their crimes. You shall again be the queen of Kings. The heavens may fall; mount Himavata may crack; and the oceans may dry up, but My words will never prove to be futile."

After hearing the promise of Lord Achyuta, Draupadi glanced at Arjuna waiting for a response. And Arjuna understanding what she wanted said, "O lady with coppery eyes, do not grieve about these offenses committed against you. What the slayer of Madhu has said will certainly come to pass. It will not be otherwise."

Supporting Lord Krishna's vow, Dhristadyumna said, "My sister, do not cry. I promise you that I will kill Drona; Shikhandi will kill Bhishma; Bhima will kill Duryodhana, and Karna will be killed by Arjuna. Assisted by Balarama and Krishna, we are invincible in battle. The sons of Dhritarastra will not survive."

In the presence of all assembled, Lord Krishna informed King Yudhisthira, "If I had not been preoccupied with protecting Dvaraka, then this evil would have never befallen you. O irrepressible one, I would have attended this gambling match even without the invitation of Dhritarastra or Duryodhana. I would have prevented the gambling match from taking place by showing its many evils. Supported by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Bahlika, I would have prevented these offenses from taking place. Womanizing, drinking, hunting, and gambling have been regarded as the four evils by which a man loses all prosperity. I would have pointed these evils out and their attendant miseries. If Dhritarastra had rejected my counsel, offered as medicine, then I would have compelled him by force. And if those who wait at his court professing to be his friends had supported him, then I would have slain them all. O Yudhisthira, O justice personified, it was due to My being preoccupied in protecting Dvaraka that you have fallen into such distress. It was only after a fierce battle with Shalva that I learned from Satyaki about this calamity. And, O foremost of kings, after hearing about your exile I immediately came here to assist you."

"O slayer of Madhu," King Yudhisthira inquired, "what happened at the city of Dvaraka that it had to be protected?"

"While I was attending the Rajasuya sacrifice in Hastinapura," Lord Krishna explained, "King Shalva attacked Dvarakapuri. Previously, he had attended the wedding ceremony of Rukmini in which she was to be married to Shishupala. When I kidnapped the beautiful Rukmini, Shalva fought with the Yadu dynasty and was defeated. At that time he took a vow that he would destroy all My family members. He worshiped Lord Shiva and received a benediction of an airplane called Saubha. This airplane could not be destroyed by any demigod, demon, human being, Gandharva, Naga, or even by any Rakshasa. The airplane could also fly anywhere and everywhere, and he strongly desired that it be a great danger to the Yadu dynasty. Lord Shiva agreed to the request of Shalva, and the demon Maya helped him to manufacture the airplane. It was more like a flying city than an airplane, and it could fly so high and at such a great speed that no one could see where it was. When Shalva had acquired this airplane, he decided to attack Dvaraka. When the demon heard of the death of his friend Shishupala at the Rajasuya sacrifice, he was overpowered with resentment. He organized his divisions and attacked Dvaraka City. Not only did he attack Dvaraka from the air, but he also laid siege to My city from the ground with numerous troops. His army began to destroy the beautiful points of the city, and the members of the Yadu dynasty were immediately called to battle."

"Dvaraka City was well fortified; the walls of the city were high and thick; there were turrets at the top of the walls furnished with different kinds of weapons for repulsing the enemy. There were cannons and machines that could hurl fire, liquid metal, huge metal balls and dangerous bullets. The city was also defended by numerous chariot fighters, who were fearless in the face of the enemy. King Ugrasena had been contemplating an attack from Shalva, and thus he had the bridges destroyed. The trenches around the city were spiked with poles. Mines were laid around the city, and the ground was dug up so that it was uneven in all directions. No one was allowed in or out of the city with out the proper password. Thus Dvaraka was defended by the intelligent King Ugrasena.

"Shalva attacked Dvaraka from the sky and began to shower slabs of stone, tree trunks, thunderbolts and poisonous snakes. Shalva also managed to create such a strong whirlwind that the city of Dvaraka was covered in dust. The inhabitants of Dvaraka were in such distress that they were not peaceful even for a moment. The great heroes of Dvaraka City, headed by commanders such as Pradyumna, counterattacked the soldiers and the airplane of Shalva. Following the command of Pradyumna, many warriors such as Satyaki, Carudeshna, Samba, Akrura, Kritavarma, Bhanuvinda, Gada, Suka and Sharana--all came out of the city to fight with Shalva. All of them were maharathis; and assisted by thousands of warriors, they came out of the city to fight with Shalva. Fierce fighting began between the two armies, exactly as was carried on between the demigods and demons.

Lord Krishna continued, "O King, the demon Kshemavridhhi attacked my son Samba and tried to overcome him with his arrows. However, Samba countered with a thousand arrows, driving him from the field of battle. After that mighty general had retreated, a demon named Vegavat attacked My son. Samba held his ground; and taking up a powerful mace, he hurled it at Vegavat. When hit by that mace, the demon fell to the ground dead. Meanwhile, one of Shalva's generals named Vivindhya attacked Pradyumna and covered him with arrows. Pradyumna, the mighty son of Rukmini, fixed to his bow an arrow effulgent as the sun and empowering it with the force of a thunderbolt released it at the demon. When Vivindhya was struck by that weapon, he fell down to the ground, a lifeless corpse.

"Upon seeing that his men were being defeated, Shalva advanced in his airplane. The warriors of the Yadu dynasty were struck with fear upon seeing that wonderful airplane. It was so extraordinary that sometimes there would appear to be many airplanes in the sky. Sometimes they would see the airplane in the sky, and sometimes they would see it on the ground. Sometimes they would see it on the peak of a hill, and sometimes floating in the water. The wonderful airplane would not stay steady even for a moment. Pradyumna encouraged the members of the Yadu dynasty by vowing, 'Stand your ground and do not fear this airplane. I shall, by the force of my arrows, stop the advance of Shalva's creation. With the power of my weapons, I shall destroy the host of demons that inhabit this airplane. Fear not, I will slay the lord of Saubha today!' Thus encouraging his troops, Pradyumna attacked with greater force. The arrows released by the members of the Yadu dynasty were as brilliant as the sun and as deadly as the tongues of serpents.

"The commander in chief of Shalva's forces was Dyuman, and he was a great warrior. Although stung by twenty-five of Pradyumna's arrows, he suddenly attacked Pradyumna with his club and struck him so strongly that he fell to the ground unconscious. Shalva's men roared with joy and exclaimed, 'Now, he is dead! Now, he is dead!' The force of Dyuman's club was so severe that it would have torn open the chest of an ordinary man.

Lord Krishna continued, "The chariot of Pradyumna was being driven by the son of Daruka. According to Vedic military principles, the chariot driver and the hero on the chariot have to cooperate during the fighting. As such, it is the duty of the chariot driver to take care of the hero on the field of battle. Thus, the son of Daruka removed Pradyumna from the battlefield. Two hours later, he regained consciousness; and when he saw that he was not on the battlefield, he began to chastise his charioteer, 'Oh, you have done the most abominable act! Why have you moved me from the battlefield? My dear charioteer, I have never heard that anyone in our family was ever removed from the battlefield while in the midst of fighting. I accuse you of being a coward. Tell me how I can go before my uncle, Balarama, and before my father, Krishna; and what shall I say to them? Everyone will talk about me, and say that I fled from the fighting place; and if they inquire from me about this, what will be my reply? My sisters-in-law will play jokes upon me with sarcastic words. I think, O charioteer, that you have committed a great offense by removing me from the battlefield.'

"The son of Daruka replied, 'My dear hero, I wish a long life for you. I have not done anything wrong, as it is the duty of the charioteer to help the chariot fighter when he is in a precarious condition. My dear sir, you are completely invincible in battlefield activities. It is the mutual duty of the charioteer and the warrior to give protection to each other in a precarious condition. I was completely aware of the regulative principles of fighting, and I did my duty. The enemy all of a sudden struck you with his club so severely that you lost consciousness. You were in a dangerous position, surrounded by your enemies. Therefore, I was obliged to act as I did.'

Lord Krishna continued, "After talking with his charioteer, the son of Daruka, Pradyumna could understand the real circumstances, and therefore he refreshed himself by washing his mouth and hands. Arming himself properly with bows and arrows, he asked his charioteer to take him near the place where Shalva's commander in chief was engaged in combat. During the short absence of Pradyumna from the battlefield, Dyuman, Shalva's commander-in-chief, had been pushing back the soldiers of the Yadu dynasty. By appearing in the battlefield, Pradyumna immediately stopped him and struck him with eight arrows. With four arrows he killed his four horses, with one arrow he killed his chariot driver, and with another arrow he cut his bow in two; with another arrow, he cut his flag into pieces, and with another arrow he severed his head from his body.

"Pradyumna then attacked Shalva as he was fighting from his airplane. Seeing the presence of My son on the field of battle, Shalva released a shower of arrows that pierced the son of Daruka. Not minding those arrows, the son of Daruka directed the chariot closer to where Shalva's airplane was hovering in the sky. Shalva released

more arrows, but they were cut to pieces before they could reach his chariot. Shalva then resorted to mystic illusions and caused a rain of terror on the battlefield. Pradyumna counteracted that illusion with the Brahma weapon and then released his own arrows that pierced Shalva in the head, chest, and face. Hit by those weapons the demon fell to the ground unconscious. The son of Rukmini then fixed to his bowstring an arrow that was as deadly as a venomous serpent. With this action all the warriors exclaimed, 'Alas, Alas!' Suddenly Narada appeared before Pradyumna and informed him, 'O hero, Shalva is not to be slain by you! Do not release your arrow. It has been ordained by providence that this demon will die by the weapon of Lord Krishna.' With these words, Pradyumna withdrew the incantations for the arrow and placed it back in his quiver. Meanwhile Shalva recovered from Pradyumna's arrows and continued fighting the soldiers of the Yadu dynasty.

Lord Krishna continued, "After the completion of the Rajasuya sacrifice in Indraprastha, I returned to Dvaraka just during the thick of the fighting. My chariot was marked with the flag bearing the insignia of Garuda; and as soon as the soldiers and warriors of the Yadu dynasty saw the flag, they could understand that I was on the battlefield. By this time, almost all of Shalva's soldiers had been killed; but when Shalva saw that I had come to the battlefield, he released a great, powerful weapon which scorched through the sky like a roaring meteor. It was so bright that the whole sky lit up by its presence. But as soon as I saw the weapon, I tore it into hundreds and thousands of pieces. I then struck Shalva with sixteen arrows; and with a showers of arrows I overpowered the airplane, just as the sun in a clear sky overpowers the whole sky by an unlimited number of molecules of sunshine. Shalva struck a severe blow to my left side, where I was carrying My Sarnga bow, and as a result the Sarnga bow fell from My hand.

"The sinful Shalva thought that he had become victorious, and with a roaring sound began to address Me, 'You rascal, Krishna!. You kidnapped Rukmini forcibly, even in my presence. You baffled my friend Shishupala and married Rukmini Yourself. And in the great assembly at King Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice, while my friend Shishupala was a little absentminded, You took an opportunity to kill him. Everyone thinks that You are a great fighter and that no one can defeat You. So now You'll have to prove Your strength. I think that if You stand before me any longer, with my sharpened arrows I shall send You to a place wherefrom You will never return.' To that sinful person I replied, 'Foolish Shalva, your threats are simply nonsense. You do not know that the moment of death is already upon your head. Those who are actually heroes do not talk much. They prove their prowess by practical exhibition of chivalrous activities.' After saying this, I struck Shalva on the collarbone with My club so severely that he began to bleed internally and tremble as if he were going to collapse from severe cold. Before I was able to strike him again, however, Shalva became invisible by his mystic power.

"Within a few moments, a mysterious unknown man came before Me. Crying loudly, he bowed down and informed Me, 'Since You are the most beloved son of Your father Vasudeva, Your mother Devaki has sent me to inform You of the unfortunate news that Your father has been arrested by Shalva and taken away by force. He took him just as a butcher mercilessly takes away an animal.' When I heard this

unfortunate news from the unknown messenger, I thought, 'How could that happen? My brother Lord Balarama is there, and it is impossible for anyone to conquer Balaramaji. He is in charge of Dvaraka City, and I know He is always alert. How could Shalva possibly enter the city and arrest My father in that way? Whatever he may be, Shalva's power is limited, so how could it be possible that he has conquered the strength of Balaramaji and taken away My father as described by this man? Alas! Destiny is, after all, very powerful.'

"While I was thinking like this, Shalva brought before Me a man exactly resembling Vasudeva, My father. These were all creations of the mystic power of Shalva.

"Shalva then spoke to Me. 'You are a coward, Krishna! Look! This is Your father who has begotten You, and by whose mercy You are still living. Now just see how I kill Your father. If You have any strength, try to save him.' The mystic juggler, Shalva, immediately cut off the head of the false Vasudeva. Without hesitation he took away the dead body and got into his airplane. In the next moment I could understand that the arrest and killing of My father were demonstrations of the mystic powers which Shalva had learned from the demon Maya, Coming to My senses, I could see that there was no messenger and no head of My father, but that only Shalva had left in his airplane, which was flying in the sky. I then began to think of slaying Shalva.

Lord Krishna continued, "When Shalva thought that I had been bewildered by his mystic representations, he became encouraged and began to attack the Me with greater strength and energy by showering volumes of arrows upon Me. By hurling My arrows with lightning speed, I injured Shalva, whose armor, bow and jewelled helmet all scattered into pieces. With a crashing blow from My club, Shalva's wonderful airplane burst into pieces and fell into the ocean. Shalva was very careful, and instead of crashing with the airplane, he managed to jump onto the land. He again rushed towards Me. When Shalva ran swiftly to attack Me with his club, I cut off his hand, which fell to the ground with the club. Finally deciding to kill him, I took up My wonderful discus, which was shining like the brilliant sun. I then cut off his head, and the head, with its earrings and helmet, fell on the ground. Shalva was thus killed in the same way as Vritrasura was killed by Indra, the King of heaven."

After relating to the Pandavas Shalva's death and the attack on Dvaraka city, the Lord made preparations to return to Dvaraka. The slayer of Madhu offered reverential respect to King Yudhishthira, and Bhima being older than Krishna smelt the crown on His head out of affection. He was embraced by Arjuna and the twins bowed down to him with reverence. Lord Krishna was duly honored by Dhaumya and worshiped with tears by Draupadi. He then requested Subhadra and Abhimanyu to ascend His chariot. After promising the Pandavas that He would come to them whenever they called, He headed on His golden chariot for the city of Dvaraka.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Vana Parva, Entitled, Lord Krishna Visits the Pandavas.

## Chapter Commentary

Lord Krishna loved the Pandavas so much that He sometimes lived with them in the forest. The Pandavas did not request Lord Krishna to relieve their suffering condition. Yudhisthira accepted the loss of his kingdom as destiny and did not complain to Lord Krishna. He could have requested Lord Krishna to fight with Duryodhana and gain back his kingdom, but he didn't. A devotee can accept any condition as the mercy of the Lord. The Pandavas are pure devotees and eternal associates of the Lord; so one may ask why the Lord put them in that condition of life? He did so to show the conditioned souls in this world how to act in times of calamity. By setting the proper example common persons will know how to act. Everyone in this world has been transmigrating through many species of life. In the human form we have committed many sinful activities for which we have to suffer. When a conditioned soul comes to Krishna, the Lord takes his karma and minimizes it. The devotee only receives a token reaction for his past sins and that is given directly by the Lord. Therefore, a devotee should not complain, but thank the Lord for giving a small punishment.

The Lord always promises to protect his devotees. In this chapter Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "You are Mine, and I am yours....He who hates you, also hates Me, and he who follows you, also follows Me." With this loving reciprocation, there was no chance for Duryodhana to be victorious. Duryodhana could have had a hundred or a thousand Bhishma's on his side; still he would have lost. When Lord Krishna agrees to protect someone, nothing can harm that person. If Lord Krishna does not protect someone, no one can save that person. Because Bhishma did not take the side of the Pandavas, he was destined to die because he did not receive the protection of Lord Krishna.

## Chapter Three

### Arjuna Obtains the Celestial Weapons

The Pandavas spent many years in the forest, and it was difficult for Bhima to tolerate the life of an ascetic. He would sometimes contemplate killing all of the Kurus at once, but his brother Yudhisthira would always pacify him and tell him that it was not the opportune time to fulfill their desires. The Pandavas lived peacefully in the forest and received knowledge from many sages and saintly persons. One day the great sage Vyasa came and informed the Pandavas that many generals had agreed to take up Duryodhana's cause, such as Karna, Shakuni, Bhurishravas, Sala, Drona and even grandfather Bhishma. He told Arjuna that if he were to fight in a future war, he would have to obtain the divine astras of Lord Indra and Lord Shiva. After the departure of Vyasa, Yudhisthira ordered Arjuna to go to the Himalayan mountains to perform austerities to please Lord Shiva.

Arjuna did as he was told and headed for the Himalayan mountains. When Arjuna entered a forest at the base of Mount Himavat, he saw that it was devoid of human beings; however, he could hear the sounds of conches and drums from the heavens. He soon passed through many woody regions until he came to the peak of Mount Himavat. He stayed there for some time in that opulent region. Beautiful birds abounded everywhere, and the rivers were the color of Lapis Lazuli. When Arjuna saw the beauty of that heavenly place, he was pleased at heart. It was there that he decided to perform austerities and worship Lord Shiva. In the beginning of his austerities, he ate withered leaves that fell from the trees. For the first month he also ate fruits every three days. In the second month he ate fruits every sixth day and in the third month every fortnight. When the fourth month came, that best of the Bharatas began to subsist on air alone. With his arms upraised and standing on his tiptoes, he continued his austerities. The illustrious hero's matted locks took on the color of lightning due to his severe austerities. Then all the rishis, suffering from the heat of Arjuna's tapasya, went to Lord Shiva and complained, "O god of gods, we do not know the reason why the son of Kunti is performing these severe austerities. He is, however, causing us pain. Heated by his asceticism, the world is smoking in all directions."

"Do not lament over the austerities of Phalguna," Lord Shiva replied. "Cheerfully return to your ashramas. I know the desire of Arjuna's heart. His wish is not for heaven, nor for prosperity, nor for a long life. I will fulfill the desire for which he has come here."

Lord Shiva then took the form of Kirata, an inhabitant of the mountainous regions, and along with Uma, who also took the form of a Kirata woman, went to see Arjuna. They were accompanied by many other Kirata women. Upon Lord Shiva's arrival in that region the sylvan deities became silent. Even the birds did not chirp. As he was approaching Arjuna, a demon named Muka, taking the form of a boar, sought to kill Arjuna. Arjuna immediately took up his Gandiva bow and a number of arrows resembling snakes of virulent poison. He then addressed the boar, "I have not come here to harm you, but you seek to slay me. Therefore, I must send you for judgement in Yamaraja's abode."

Beholding Arjuna about ready to kill the boar, Lord Shiva ordered, "Do not kill this boar for I have aimed at it first!" However, Arjuna disregarded that order and shot the boar. The Kirata also let loose his arrow at the same time, and both arrows hit the boar, resounding like Indra's thunderbolt. When the boar was hit, it gave up its life assuming the original form of a Rakshasa.

Seeing the Kirata before him, Arjuna inquired, "Who are you, and who are all these women surrounding you? O thou who has the splendor of gold, are you not afraid of this terrible forest? Why have you shot this boar that I aimed at first? This Rakshasa was seeking to slay me, and therefore I have released my arrow. You have not acted according to hunting codes, and therefore, I challenge you."

"O hero," Lord Shiva replied, "you should not be anxious on my account. This forest is the proper abode of those who inhabit mountainous regions. I would inquire, however, as to why you have chosen this region amidst such difficulties?"

"Depending on the Gandiva bow and arrows like blazing fire," Arjuna said, "I live in this great forest like a second wind god. You have seen how I have killed this Rakshasa, who took the form of a boar."

"I shot this boar first," the Kirata adamantly stated, "and it was my arrow that killed the boar. You are proud of your strength, and it behooves you not to attribute your faults to others. You are at fault, O wretch, and therefore, you will not escape with your life."

Hearing these challenging words, Arjuna released his deadly arrows. Then both of those mighty warriors began to release showers of arrows at each other. Lord Shiva stood unmoved by Arjuna's arrows. Seeing his arrows ineffective, Arjuna exclaimed, "Excellent! Excellent! Alas, this mountaineer, dwelling on the heights of Himavat, has born the arrows of the Gandiva bow. Who is he? Is he Shiva himself or some other demigod, Yaksha or asura? The gods sometimes descend on the heights of Himavat. Except for Lord Shiva there is none who can bear the infinite arrows shot from the Gandiva. However, never mind who he is, I will slay him this moment." Arjuna then released hundreds and thousands of arrows, but soon his quiver became depleted, and he became alarmed. He began to think, "Alas, my arrows are all exhausted. What shall I shoot now? I shall slay him with the end of my bow."

Arjuna then dragged the Kirata by the bowstring and beat him repeatedly and the sounds were like thunderbolts. However, the Kirata snatched the bow from Arjuna's hands. Arjuna then took out his sword and ran at the Kirata to kill him. The Kuru prince, with the full force of his arms, brought that mighty sword down upon the Kirata's dazzling crown. As soon as it touched the crown, it shattered into hundreds of pieces. Enraged, Arjuna threw trees and rocks and finally began to beat the Kirata with his clenched fists. Lord Shiva, in the form of the Kirata, returned Arjuna's blows, and the combined sounds were frightening. Arjuna finally clasped the mighty Kirata in his arms and began to squeeze him with all his might. However, the Kirata also pressed Arjuna to his chest and Arjuna, whose body was weakening, fell to the ground senseless.

Arjuna soon regained consciousness and began to mentally worship Lord Shiva. He mentally offered a garland, and when he looked up he saw that the garland was on the crown of the Kirata. He then understood that the Kirata was Lord Shiva, and overwhelmed with joy, Arjuna fell at his feet. Lord Shiva was satisfied with Arjuna and said, "O Phalguna, I am pleased with you, for no one can rival your prowess. There is no kshatriya who is equal to you in courage and patience. O sinless one, your strength and prowess almost equal mine. Behold me, O bull of the Bharata race. I will grant you eyes to see my true form. Without doubt you will defeat your enemies, including those in heaven. I have been pleased with you and will grant you an irresistible weapon."

Prostrating himself before Lord Shiva, Arjuna said, "O Mahadeva, O Rudra, O bearer of the trident, you are the foremost of all male beings. I bow down to you. O illustrious Sankara, it behooves you to pardon my fault. It was to obtain your sight that I came to this mountain to perform austerities. I have worshiped you to obtain your grace. Please do not regard my impudence as a fault. I seek your protection; pardon me for all the offenses I have committed."

Lord Shiva then took the hands of Arjuna into his and smilingly said, "I have pardoned you. In your former life you were Nara, the friend of Narayana, the Supreme Lord of lords, the upholder of this universe. O lord, taking up your fierce bow, whose twang resembled the deep roar of thunder, you, as well as Lord Krishna, chastised the demons at the coronation of Indra. This Gandiva bow, O son of Pritha, is fit for your hands. I have forcibly taken it from you with the help of my powers of illusion. Your two quivers will again provide you with infinite arrows. Your body will be free from pain and disease, and no enemy will defeat your prowess. O chastiser of the foes, there is not a being, even in heaven, equal to you, nor is there any kshatriya on earth your equal. Please, ask me for a boon."

"O illustrious god," Arjuna said, "if you will grant me any desire, then I request your pasupata astra by which I may obtain victory in battle over Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Karna."

"O powerful one," Shankara (Shiva) replied, "I will give to you my favorite weapon called the pasupata astra. O son of Pandu, you are capable of holding, hurling, and withdrawing it. Neither Indra, nor Yamaraja, nor Kuvera, nor Varuna, nor Vayu have access to this weapon. Therefore, how could ordinary mortals know of it? However, O son of Pritha, this weapon should not be hurled without adequate cause; for if hurled at an inferior enemy, it may destroy the whole universe. In the three worlds there is no one who cannot be slain by this weapon. It can be hurled by the mind, by the eye, by words, and by the bow."

Arjuna then purified himself and requested Lord Shiva, "Please instruct me how to use this weapon." Mahadeva then instructed Arjuna in every detail of the weapon. The pasupata astra then began to serve Arjuna as it previously did Lord Shiva. After Arjuna received this foremost weapon, the whole earth trembled, and the sounds of conches, drums, and trumpets could be heard in all directions. The heavenly gods and demons then beheld the marvelous weapon in its embodied form by the side of Arjuna. Then Lord Shiva touched Arjuna and whatever inauspicious things had been in his body disappeared .

Lord Shiva then instructed Arjuna, "Go to heaven and obtain the weapons of the other devas." Arjuna then worshiped Lord Shiva; and the three eyed deity, along with his wife Parvati, ascended into the heavens.

Arjuna was overjoyed at having been benedicted by Lord Shiva, and he thought, "O, I have been favored by the three eyed Hara. I shall certainly obtain success. My enemies have already been defeated. My purposes have been achieved."

While Arjuna was contemplating the mercy of Lord Shiva, suddenly, Varuna, the god of the waters, appeared before him, dazzling with effulgence. Also Kuvera, with a body resembling pure gold, appeared on the scene. Next to come was Yamaraja, the lord of justice. He was accompanied by the Pitris. At that moment Indra also appeared, along with his wife Sachi. They were riding on the celestial elephant Airavata. Indra was being eulogized by ascetic rishis and Gandharvas. Other heavenly gods also appeared to bestow benedictions upon Arjuna.

After all had arrived, Yamaraja spoke to Arjuna, "Behold the protectors of the world assembled here. We will grant you special vision to behold us. In your former life you were Nara, who possessed infinite power. At the command of Brahma you have been born among men. O sinless one, it will be you who vanquishes the great Bhishma in battle. You will defeat all the kshatriyas commanded by the son of Bharadwaja, Drona. There have been many demons born among men, and you shall destroy them all to establish religious principles. O Dhananjaya, O son of the Kuru race, you shall slay Karna, who is a portion of my father, Surya. O Phalguna, your achievements will earn you lasting fame in this world. You have gratified the invincible Mahadeva in battle. You shall, with Vishnu Himself, lighten the burden of the earth. Please accept my personal weapon, the mace, which cannot be baffled by any warrior." The son of Pritha then received that weapon from Yamaraja along with the mantras for hurling and withdrawing it.

Then Varuna, the lord of all watery creatures, benedicted Arjuna, "O son of Pritha, you are the foremost of kshatriyas. Behold me; I am Varuna, the god of the waters. Accept from me the Varuna nooses, which cannot be counteracted. With these, O hero, I have in the past seized and tied up thousands of Daityas (demons) in battle. Even Yamaraja himself could not escape this weapon. With these nooses in hand, the battlefield will become destitute of warriors."

After Varuna and Yamaraja had given away their celestial weapons, Kuvera, the lord of heavenly treasures, spoke to Arjuna, "O son of Pandu, O thou of great might and wisdom, I, too, have become pleased with you. Meeting you gives me as much pleasure as meeting Lord Krishna. O wielder of the Gandiva bow, you were in a previous life the great Nara, possessed of ascetic splendor. Please accept my personal weapon by which you will be able to consume the ranks of Duryodhana. This favorite weapon of mine is called antardhana, which is capable of putting your enemy to sleep. Endowed with the dignity of Meru, you are competent to hold this weapon."

After Kuvera had benedicted Arjuna, Indra, the king of heaven spoke, "O mighty armed son of Kunti, you are an ancient god of yore. O repressor of the foe, you have yet to accomplish the purpose of the demigods. You must first ascend to heaven. I have prepared my own chariot with Matali as its driver. It will soon ascend to earth and take you to my abode. There I will bestow upon you all my celestial weapons."

Beholding the protectors of the worlds assembled together, Arjuna was struck with wonder. He worshiped them with sweet words, water and fruits. After benedicting

Arjuna with various weapons needed to defeat the demons, the heavenly lords returned to their abodes. Arjuna was filled with joy and regarded himself as one favored by providence and crowned with success.

As Arjuna was thinking of the heavenly realm, suddenly, the heavens illumined and Indra's chariot appeared in the sky dividing the clouds. That chariot was traveling at such speed that one could hardly mark its progress. Drawn by ten thousand horses, that golden chariot, filled with the most powerful weapons, descended to the spot where Arjuna was sitting. Matali stepped down from the chariot and requested, "O son of Indra, your father wishes to see you. Please ascend this celestial chariot, and I will take you to the heavenly realm. You will return after obtaining all the celestial weapons."

"O Matali," Arjuna replied, "Even kings of great prosperity, who have performed great sacrifices, are not competent to ride on this chariot. He, who does not possess ascetic merit, will not be able to see or touch this chariot. After you have ascended it and calmed the horses, I will attempt to sit in it like an unworthy man stepping on the high road to honesty."

Before ascending the chariot, Arjuna bathed in the Ganges and purified himself by his daily offering of prayers. He bid farewell to Mount Himavat and then ascended the chariot. The Kuru prince, looking like a second Indra himself, then coursed through the firmament to Indraloka. After he had become invisible to mortal eyes, he beheld thousands of celestial airplanes of extraordinary beauty. And in that region there was no sun or moon or fire to give light. The light generated was from that of ascetic merit. And those brilliant stars seen from earth, so small in consequence, though actually very large, were seen by Arjuna full of beauty, effulgence and blazing with splendor. There he beheld royal sages crowned with ascetic merit, and heroes who had attained heaven by yielding their lives in battle. There were also those who had attained heaven by severe austerities. Arjuna also saw Gandharvas, with bodies blazing like the sun, and Guhyakas, Rishis and Apsaras.

Beholding those self-effulgent regions, Arjuna became filled with wonder and inquired about them from Matali. Matali replied, "These, O son of Pritha, are virtuous persons stationed in their respective places according to their karma. It is these, O exalted one, that you have seen on earth as stars." Then Arjuna saw at the gates of Indraloka the victorious elephant Airavata, which possessed four tusks and resembled Mount Kailasa. After entering the gate, Arjuna followed that path that only the most pious persons were able to follow. Endowed with lotus petal eyes, the celebrated Arjuna finally beheld Amaravati, the city of Indra.

The city was indeed dazzling in all its splendor. It was the resort of the siddhas and charanas. It was adorned with flowers of every season and trees of every kind. Arjuna also beheld the Nandakanana gardens, which were the favorite place of the Apsaras. Fragrant breezes carried the scent of different kinds of flowers. The region was such that none who had not performed austerities could see it. It was a region for the pious alone. It was not for those who turned their back in battle, who had

not performed sacrifices, or practiced rigid vows, or who were without Vedic knowledge, or who had not bathed in sacred waters. And none were competent to visualize that remarkable city who had disturbed sacrifices in a previous life, who drank intoxicating liquors, who committed adultery with their preceptor's wife, or who were eaters of meat, or who were wicked.

As Arjuna entered the celestial city, he saw thousands of flower airplanes driven by the most beautiful persons. The Apsaras and the Gandharvas began to praise Arjuna. Benedictions were poured upon him, accompanied by the sounds of celestial music. Indra welcomed his son by embracing him and smelling his head out of affection. He made Arjuna sit on his exalted seat, and taking his handsome face in his perfumed hands which bore the mark of the thunderbolt, he glanced again and again at Arjuna's handsome features. Indra and Arjuna appeared like the sun and moon seated on that most opulent throne. Then the Gandharvas headed by Tumburu played music, and the heavenly maidens Ghritachi, Menaka, Rambha, Purvachitti, Swayamprabha, Urvasi and others by the thousands began to dance for the pleasure of Indra and Arjuna. These women had eyes formed like lotus petals and could entice the hearts of even great ascetics. They had slim waists, large hips, large breasts and casting their beautiful eyes in all directions, they could steal any man's heart. In this way Indra showed Arjuna the opulences of Amaravati one by one.

Arjuna stayed with his father for some time in the heavenly planets. Indra instructed Arjuna how to use various weapons, including the thunderbolt weapon which Indra had used to slay Vritrasura. After receiving all the celestial weapons, Arjuna remembered his brothers with great affection and thought of returning to them. However, Arjuna stayed a full five years in the heavenly planets due to Indra's desire. At Indra's request, Arjuna learned the art of dancing and music from Chitrasena, the Gandharva. This particular science of music and dance was unknown in the earthly regions. Nonetheless, even after obtaining the different weapons and sciences of music and dance, Arjuna was unhappy, wanting to return to his brothers and his wife Draupadi.

One day, Indra, thinking that Arjuna was attracted to Urvasi, told Chitrasena to go to Urvasi and request her to satisfy Arjuna's desire. When Urvasi heard that Arjuna was attracted to her, she was pleased and said, "Seeing the good qualities of this best among men, I will bestow my favor upon him. I will be happy to choose Arjuna for a lover."

When the twilight had come and the moon was illuminating the dark sky, Urvasi went to the Palace of Arjuna. Her braids of hair were decked with flowers and she looked extremely beautiful. Her graceful features, her charm, the motions of her eyebrows, her soft accents, and her moon-like face contained all the power of Cupid's arrow. As she proceeded, her full, finely tapering bosoms decked with a chain of gold and smeared with sandalwood and perfumed oil, trembled. Her thighs were faultlessly shaped, and the abode of the god of love. Her hips were high and fair. Being decked with very thin transparent attire, her body was able to shake the

very sainthood of most ascetic sages. Exhilarated with a liquor she had taken and filled with sensual desire, she approached Arjuna's quarters.

The doorkeeper informed Arjuna of her arrival, and she was allowed in. When Arjuna saw her thus attired, he closed his eyes from modesty and offered her respectful words of worship. Not understanding Arjuna's intention, she tried to entice him with sweet words, "O thou of fairest complexion, I have been sent here by Indra himself. Please satisfy my desire, your desire, and the desire of your father. O slayer of the foes, my heart has become attracted by your virtues, and I am already under the influence of the god of love."

Arjuna was overcome with bashfulness. and covering his ears with his hands, he said, "O blessed lady, please do not speak to me in this way, for you are certainly equal to the wife of a superior. Even as my mother, Kunti, or Sachi, the wife of Indra, are to be worshiped, so are you to be worshiped. There is no doubt of this. It is true that I had given you my attention, but there was a reason for this. I remembered that you were the mother of the Kuru race, having taken Puru for your husband. O blessed Apsara, it behooves you not to entertain any other feelings towards me, for you are my superior, being the mother of my dynasty."

"O son of Indra," Urvashi replied, "Apsaras are free and unconfined in their choice of mate. You should not, therefore, look upon me as a superior. The sons and grandsons of the Puru race have come here in consequence of their ascetic merit and have sported with us without incurring sin. Therefore, O hero, do not send me away. I am burning with desire."

"Truly I tell you," Arjuna said, "that you are as a mother to me. Therefore, I bow my head before you and prostrate myself at your feet. You deserve worship as a mother, and I ask that you protect me as a son."

Being rejected by Arjuna, Urvashi was extremely angry. Trembling with rage and contracting her eyebrows, she cursed Arjuna saying, "Since I have come here on your father's order and since I am burning with the shafts of love, I curse you become impotent and pass your time among females as a dancer and scorned as a eunuch." Her lips still quivering in anger, Urvashi then returned to her abode.

When Indra heard how Arjuna had rejected Urvashi, he embraced his son and said, "O best of beings, having obtained thee as a son, Pritha, today has truly become a blessed mother. O mighty armed one, you have vanquished even rishis by your patience and self control. Do not be disturbed by the curse of Urvashi. It will benefit you in your last year of exile when you have to pass that time unknown to men. It is at that time that you will suffer the curse of Urvashi. After that final year has ended, you will again achieve your power of manhood." Arjuna was pleased to hear how the curse was a benediction and ceased to think of it any longer.

One day the great sage, Lomasa, came to the court of Indra and saw Arjuna sitting on the throne with his father. Lomasa wondered what austerities this earthly person had performed to sit on the same throne as Indra. While Lomasa was thinking in this

way, Indra informed him, "O brahmarishi, I know what is passing through your mind. However, this one is no mortal, although he has taken his birth among men. This mighty armed hero is my son, born of Kunti. He has come here in order to obtain celestial weapons. Do you not recognize him as the ancient rishi, Nara, of the highest merit? Listen to me, O brahmana, as I tell you who he is, and why he has come here. Those ancient Rishis, Nara and Narayana, have descended on Earth as Krishna and Arjuna. They will accomplish their mission of establishing religious principles, and lightening the burden of the earth. Also, there are certain asuras, known as Nivatakavachas, who are proud of a boon they have acquired. Even now they are planning to destroy the heavenly regions. Due to a benediction they have received, they cannot be killed by the denizens of heaven. Only Lord Vishnu or Arjuna is capable of slaying them. However, the slayer of Madhu should not be requested to kill them when the task is insignificant. Arjuna is competent to encounter them all; and after slaying them in battle, he will return to the world of men. My dear rishi, please descend to earth and find Yudhisthira in the forest of Kamyaka. Inform him that he should not be anxious about Phalguna, for he will return to earth a proficient master of weapons. Without these weapons he will not be able to conquer Bhishma and Drona in battle. Also inform him that he should go on pilgrimage and bathe in the different holy rivers to cleanse himself of any desire for material attraction. Then the fever of his heart will abate. O foremost brahmana, it behooves you to guide and protect him on his pilgrimage through the earth. Fierce Rakshasas live in the mountains and rugged steppes. Please protect the king from those cannibals." After Mahendra (Indra) had humbly requested Lomasa in this way, the sage descended to the earthly plane to find that saintly king, Maharaja Yudhisthira.

Meanwhile, Narada Muni had already gone to the Kamyaka forest to pay a visit to the godly Yudhisthira. When Yudhisthira requested Narada to describe the merits of going on pilgrimage to the different holy places, Narada then described in detail all the holy places, sacred rivers and ashrams of saintly sages. After hearing the glories of all the pilgrimage sites and while the brothers were discussing the idea of going on pilgrimage, Lomasa, on the order of Indra, appeared before them. He related all messages from Indra and Arjuna. He advised them not to worry about Arjuna, since he was under Indra's care in the heavenly realm. He told them how Arjuna was faring, and how he had obtained all the celestial weapons from Lord Shiva, Indra, Kuvera and Varuna. He told Yudhisthira that after Arjuna had finished his business in the heavenly planets, Indra would return him to their association. Lomasa informed the Pandavas of Indra's desire that they should go on pilgrimage and perform austerities. Lomasa instructed Yudhisthira about the necessity for austerity, because that allows one to fulfill one's desires. He then offered to guide them to all the holy spots. Agreeing with the proposals, the Pandavas began their travels and visited all the important holy tirthas in Bharatavarsha.

When the Pandavas, headed by Lomasa, reached the holy place of Prabhasa, Yudhisthira engaged himself in ascetic practices for twelve days, subsisting only on air and water. He performed ablutions for many days and nights and surrounded himself with fire. Thus that greatest of all virtuous men engaged himself in asceticism. While he was practicing these needed austerities, news reached Lord

Krishna and Balarama that Yudhisthira was nearby. Those two leaders of the Vrishni race, accompanied by their troops, came to see Yudhisthira. When the Vrishnis beheld the sons of Pandu in ascetic dress, their bodies smeared with dirt, due to lying on the ground, they were beside themselves with grief. They could not refrain themselves from lamentation. When Yudhisthira saw the arrival of the Vrishnis, he paid them honor as far as his means would allow. That pious king, whose determination was so great that no misfortune could cast him down, was overjoyed to see Lord Krishna and Balarama. At the request of the Vrishnis, King Yudhisthira recounted the mischievous acts of the Kurus during the vicious gambling match. He also told them of their adventures in forest life and how Arjuna had gone to the heavenly planets. When the Vrishnis saw the Pandavas so exceedingly lean, they could not check their tears, which spontaneously flowed from their eyes.

When Balarama, whose hue resembled milk, the Kunda flower, the moon, silver and lotus root, saw the condition of the Pandavas, He spoke to His brother Lord Krishna, "O Krishna, I do not see that the practice of virtue leads to any beneficial result, or that the practice of irreligious activities can cause suffering, when Yudhisthira, the virtuous, is living in such a miserable state, and Duryodhana is now ruling the earth. It would seem to a person of limited vision that a vicious course of life is preferable to a virtuous one. When Duryodhana is in a flourishing state and Yudhisthira is suffering thus, what should people think of this matter? This is the doubt that is perplexing all men."

Replying to the inquiry of Lord Balarama, Satyaki, the commander in chief of the Yadus, replied, "O Rama, let us do what is proper and suited to the present occasion. Although Yudhisthira does not say a word, let us look after his welfare as Saivya and others did for Yayati. When the sons of Pritha have for their patrons, Rama and Krishna, Pradyumna, Samba and myself, why should the sons of Pritha be living in the forest? It is certainly fitting that this very day the army of the Vrishnis should march against the sons of Dhritarastra and send them to the abode of death."

"O scion of the Madhu race," Lord Krishna replied, "no doubt what you say is true. However, this bull of the Bharata race would never accept sovereignty of the world unless it were won by the prowess of his own arms. When we put forth our united strength, the enemies of Yudhisthira will be annihilated."

"It is not incorrect," Yudhisthira said, " that you (Satyaki) should speak in this way. However, O scion of the Madhu race, truth is the first consideration above my sovereign power. It is Krishna who knows precisely my heart, and I am fortunate to also know His heart. As soon as Krishna perceives that the time has come for feats of heroism, then He, who possesses beautiful hair, will direct us to defeat Duryodhana. Let all the brave men of the Vrishni race return to Dvaraka. We shall be united when the opportune time has come."

Thus after mutual greeting and after offering obeisances to each other, the valiant men of the Yadu dynasty and the Pandavas departed. Having offered due respect to

Lord Krishna, the Pandavas continued their journey to the sacred holy places of Bharatavarsha.

Thus Ends Chapter Three of the Vana Parva, entitled, Arjuna Obtains the Celestial Weapons.

### Chapter Commentary

Arjuna is in preparation to fulfill the desire of the Lord. By performing austerities we show the Lord our desire. We should perform austerities to conform to the will of the Lord. The Lord's desire was that the demoniac kings be replaced with godly kings so that the earth's great burden would be lifted. One may think that Arjuna performed his austerities for some mere weapons. One may think, "What does that have to do with pure devotional service?" His desire to obtain the celestial weapons was a part of the Lord's plan to annihilate the miscreants. Therefore, it was pure devotional service.

One may also ask why Arjuna worshiped Lord Shiva. Why not worship Krishna for the needed weapons? When Lord Krishna stopped the cowherd men from worshipping Indra, He did so to establish firm monotheism. There is only one God. There was no need to worship Indra. Therefore, why did Arjuna perform austerities to worship Lord Shiva? The answer is that for the service of the Lord, a devotee may worship a demigod. Just like the Gopis of Vrindavana worshiped the Goddess Durga to have Lord Krishna as their husband. They weren't interested in becoming more devoted to the Goddess Durga. Their only interest was Lord Krishna. Similarly, Arjuna's only interest is Krishna and his service to Krishna. What is Arjuna's devotional service? His service is to be an instrument of the Lord in decreasing the burden of the earth. To help in that devotional service, he has worshiped Lord Shiva, Indra, Varuna, Kuvera and Yamaraja. In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "In order to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to establish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium." (B.g. 4.8)

There is a difference in worshipping the demigods for sense gratification and the service of the Lord. Lord Krishna has over and over condemned worship of the demigods in the Bhagavad-gita. "Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." (B.g. 7.20) "Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary." (B.g. 7.23) "Whatever a man may sacrifice to other gods, O son o

## Chapter Four

### Bhima Meets Hanuman and Kills Jatasura

It then happened that Vyasa, the father of Dhritarastra, went to Hastinapura and informed his son of Arjuna's accomplishments in the heavenly planets. When Dhritarastra heard from his father, Vyasadeva, about Arjuna's success in Indra's abode, he spoke with Sanjaya, "O charioteer, have you heard in detail the accomplishments of Arjuna? My wicked and sinful son is still engaged in sinister policy. Being a wicked soul, he will certainly depopulate the earth. That compassionate soul, Yudhisthira, whose words even in jest are true and who has Arjuna to fight for him, will certainly gain sovereignty of the entire world. Who is there who can challenge Arjuna to battle? My wretched sons, who will be forced to fight with the Pandavas, are indeed doomed. If Drona, Karna or even Bhishma were to advance against Arjuna, a great calamity is likely to befall the earth. The person who can kill Arjuna does not exist, nor is there a person who can defeat him. O Sanjaya, the thunderbolt falling on a mountain top will leave a portion unconsumed, but the arrows of Arjuna will not leave a single soul behind."

"What you have said, O King, is true," Sanjaya replied. "The Pandavas are filled with rage, seeing their dear wife insulted during the gambling match. I have heard how Arjuna has gratified Lord Shiva, who assumed the form of a Kirata. I have also heard how the other devas have bestowed upon him their respective weapons. Arjuna cannot be defeated even by the heavenly lords. Provoked by the insult to their wife, the Pandavas will certainly slay your sons in battle. When Baladeva, Krishna, Arjuna, Pradyumna, Samba, Yuyudhana, Bhima, the sons of Madri, the Kekaya princes, and the Panchala princes bring their wrath against your sons, how can they live? What senseless person would dare to face them on the battlefield?"

"O Sanjaya," Dhritarastra inquired, "how can my wicked sons live, for they do not tread in the path of righteousness? Because I am devoid of eyesight, my son thinks that I am a fool and does not listen to my advice. He, who has Lord Krishna for his counselor, will never experience defeat. When, therefore, Bhima, Arjuna and Vasudeva become enraged, surely my sons will perish like moths in a fire. O charioteer, I have not had a moment's peace thinking of my son's terrible misbehavior during the gambling match. What Vidura warned me about during the gambling match is about to mature. A terrible fratricide will take place at the end of the thirteenth year of exile." Thus Dhritarastra, meditating on the future death of his sons, could not find any peace of mind.

As the Pandavas made their way from one holy tirtha to another, they finally came to Badrikashrama in the Himalayan mountains. It was a very scenic spot that could hardly be described in words. The flowers that bloomed there could not be found anywhere else in the world. One day as Draupadi was gazing on the beautiful scenery, a strong wind arose and blew a thousand-petaled lotus flower into her lap. The flower had an celestial effulgence, a captivating aroma, and its beauty was

unearthly. She took the flower to Bhima and requested, "Behold, O Bhima, this most celestial flower. O repressor of the foes, it has gladdened my heart. I shall present this one to Yudhisthira. Will you also obtain others for my satisfaction so that I may carry them to our hermitage in Kamyaka?" Bhima was delighted to please Draupadi in some way and proceeded to follow the path the scented flower had left. He traced the perfumed air for some time, and suddenly he realized he had covered a long distance. When he blew his conchshell, which roused the lions in the area, he also heard a loud pounding that caused the earth to tremble.

As Bhima approached the sound which was like a challenge to him, he suddenly saw a huge monkey lying on a stone slab. The monkey was waving his tail in the air and dashing it against the ground, causing the tremendous noise that spread in all directions. Bhima was completely amazed for he had never seen a monkey like this before. The monkey was sitting there with half opened eyes calmly blocking the way. As Bhima approached, the monkey advised him, "Young man, why do you make so much noise? Most of the animals in this region were sleeping peacefully, and now you have awakened them. Please be more considerate, and do not be so cruel to the inhabitants of this region. Beyond this point the forest is impassable. It is a path leading to heaven and cannot be taken by ordinary mortals. Rest awhile here and eat some fruits. After your fatigue is relieved, you may return to your residence."

Bhima was surprised that the monkey could talk like a human being, and questioned him, "May I know who you are? What monkey speaks like a human being? You must be some demigod in disguise. As for myself I am the son of Vayu, and my mother is the chaste Kunti. My name is Bhima, and I am one of the Pandavas." Bhima then told him the history of how they were exiled to the forest. He also informed the monkey that at the present moment they were waiting for the return of their brother Arjuna from the heavenly planets. The monkey smiled when Bhima told him all this and said, "I know that I am obstructing your path, but I have become ill and cannot move. If you take my advice, you should return by the path which you came."

Bhima's eyes reddened in anger, and he became very impatient. "I do not want your advice," he said. "Move out of my way, or I will have to move you myself."

The monkey replied, "I have grown too old to move and most of the time I simply lie here. If you insist on going further, then you can do so by leaping over my body."

Bhima was becoming frustrated with the whole matter. He said to the monkey, "You are an elderly personality, and you are lying on my path. It is not proper for me to jump over your body, for the Supreme Soul exists in everyone. It is also disrespectful to elders. If I had not known that Supreme Lord exists in everyone's heart, then I would have leapt over your body and this mountain as the great Hanuman did when he crossed the sea to Lanka."

The monkey inquired, "Who is this Hanuman who bounded over the ocean? You speak of him with respect. His name comes with affection from your mouth. Have you met him before? Can you relate something about him?"

The monkey looked at Bhima with a smirk on his face, and Bhima became furious. He exclaimed, "You are a monkey, and you do not know who Hanuman is? Hanuman is the greatest of all monkeys. He is also the son of the wind god Vayu and is, therefore, my esteemed brother. He is famed for his devotion to Lord Ramachandra. He is the illustrious chief of the monkeys, who is renowned in the Ramayana. When Lord Ramachandra lost His wife Sita, that brother of mine leaped across the sea to Ravana's abode and discovered her whereabouts. He then set the city of Lanka on fire. Later he killed many Rakshasa generals in the battle of Lanka. He even carried a huge mountain from the Himalayas just to save the life of Lord Ramachandra's brother, Lakshmana. I am insignificant in comparison to his strength, but I am able to fight with you if I have to. I must proceed further into this forest, and you must clear the way."

The monkey smiled calmly when he saw Bhima's impatience. He said, "Please do not be angry with me. I tell you the truth when I say that I am too old to move from this spot. If my tail obstructs your path, then just move it aside and go on your way."

Bhima, thinking that the monkey was failing in energy, thought, "I will take hold of his tail and throw this monkey, destitute of strength, to Yamaraja's abode." Assured of his prowess and smiling, Bhima approached the tail, and with his left hand he tried to move the tail as if it were a twig on the ground, but the tail would not move. He tried with both hands, but still he could not lift the tail. He tried again and again, but still he could not budge the tail so much as an inch. The monkey was smiling in amusement, which only increased Bhima's anger. Bhima tried repeatedly to lift the monkey's tail till his face was completely red, his eyebrows tightened, his eyes rolled, his face was contracted in wrinkles, and his body was covered with sweat. Finally, Bhima had to admit his defeat. He went before the monkey and prostrated himself, saying, "Please forgive my harsh words. Out of ignorance I have transgressed the conduct of good behavior to elders. Your power is greater than mine, and therefore, you must be some demigod descended from the higher regions. Please tell me who you are."

The monkey smiled at him and said, "I will gladly tell you who I am. I am the son of the wind god, Hanuman." With these words they tightly embraced each other, and tears of joy came from their eyes. They talked a long time, and Bhima was thrilled beyond words that he had finally met his brother, whom he had only heard about previously. Before their departure, Hanuman bestowed a boon on Bhima, "I am going to grant you a benediction that will help you in the future battle of the Bharatas. I will sit on the flagstaff of Arjuna's chariot and with my thunderous voice, I will strike fear into the hearts of your opponents and put new life into your army. I will always be with you." After Hanuman gave this boon to the Pandavas, both brothers embraced and departed.

Bhima continued on his journey and finally came to a lake that was covered with thousands of the flowers that Draupadi had wanted. It happened to be the garden of Kuvera, and there were many Rakshasas guarding it. They attacked him with their upraised weapons, but Bhima killed most of them. Those that were left alive ran to Kuvera and informed him of the intruder that had come upon the lake. Kuvera

understood that it was Bhima and told his servants to let him pick as many flowers as he wanted. This message was relayed to Bhima, who thought of Kuvera with great affection.

In the meantime, Yudhisthira and Draupadi became worried that Bhima had not returned. They called for Ghatotkacha, and together they followed Bhima's path. In a short time they found him at the lake of Kuvera, sitting with an armful of flowers that were meant for Draupadi. Bhima then related to them all that had happened. As they were talking, an invisible voice spoke from the heavens ordering, "You are to go no further than this point. You must return to Badrikashrama. Your brother Arjuna will return from Indra's abode in a short time." Following the command of the voice, they returned to Badrikashrama and waited for the return of Arjuna.

One day while Bhimasena was away, a Rakshasa all of a sudden carried off Yudhisthira, Nakula, Sahadeva and Draupadi. That Rakshasa, who had been disguised as a brahmana, had secretly remained in the company of the Pandavas, alleging that he was a high class brahmana. His real desire was to steal the bows, quivers and other possessions of the Pandavas. He had also been waiting for the opportunity to enjoy Draupadi. The name of this wicked demon was Jatasura. When he saw that Bhima and Ghatotkacha were away and that Lomasa and the other ascetic sages were bathing and collecting flowers, he took the opportunity to steal away the three brothers and Draupadi. However, Sahadeva broke away from the demon's grip and forcefully took the sword named Kausika from his grasp. He then began to call for Bhimasena in the direction in which that mighty warrior had gone.

While Sahadeva was calling out for Bhima, Yudhisthira rebuked the Rakshasa, "O stupid one, your merits are decreasing moment by moment. O Rakshasa, we are the guardians, governors and preceptors of kingdoms. Unless we have committed some offense, you should not abduct us like this. We have not committed any misdeeds, however small. Living on simple food in the forest, we serve gods and others to the best of our ability. After offering you food and shelter, why would you seek to injure us? Why do you seek your death for no apparent reason? If you are really a hero, then give us back our weapons and fight us one by one."

Suddenly the Rakshasa could not proceed at a rapid pace. Sahadeva, following behind, began to challenge the Rakshasa, "Wait! Wait! I am Pandu's son, Sahadeva. Stand before me and fight, O coward; either I will slay you or you will slay me."

While Sahadeva was challenging the Rakshasa, Bhima appeared on the scene holding his mighty mace. When Bhima saw Yudhisthira, Nakula and Draupadi on the shoulders of the demon and Sahadeva chastising him fearlessly, he fired with wrath and addressed the Rakshasa, " I suspected you for a wicked person from the time I saw you looking at our weapons. Because you were in the dress of a brahmana, and you were innocent of offense, I did not kill you at that time. He who kills a Rakshasa in the dress of a brahmana goes to hell for slaying him. Further, a person cannot be killed before his time comes. Surely you have reached the end of your time for carrying away the chaste Draupadi. By committing this sinful deed, you have

swallowed the hook fastened to the line of fate. So, like unto a fish in water, whose mouth has been hooked, you will not live today. You will attain the same destination as that of Baka and Hidimva."

Thus challenged by Bhima, the Rakshasa put down Yudhisthira, Nakula and Draupadi, and being forced by fate, approached Bhima for a fight. And with his lips trembling in anger, he rebuked Bhima, "Wretch! I have not been bewildered. I have been waiting for you. Today, I will offer oblations to those Rakshasas whom you have just mentioned."

Challenged in this way, Bhima, bursting with wrath, rushed towards the Rakshasa, licking the corners of his mouth and slapping his own arms with his hands. The Rakshasa also darted toward Bhima in anger. When the dreadful wrestling ensued between those two, the sons of Madri also rushed at the Rakshasa. However, Vrikodara forbade them with a smile and said, "Witness this battle! I am more than a match for this puny Rakshasa. By my own self, by my brothers, by my merit, by my good deeds, and by my sacrifices, do I swear that I shall slay this Rakshasa."

Thus the fighting ensued, and those two mighty heroes struck each other with their arms. Repeatedly uprooting trees, they hit each other, shouting and roaring like two masses of clouds. Wishing to kill the other and wrestling with each other in fury, those two combatants broke down many massive trees by the force of their thighs. The encounter resembled that between Vali and Sugriva, who fought over a kingdom and a woman. Brandishing trees in their hands, they struck each other with full force, shouting incessantly. When all the trees in that region had been pulled down and crushed to pulp, those two warriors picked up rocks and flung them at each other. Then again they darted toward each other, and each grabbing the other, wrestled like two maddened elephants. They dealt each other fierce blows that sounded like the crashing of thunderbolts. Clenching his fist like a five headed snake, Bhima dealt a blow to the neck of the Rakshasa that made him fall faint. Catching hold of the mighty Rakshasa and lifting him up Bhima threw him to the ground with full force, smashing all his limbs. Striking the Rakshasa's neck repeatedly, Bhima severed his head from his body. He did this with the ease of a person plucking a fruit from its stem. Having slain Jatasura, Bhima went to Yudhisthira, and the foremost brahmanas began to eulogize Bhima even as the Maruts praised Indra.

Thus ends Chapter four of the Vana Parva, entitled, Bhima Meets Hanuman and Kills Jatasura.

## Chapter Commentary

Another benediction has been obtained by the Pandavas, so how can they be defeated by the Kurus. Whenever one gets the blessings of Vaishnavas, brahmanas and other worshipable superiors, how can there ever be any ill fortune? We must follow in the footsteps of the Pandavas and try for blessings and benedictions from the Vaishnavas for preaching Krishna consciousness in this difficult age of Kali. When the Lord's pure devotees are pleased with our service then certainly Lord Krishna will remove any impediments from our devotional path.

## Chapter Five

### The Return of Arjuna and the Evil Plan of Duryodhana

After Jatasura had been slain, the royal son of Kunti, Yudhisthira returned to Badrikashrama. One day, upon remembering Arjuna, Yudhisthira gathered his brothers and Draupadi and explained to them, "We have passed these four years peacefully in the forest. Arjuna has informed us through different sages that in the fifth year he will descend from heaven to mount Himavan. This mountain is like unto an abode of the gods. We should now travel there, where we shall soon see the wielder of the Gandiva bow." Having thus made up his mind, Yudhisthira summoned the brahmanas and explained to them his plan. They blest him by saying, "Your plan shall be attended by prosperity."

The Pandavas and their wife accompanied by many pious brahmanas then traveled to the north. They saw many lions, tigers and elephants as they traveled. On the seventeenth day they reached Mount Mainaka and the base of Gandhamadana mountain. Not far from Gandhamadana, Pandu's son beheld the sacred slopes of Himavan, covered with various trees and creepers. There among the blossoming trees, the Pandavas beheld the holy hermitage of Arishtasena. The renowned sage Arishtasena, greeted the Pandavas and the accompanying sages and brahmanas. The Pandavas then spent the fifth year on Mount Himavan waiting for the return of Arjuna. The mountain was celestial with its flower bearing trees, fruits, clear water lakes, and birds of every description. It was indeed the abode of the denizens of heaven. The Pandavas passed their time listening to Lomasa tell various stories from the Puranas.

One day Suparna, a large bird, carried off a powerful and mighty Naga living in the large lake nearby. When this happened the mighty mount Himavan began to tremble and large trees shattered to pieces. All the creatures on the mountain and the Pandavas witnessed this marvel. Then from the top of the mountain the wind brought before the Pandavas various fragrant and beautiful flowers. The Pandavas,

Draupadi and their friends saw the heavenly blossoms colored with five hues. When Draupadi saw the flowers, she solicited Bhima, "There are many Rakshasas living on this mountain, O best of the Bharata race. You possess great prowess and the might of your arms is irrepressible. O Bhimasena, perhaps these Rakshasas, terrified by your powerful mace, will leave this mountain, allowing us to behold the summit which is covered with these beautiful blossoms. O Bhima, for a long time I have cherished this thought in my mind."

Bhima, driven by the wish of Draupadi, could not help but fulfill her desire. Taking up his weapons, the club, sword, bow and arrow, Bhima proceeded to clear the mountain of Rakshasas, who happened to be the servants of Kuvera and who guarded the mountain from unwanted intruders. Bhima found a rugged path that only one person could follow. Bhima ascended to the summit and came upon the opulent abode of Kuvera, adorned with golden crystal palaces, surrounded on all sides by golden walls embedded with gems. Gardens filled with flowers were everywhere. The abode was graced with heavenly damsels who were expert at dancing. Casually supporting himself on the end of his bow, Bhima stood beholding the city of Kuvera. The foremost of the Bharatas surveyed the Palace of Kuvera adorned with multi-colored gems. Bhima then blew his conchshell making the hair on the Rakshasas' bodies stand on end. Taking up their weapons, the Yakshas and Rakshasas rushed at Bhima, ordering him not proceed further. The Yakshas and Rakshasas released javelins, darts, arrows, maces, and axes at the powerful son of Pandu. However, Bhima crushed their weapons with his own and then began severing their hands, legs, arms and heads. The Rakshasas tried to surround Bhima like the clouds surround the sun. However, just as the sun disperses clouds, so also Bhima repulsed the oncoming enemy. Terrified at this wielder of weapons, they fled in different directions. Only Maniman, the friend of Kuvera, stood to face Bhima with darts and maces in his hand. He addressed the retreating Rakshasas, "When you go to Kuvera's abode, what will you say to him? That you have been defeated in combat by a mere mortal." Having scorned them, he took up his weapons and rushed at Bhima to kill him. As he rushed toward Bhima like a maddened elephant, Bhima pierced him with three arrows. The mighty Maniman then released his mace with full force. However, Bhima repulsed the mace with his weapons causing a sound and sight like thunder and lightning. In the meantime, the intelligent Rakshasa discharged a frightening iron club, decorated with a golden handle. The club, belching forth flames and emitting tremendous roars, all of a sudden hit Bhima's right arm and then fell to the ground. On being severely wounded, Bhima, with immeasurable prowess, took up his own mace. He then darted speedily toward the mighty Maniman. Maniman took up a huge dart and released it at Bhima to kill him. However, Bhima broke the dart with the end of his mace. The mighty armed Bhima then sprang into the air releasing his mace as Indra releases a thunderbolt. That mace pulverized the mighty Maniman, who fell to the ground, completely devoid of life. The remaining Rakshasas then fled to save their lives.

Meanwhile, Yudhisthira, not seeing Bhima anywhere, took Nakula and Sahadeva and began to ascend the summit of Mount Himavan. On reaching the summit, Yudhisthira saw Bhima holding his weapons and near to him the dead Rakshasas. Yudhisthira embraced Bhima, happy to see him alive. They sat down and Yudhisthira

said to his younger brother, "Either through rashness or through ignorance you have committed a sinful act. O hero, because you are leading a life of an ascetic, this slaughter is without cause. This act has certainly offended the heavenly gods. If you seek to do good, never again commit such a deed." Having been rebuked by his brother, Vrikodara began to reflect on what he had said.

Those Yakshas and Rakshasas who had not been killed by Bhima went to Kuvera and told him what had taken place. When Kuvera heard how so many of his servants had been killed and that Maniman had been slain, Kuvera was filled with anger and ordered his men, "Yoke the horses!" Kuvera then ascended his wonderful chariot, which was opulent beyond description, and to the eulogy of thousands of Rakshasas started into the heavens toward Mount Himavan. When the Pandavas saw the large entourage of Kuvera, their hair stood on end. When Kuvera's celestial chariot arrived on the scene, Kuvera smilingly descended and stood before the Pandavas. Thinking that they had committed an offense, the Pandavas bowed down to Kuvera and then stood before him with folded hands. Upon seeing Bhima holding sharpened shafts and ready to fight, Kuvera addressed Yudhisthira, "O son of Dharma, all creatures know that you are engaged in the welfare of all. Therefore, you may dwell on the summit of this mountain. O Pandava, do not be angry with Bhima. These Rakshasas have been slain by destiny. Your brother has been an instrument only. The death of these Rakshasas has been foreseen by the gods. I entertain no anger toward Bhimasena."

Kuvera then turned to Bhima and said, "I do not mind that you have committed this rash act. In trying to please Draupadi, you have disregarded the boundaries of the gods. Actually, I am pleased with you. O Vrikodara, today I have been freed from a terrible curse. For some offense the great rishi, Agastya, had cursed me in anger. You have been the instrument to fulfill this curse. O Bhima, it has been destined that I be disgraced in this way. Therefore, no blame can be attached to you."

"O divine one," Yudhisthira inquired, "why had you been cursed by the great sage Agastya?"

"O King," the lord of the treasures replied, "once there was an assembly of the gods, and I also attended, surrounded by numerous Yakshas carrying fierce weapons. On the way I saw the eminent sage, Agastya, engaged in severe austerity on the bank of the Yamuna. On seeing that muni, flaming and brilliant as fire, seated with upraised arms, facing the sun, my friend, Maniman, from stupidity and foolishness, discharged his stool on the head of that Maharishi. Thereupon the sage cursed me saying, 'Because you have offended me in this way, this Maniman, along with your forces, shall meet death at the hands of a mortal. You shall be distressed on account of your fallen soldiers, but you will be freed from this sin on beholding that mortal.' O Yudhisthira, patience, ability, time, place and prowess--these five lead to success in human affairs. A kshatriya who is endowed with patience can rule the world for a long time. O best of men, Bhima is fearless, but ignorant of proper duty. He has the sense of a child and unforbearing. Please, therefore, check him. You should not return the ashrama of the pious sage Arishtasena. You can stay there until the

return of Arjuna. O lord of men, deputed by me, the Gandharvas will give you protection from any harm."

Having heard these words from Kuvera, the lord of wealth, the Pandavas were relieved at heart. Then, Bhima, lowering his weapons, bowed down at the feet of Kuvera. Kuvera, seeing Bhima prostrate before him, desired to give him benedictions. He blest him saying, "May you destroy the pride of your foes, and may you give delight to the pious."

Then turning to Yudhisthira, Kuvera said, "O great King, do live in this romantic region, and the Yakshas will not bother you. Gudakesha will come back soon after attaining all the celestial weapons." After instructing Yudhisthira, Kuvera ascended into the heavens, followed by the host of Yakshas and Rakshasas.

One day as those mighty warriors were thinking of Partha, Indra's chariot suddenly descended from the heavens. It was driven by Matali, and it so happened that Arjuna was on the chariot. Arjuna was fully decorated with ornaments and wearing garlands made of heavenly flowers. Arjuna descended from the chariot and offered obeisances first to Dhaumya and then to Yudhisthira and Bhima and accepted the obeisances of Nakula and Sahadeva. He offered cheerful words to Draupadi, who was overjoyed at his return.

As the Pandavas gazed into the skies, Indra suddenly appeared from the heavens, accompanied by the hosts of demigods. As he descended from his chariot, Arjuna offered his obeisances along with the rest of his brothers. Indra then instructed Yudhisthira, "You are blessed, O Pandava. You shall be a ruler of the earth. At this time, O son of Kunti, you should go to Kamyaka forest and reside there till the time of the twelve years are up." Indra then ascended his chariot and returned to the heavenly planets.

Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva were very happy to have Arjuna back in their midst, and they questioned him about his travels. Arjuna began to relate how he had been taken to the heavenly planets and how Indra had treated him as his son. He told them of the beauty of the heavenly planets and how he had been cursed by Urvasi to be a eunuch for the period of one year. He also told them how he conquered the Nivatakavachas who had received a benediction from Lord Brahma and were thus unconquerable by the demigods. He told them how he approached their flying city and how he challenged them to fight. They came out of their city 60,000 strong and began to battle with him. They used many demoniac illusions and fought with fierce weapons, but he was able to defeat all of them with Indra's thunderbolt weapon and various other divine astras. Arjuna then told his brothers what Indra has said concerning the future war, "Indra instructed me, 'O son, all the celestial weapons of the devas are in your possession, so no man on earth will be your equal. When you are on the battlefield, the combined forces of Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripa, Shakuni and all others will not equal one sixteenth of your prowess.' And Lord Indra granted me this golden garland and this conchshell, Devadatta. He also gave me this celestial crown and this impenetrable mail capable

of protecting the body. These elegant and divine clothes and ornaments were also presented by Indra. Thus I have spent five years in Indra's abode."

The next morning Yudhisthira approached Arjuna requesting, "O Kaunteya, please show me the weapons by which you have vanquished the Danavas." Arjuna then took out his Gandiva bow and commenced to show the weapons in order. When the divine astras had been set, the earth began to tremble and the sun hid itself in the clouds. Suddenly the Rishis, Siddhas, Devarshis, denizens of heaven, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Brahma, Shiva and the Lokapalas appeared on the scene. Narada Muni, speaking on behalf of the devas, addressed Partha in sweet words, "O Arjuna, do not discharge the celestial weapons. These should never be discharged when there is no fit object. And when there is a fit object, they should not be released unless sore pressed by the opponent. O son of the Kurus, to discharge weapons without occasion is fraught with evil. O Dhananjaya, these weapons when properly kept will increase your strength and happiness; but if they are not properly kept, they can destroy the three worlds. You should not act in this way again. O Yudhisthira, you will behold these weapons when Partha will use them for grinding your enemies in battle." On saying this Narada and the heavenly lords left that place, and Yudhisthira was struck with wonder. After this incident the Pandavas started for the Kamyaka forest.

On the way to the Kamyaka, they came upon the ashrama of Vrishaparva near the bank of the Yamuna. There, they spent some time, and one day while Bhima was hunting in the forest, he came face to face with a huge serpent. As Bhima approached the serpent, the huge snake immediately seized Bhimasena in his grip. He began to coil around the body of Bhimasena; and although the son of Kunti had the strength of ten thousand elephants, he could do nothing for the serpent had received a benediction that whatever came into its grip became powerless. Bhima tried to free himself from the grasp of the snake, but it was no use. Meanwhile, Yudhisthira saw that there were many evil omens manifest, and he inquired about Bhimasena's welfare. When he heard that Bhima had gone hunting in the forest, he ordered Partha to stay with Draupadi, and Nakula and Sahadeva to guard the brahmanas. He, along with Dhaumya set out to find Bhima. As they traveled through the forest, they saw Bhima's path, which was marked with toppled trees, dead lions and other furious dead animals. As they searched they saw Bhima lying motionless, enwrapped in the coils of a serpent. Yudhisthira anxiously questioned Bhima, "O son of Kunti, how did you come upon this misfortune? Who is this serpent who appears like a mountain?" Bhima replied, "This mighty serpent has caught me for his food. He is the royal sage Nahusha living in the form of a serpent."

Yudhisthira then requested the serpent, "O great personality, please release my brother, and I will give you some other food to satisfy your belly. Please tell me who you are, and how you have come to accept this form."

"O sinless one," the serpent replied, "I am one of your previous ancestors, the son of Ayu and fifth in descent from the moon. I was formerly a celebrated King named Nahusha. Due to my past pious activities, I had attained the heavenly realm and was ruling in the absence in Indra. However, I offended the brahmanas, and

they cursed me to take this form. They said I would be delivered from this curse when the intelligent Yudhisthira answers my questions."

"You may ask any question that you like," Yudhisthira replied. The serpent began to ask questions, and Yudhisthira answered them to the satisfaction of the serpent. The serpent then released Bhima, and Nahusha again took his form as a demigod. He offered blessings to the Pandavas and again ascended to the heavenly realm.

The Pandavas then continued to make their way to the Kamyaka forest. Upon reaching that wooded region, they made their home there again.

During their stay, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, came there to see His devotees and tried to persuade them to attack the city of Hastinapura and take back their kingdom. Yudhisthira refused to accept the offer of Lord Krishna, for he wanted to wait for the full thirteen years before taking any action.

It so happened that a certain brahmana came to Dhritarastra and related to him the experiences the Pandavas had while in the forest. He told the blind king how Arjuna had attained the celestial planets and acquired the weapons of the demigods. Dhritarastra was very much aggrieved to hear all that had taken place; for he knew at the end of the thirteenth year, his sons and relatives would be killed in a great battle.

Shakuni happened to be listening to the conversation between the brahmana and the King. Shakuni then told Duryodhana and Karna what benedictions Arjuna had received, and together they made a wicked plan. They decided to go to the forest of Dvaitavana, which was in the Kamyaka forest, on the plea of inspecting the cows. Upon seeing the Pandavas dressed in rags, they would laugh at their misfortune and thus humiliate them. With this plan in mind, Shakuni, Duryodhana and Karna approached the King and begged permission to go to Dvaitavana to inspect the cows. The king gave permission, and thus the evil trio began their journey. The procession consisted of eight thousand chariots, thirty thousand elephants, nine thousand horses and many thousands of foot soldiers.

They soon arrived at Dvaitavana forest. There the Kurus had several herds of cows numbering many, many thousands. They began to inspect all these herds and count the exact number that was in each herd. There happened to be a scenic lake nearby, and Duryodhana ordered that tents be erected there. When the servants of Duryodhana reached that lake, they saw that it was filled with Gandharvas, who had descended from the heavenly planets. The servants of Duryodhana returned and told him the situation. The son of Dhritarastra then ordered some of his best men to drive the Gandharvas from the lake. Following their master's order, those soldiers approached the Dvaitavana lake and ordered the Gandharvas, "The mighty King, Duryodhana, is coming here for sport. You must stand aside!"

The Gandharvas began to laugh. "Your wicked King," they replied, "must be devoid of all good sense, or else how could he order the residents of heaven to leave this place. Return to your King and inform him that if he comes here, he will be sent to

the abode of death." Thus chastised by the Gandharvas, the king's army returned to the presence of the royal son of Dhritarastra.

Duryodhana was incensed and ordered his soldiers to prepare for battle. When all preparations had been made, the army headed toward the Dvaitavana lake. When they approached the gate leading to the garden, the Gandharvas forbid them to go further, but the Kuru host headed by Duryodhana and Karna did not listen to them and entered the lake region. The Gandharvas went to their leader Chitrasena and told him of the advance of the Kuru army. The Gandharva king ordered his men to attack the intruders. The Gandharvas then assaulted the army of Duryodhana, and seeing the Gandharvas, rushing towards them with upraised weapons, the Kuru warriors fled the lake area. Karna alone stood and faced the enemy. The suta's son checked their advance with a deluge of arrows. He struck the Gandharvas with his sharp pointed shafts, causing their heads to roll on the ground. Although they were being slaughtered in great numbers, the Gandharvas did not retreat but fought with greater valor. King Duryodhana, Shakuni, Duhshasana, Vikarna and the other sons of Dhritarastra appeared on their chariots and began driving the Gandharvas from the lake. The fighting soon became fierce, and anyone who witnessed the exchange of weapons was filled with wonder. Unable to withstand the prowess of the Kuru army, the Gandharvas began to flee Dvaitavana.

Seeing his army routed by the onrush of the Kuru host, Chitrasena, the Gandharva king, became enraged and released weapons that deprived the Kaurava warriors of their senses. By the mystic illusion of the Gandharva king, it appeared that there were ten Gandharvas around each soldier of the Kuru army. Thinking themselves outnumbered, the army broke and ran from the battlefield. Only Karna, Shakuni and Duryodhana remained to fight with the Gandharvas. The son of the sun god stood there on his chariot and fought with the Gandharvas. The Gandharvas, desirous of killing Karna, surrounded his chariot and tried desperately to overcome him. Some killed his charioteer, and some killed his horses. Some destroyed his wheels, and others completely smashed his chariot. While his chariot was being thus attacked, Karna leaped down with sword and shield in hand. He mounted Vikarna's chariot and fled the battlefield to his eternal shame.

After Karna had been defeated, Duryodhana alone stood against the onslaught of the Gandharvas. The Gandharva host attacked his chariot, killing his charioteer and horses. When Duryodhana was deprived of his chariot, Chitrasena rushed towards him and seized him. Duhshasana was also taken in the same way, and so were the other sons of Dhritarastra. After they were captured in this manner, whatever men were left in Duryodhana's army went to the Pandavas for protection. Duryodhana's followers approached Yudhisthira pleading, "O sons of Pritha, the Gandharvas have captured our prince and his brothers. Please save them!" When Bhima heard their calls, he laughed and answered them, "What we wished to accomplish with horses, elephants, and infantry has, indeed, been accomplished by the Gandharvas! The sons of Dhritarastra have come here with evil intentions and have been overtaken by the results of their sinful activities. It seems that there are still some people in this world who are desirous of doing us good."

While Bhima was speaking thus, Yudhisthira corrected him, "This is not the time for cruel words. When a kshatriya is approached with a helpless plea like this, who can refuse to give protection? Our cousins have been captured by the Gandharvas, as well as the ladies of the royal household. This is an insult to our family tradition. It cannot go down in the history of the world that the Kuru warriors were defeated. Let us take up our weapons and attack the Gandharvas."

Hearing Yudhisthira's inspiring words, Arjuna and the sons of Madri pledged protection, and even Bhima readied himself for battle. They then ascended chariots brought for them from the Kuru camp, and approached the Gandharvas, ordering the release of Duryodhana. The Gandharvas refused, and a battle ensued. The Gandharvas attacked the chariots of the Pandavas in the same way as they had attacked the chariots of Karna and Duryodhana. However, by the use of his celestial weapons, Arjuna sent hundreds and thousands of Gandharvas to the abode of death. The Gandharvas could not approach the Pandava's chariots, and as they were being slaughtered, they rose up into the skies to escape arrest. Seeing them fleeing, Arjuna covered them in a network of arrows preventing their escape. The Gandharvas returned these arrows with thousands more. Chitrasena attacked Arjuna with his mystic illusions, but he was checked by the celestial weapons of Arjuna. Resorting to a curtain of mystic power, Chitrasena began to fight Arjuna with greater prowess. Partha, however, dispelled the mystic curtain by means of a weapon known by the name of sabda-veda. When Chitrasena was exhausted in fighting, he revealed himself to his friend Arjuna. When Arjuna saw Chitrasena, he withdrew his weapons and the other sons of Pandu also did the same.

The mighty bowman, Arjuna then smilingly inquired of Chitrasena, "O hero, why have you arrested the sons of Dhritarastra as well as their wives.?"

"Knowing that you were in the forest," Chitrasena replied, "these sinful men have come here to laugh at you. Understanding their intentions, Indra has sent me here to capture Duryodhana and bring him to the heavenly planets for punishment. This wicked prince has now been put in chains; and if it is agreeable to you, I will take him to the presence of Indra."

"O Chitrasena," Arjuna replied, "if you wish to please us, then set Duryodhana free. This is the desire of our brother Yudhisthira."

Chitrasena then requested Arjuna, "This wicked soul is full of false pride and envy. He does not deserve to be set free. If Yudhisthira knew the real reason why these men came here, I am sure he would allow them to be taken to Indra for punishment. Let us go to Yudhisthira, and let him decide the future of these sinful men.

They then went to Yudhisthira and informed him about the conduct of Duryodhana, and after hearing everything, he ordered the release of his cousins. Yudhisthira was pleased with the Gandharvas for not killing Duryodhana and said, "Fortunate it is that although you had the strength, you did not kill Dhritarastra's wicked son and the rest of the Kuru house. This has been a great act of kindness, for the honor of

my family has been saved. I am very satisfied with all the Gandharvas. Ask from me anything, and having all your desires fulfilled, return to your celestial abode." The lord of the Gandharvas was pleased with Yudhisthira's humility and returned to his abode. It was then seen by the Pandavas that Indra appeared over the battlefield and showered the dead soldiers with his nectar of immortality. This revived all the Gandharvas, who then returned to the heavenly planets.

When Duryodhana had been released, he was very much ashamed and Yudhisthira admonished him, "O child, never again try to make fun of anyone for such acts will never bring you happiness. Please go back to your kingdom. I wish you well." With his head bent low in extreme humiliation, Duryodhana along with his relatives left the presence of Yudhisthira and went away.

Thus Ends the Fifth Chapter of the Vana Parva, Entitled, The Return of Arjuna and The Evil Plan of Duryodhana.

#### Chapter Commentary

Here is another example of how impious reactions come when one desires to harm others. In this case Duryodhana got an immediate reaction for his folly. The reaction to the sins at the gambling match took a longer time to fructify. However, all reactions good or bad have their time of maturation. At the battle of the Bharatas at Kurukshetra, Duryodhana would eat the bitter fruit of his sinful activities by watching his entire dynasty destroyed in war. Every action is like a boomerang which comes back to us. As the modern day saying goes, "What goes around, comes around." If we want to avoid all material reactions, either good or bad, one must engage in the devotional service of the Lord. Such action produces no material reaction, but produces a spiritual body in the kingdom of God, where there is no influence of the law of karma. We can attain this state of peace and happiness by chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

King Yudhisthira's transcendental quality is that he is completely free of envy. Even though Duryodhana had come to embarrass the Pandavas and even cause some physical harm, still Yudhisthira ordered that Duryodhana be released and sent back to Hastinapura. This freedom of envy is a quality of the residents of Vaikuntha. The sanskrit word kuntha means anxiety, but the word vaikuntha means freedom from anxiety and envy. If we want to return to the kingdom of God, we must develop the same quality of being non envious. Even if someone wishes to do us some harm, we should follow the guidelines taught to us by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, trinad api sunichena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina amanadena, kirtaniya sada hari. "One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, completely devoid of all prestige and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name constantly."

## Chapter Six

### The Last Year of Forest Life

After Duryodhana had been humiliated by the Pandavas, he left the Kamyaka forest, determined to give up his life. He told Duhshasana to return to Hastinapura and rule the kingdom. Duhshasana, Karna and Shakuni tried to convince him otherwise, but they failed to do so. Duryodhana spread Kusha grass on the ground and put on the dress of an ascetic. While he was in deep meditation, the Danavas and Daityas witnessed his activities from the heavens. They wanted to stop his act of fasting until death. Thus they ordered that he be brought to their presence. The demons told Duryodhana that he should not give up his life. They told him that many asuras had taken birth on earth to assist him in killing the Pandavas. The demons informed Duryodhana of who he was in his previous life. They said that he had taken birth as the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and thus his birth was celestial. He was also informed that Karna was a demon in his previous life and was killed by Lord Krishna, Himself. They said, "He will remember his former hatred for Krishna and Arjuna and vanquish them in battle." After speaking to Duryodhana, they returned him to his place of meditation. He awoke as if from a dream and thought, "Now I will fight with the Pandavas and kill them." Thus he went back to Hastinapura along with Karna, Shakuni and Duhshasana and thought nothing of his humiliation.

After this incident Duryodhana wanted to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice with the same pomp and grandeur as Yudhisthira had performed it. However, the brahmanas told him that as long as his father and Yudhisthira were still alive, he could not perform this sacrifice. They informed him of another sacrifice that was almost equal to the Rajasuya and required the subordination of all the kings of the earth. Duryodhana sent Karna to conquer all the earthly kings, and Radha's son accomplished this feat for his friend. The sacrifice was then started and completed with success. Some who also attended the Rajasuya said it did not compare with Yudhisthira's, and others who were friends with Duryodhana said that it was greater than Yudhisthira's. Hearing this praise from his close friends, Duryodhana resided happily in his kingdom.

Once upon a time the great sage Durvasa muni came to the city of Hastinapura and was offered a royal reception by Duryodhana. As usual, Duryodhana was thinking of doing some harm to the Pandavas. He thought, "If I can satisfy this muni, then he will give me a benediction that I can use against the Pandavas." He thus pleased the muni by his service attitude, and the Muni granted him a benediction. Duryodhana asked that the muni go to the forest along with his 60,000 disciples at the time when Draupadi had already taken her meals. Duryodhana was thinking that the Pandavas would not be able to feed the brahmanas, and Durvasa would then curse them. The muni agreed and went to the Kamyaka forest accompanied by his 60,000 disciples. Yudhisthira greeted them and asked that before eating, they bathe in the Ganges. Yudhisthira asked Draupadi if there were any food left in the pot, and she replied that she had already eaten. She then began to pray to Lord Krishna to save

them. At that time Lord Krishna appeared on the scene and asked Draupadi if there was any food left in the pot. She said that there was none. Lord Krishna then went to the kitchen, looked in the pot and saw that there was one grain of food left. He ate that grain, and as soon as He did all the 60,000 brahmanas, who were bathing, felt their stomachs so full of food that they had no appetite to eat anything. They were too embarrassed to return to Yudhisthira for full meals. Thus they went away from that place and by the grace of Lord Krishna, the Pandavas were saved from the curse of a great muni.

One day, when the Pandavas were out hunting, the King of Sindhu, Jayadratha, happened to pass by their cottage in the forest. In the cottage he saw Draupadi, who appeared to be a demigoddess. He was infatuated with love and asked one of his soldiers to inquire about her. The prince went to Draupadi and asked her who her husband was. She told him that she was the wife of the Pandavas, and the prince took the news back to King Jayadratha. The sinful Jayadratha, desiring Draupadi for his wife, approached her and ordered, "You must now give up the Pandavas for they are no more than beggars. I possess an opulent kingdom, and I can give you the treatment you deserve." Draupadi laughed at him, but he grabbed her forcefully and took her to his chariot. Dhaumya chastised Jayadratha with harsh words, but the King would not listen. He put her on his chariot and rode toward his kingdom. Dhaumya followed, pleading with Jayadratha to desist from such a heinous act. Meanwhile, the Pandavas noticed some evil omens and came back to the cottage only to find Draupadi and Dhaumya gone and the maidservant crying. The maidservant told Yudhisthira that King Jayadratha had forcibly taken away Draupadi and that Dhaumya had followed them. The five sons of Pandu were furious, and ascending their chariots, they followed the path taken by Jayadratha. They challenged Jayadratha's army and within a short time thousands of men were slain, including some of Jayadratha's finest princes. Jayadratha, seeing the slaughter, left Draupadi and ran for his life. Bhima and Arjuna pursued him and killed his horses. Jayadratha jumped from his chariot and ran into the forest. Bhima caught him by the hair and threw him to the ground. He repeatedly beat him with his fists till he was unconscious. Arjuna asked that Bhima not kill him, for Yudhisthira would not approve of it. Bhima took out a sharpened arrow and cut off his hair, leaving five tufts in different places on his head. He then told Jayadratha that if he wanted to live he would have to announce that he was a slave to King Yudhisthira. Out of fear Jayadratha agreed, and he was taken in chains to the presence of Ajatashatru. He was made to say that he was a slave to Yudhisthira, and Yudhisthira; feeling compassion for him, ordered his release.

Jayadratha wanted revenge. He went to the mountains to perform austerities to please Lord Shiva. He ate little and slept little. Lord Shiva became pleased with him and ask him to take a benediction. Jayadratha requested, "Please give me the benediction that I can kill the Pandavas." Lord Shiva replied, "I cannot grant that benediction since they cannot be slain by anyone. However, I will give you a boon that you can defeat in battle at least once all the Pandavas except Arjuna." Saying this much, Lord Shiva disappeared.

It was at this time that Indra came to Karna at Hastinapura in the dress of a brahmana and begged from him his natural armor and earrings. As long as Karna possessed this kundala and kavacha, he could not be killed. Karna offered the brahmana his kingdom instead of his natural armor and earrings, but the brahmana would not be satisfied. Previously, the Sun god had come to Karna warning him that Indra would come in the dress of a brahmana and beg from him his natural armor and earrings. He told his son that he should not part with his armor if he wanted to be successful in killing Arjuna. Karna wanted to be famous as a giver of charity and said he could not refuse any brahmana who came begging something from him. Although Karna knew the brahmana to be Indra, he did not hesitate to give his natural armor and earrings. However, in return he asked for Indra's shakti weapon by which he could kill any opponent in battle. Indra agreed, and Karna received from the heavenly king his shakti weapon. Karna then peeled off his armor which was a part of his body and also cut off his earrings; both were dripping with blood. Indra then returned to his abode, and when the sons of Dhritarastra learned of this incident, they lamented greatly. When the Pandavas headed by Yudhishthira were made aware of this incident, they felt that Arjuna could now kill Karna in battle.

One day while the Pandavas were hunting in the forest, they became very thirsty. Yudhishthira ordered Nakula to bring water from a nearby lake. Nakula hastily left and soon came upon a crystal clear lake inhabited by cranes and filled with lotus flowers. He desired to drink the lake's water; but before he could a voice from the sky ordered, "O child, do not drink the water from this lake for it is in my possession. You may take water only after you have answered my questions." Nakula did not listen to the words of the unembodied voice, and when he started to drink the water, he fell down dead.

After sometime Yudhishthira became anxious about Nakula and sent Sahadeva to find out the cause of the delay. When Sahadeva came upon the lake and saw his brother lying dead, he became much aggrieved. He then went to drink the water of that lake to quench his thirst, but a unembodied voice announced, "Do not drink the water of this lake for it is in my possession. Only after you answer my questions can you take as much as you require." Sahadeva did not listen to the strange voice and drank the water of the lake. When he did, he immediately fell to the ground dead.

When Sahadeva did not return after a long time, Yudhishthira sent Arjuna to find them and bring some water for drinking. When he came upon the lake, he saw both Nakula and Sahadeva dead. He was overwhelmed with lamentation. He began to search the entire forest for the being who had killed his brothers, but he could not find anyone. Arjuna felt fatigued and went to drink water from the lake. He then heard the same voice that his brothers had heard, "Why do you approach the water, O Partha? You shall not be able to drink the water by force. If you, O Kaunteya, answer my questions, then you may drink as much water as you desire." Becoming angry, Arjuna began to release astras that filled all directions with arrows. He released barbed darts, javelins and iron arrows that were capable of hitting the target just by hearing the sound. Then the unembodied voice laughed and spoke, "What is the need of all this trouble? Just answer my questions, and you can take as

much water as you desire." Arjuna did not listen to the voice. He went to take water and when he touched the water to his mouth, he fell to the ground dead.

When Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva did not return after some time, Yudhisthira said to Bhima, "Our brothers have not returned from searching for water. Go and see if they have fallen into some difficulty." Bhima then began to search the forests and finally came upon the lake. He saw his brothers lying dead on the ground, and he became overwhelmed with grief. Tears filled his eyes, and he thought to himself, "There is some powerful enemy nearby, and I must fight with him. Therefore, let me quench my thirst." When he went to drink the water, the voice from the heavens announced, "You may drink this water only after you have answered my questions. This lake is in my possession, and you may not drink from it." Bhima did not listen to the voice and went to drink water. When he did, he fell down dead.

Yudhisthira waited for some time, but none of his brothers returned. He rose and followed their path to the lake. When he saw that celestial lake, he was struck with wonder. As he came closer, he saw his brothers lying dead on its bank. He was overwhelmed with lamentation and anxiety filled his heart. He began to think of how Bhima had made his vow to kill the one hundred sons of Dhritarastra, and how Arjuna had vowed to kill Karna. He lamented greatly. He saw that none of them had any marks of being struck by any weapons, and there were no footprints in the area suggesting a battle. He concluded that this must be the work of Yamaraja himself, for who else could defeat these great heroes?

As he thought in this way, he went to drink the water of the lake, but suddenly the voice from the sky ordered, "This lake is in my possession. Your brothers have died by not following my instructions. If you answer my questions, I will allow you to drink the water of this lake." Just then a Yaksha appeared before Yudhisthira, and the first son of Kunti spoke to him, "I do not want possession of your lake. However, I will answer your questions to the best of my ability." The Yaksha then began to pose many questions and Yudhisthira began to answer them one after another. One of those questions was, "What is the most amazing thing in this world?" Yudhisthira answered, "The most wonderful thing is that daily countless creatures are entering the abode of Yamaraja, but those that remain behind think that they are immortal." The Yaksha asked another question, "Where is the absolute truth to be found?" Yudhisthira answered, "Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated self-realized person. Consequently, as the shastras confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the mahajanas advocate."

The question and answer process went on for some time, and the Yaksha was pleased with Yudhisthira's answers. He then offered a benediction to Yudhisthira that he could have one of his brothers brought back to life. Yudhisthira requested, "Let my brother Nakula be brought back to life." The Yaksha then questioned Yudhisthira, "Why did you pick this brother when you could have saved the great

bowman Arjuna or the mighty armed Bhima." Yudhisthira replied, "My father had two wives, Kunti and Madri. I look upon both equally. Therefore, let Nakula live." The Yaksha then said, "Since you are not seeking profit for yourself in any way, I say let all your brothers live, O best among men."

While the Yaksha was speaking, the brothers of Yudhisthira rose up completely free from fatigue, thirst and hunger. Yudhisthira then inquired from the Yaksha, "My brothers are not capable of being slain by a hundred thousand warriors. How have you killed them? Are you a friend of ours, or are you my father, the great Yamaraja himself.?"

The Yaksha revealed his real form as Yamaraja and said, "I am your father, the Lord of justice. Please know that I have come here to test your merit and to bestow blessings upon you. You are endowed with all good qualities and are very dear to me. You may take from me any benediction you like."

"We have now spent twelve years in the forest," Yudhisthira replied, "and we have to spend another year in disguise. Please give us the benediction that in this last year we may not be discovered."

"I give you this benediction," Yamaraja said, "and say that even if you cover the entire earth in these forms, no one will recognize you. You may now take another benediction from me."

"It is enough that I have beheld this form with my senses." Yudhisthira said, "May, O father, I always conquer lust, greed and anger and may my mind be ever devoted toward the absolute truth and the performance of austerity."

"O my son," the lord of justice replied, "you have been endowed with these qualities from birth, and there is no need to accept them for a second time." Having said these words, the worshipful lord of justice disappeared, and Yudhisthira and his brothers returned to their cottage in the Dvaitavana forest.

Thus Ends the Sixth Chapter of the Vana Parva, Entitled, The Last Year in the Forest Life.

Thus Ends the Vana Parva to the Summary Study of the Great Epic, Mahabharata.

## Chapter Commentary

This chapter contains another example of how the Pandavas were saved by the mercy of Lord Krishna. Durvasa Muni had come with the intention of cursing the Pandavas, which would have surely put impediments on their already difficult life in the forest. Draupadi simply thought of the Lord with intense remembrance and the Lord came there personally to save them. When Lord Krishna ate a morsel of food from Draupadi's pot, the bellies of Durvasa Muni and his 60,000 disciples filled up so much so that they could not return to Yudhisthira for a meal. What was available to Draupadi is available today by intense remembrance of the transcendental form of the Lord. Lord Krishna will always give us protection if we simply remember Him. Although He may not manifest His form to us, He is always present within our hearts, and by our remembering Him, He carries what we are lacking. This is one of the great advantages of deity worship. By practice of sadana bhakti, we see the form of Lord Krishna every morning, and this gradually awakens constant remembrance of the Lord, which will intensify during times of distress. The more we remember Lord Krishna, the more our cycle of birth and death comes to an end.

This chapter also contains another example of how saintly Yudhisthira was. When Yudhisthira was being benedicted by Yamaraja, he could have chosen Bhima or Arjuna, thinking of an eminent battle with Duryodhana. Nakula or Sahadeva could not have helped as much as the greatly powerful Bhima or Arjuna. Yudhisthira was not thinking in those terms. He was thinking that since Pandu had two wives, one son should still be living from both wives. Yudhisthira never thought in terms of profit for himself.

Conversely, Duryodhana, wanted to perform a Rajasuya sacrifice to make sure his position as king of the world was secure. He was always thinking in a materially motivated way. He never thought of the mercy of the Lord. When Yamaraja saw that Yudhisthira did not care for any profit for himself, he brought all the brothers back to life. Our positions in life do not depend on profit calculation but on the mercy of the Lord.

irata Parva

## Chapter One

### Plans for the Thirteenth Year

It was now the beginning of the thirteenth year of their exile, and the Pandavas had to choose some place of residence where they would not be discovered. Yudhisthira inquired from Arjuna about any country where they might reside for the last year of exile. Arjuna replied, "There are many beautiful places to choose from. I can suggest Panchala, Chedi, Matsya, Dvaraka, Shalva, Avanti, Kalinga and Videha. Out of all of these, I suggest the kingdom of the Matsyas. The monarch there is Virata, who is a virtuous King, powerful and liked by all. Of course, there are many other cities that are also suitable, but I think that city is the only place where we will not be discovered."

Yudhisthira replied, "I agree with this proposal that we go to the kingdom of Virata for our thirteenth year."

"O god among men," Arjuna inquired, "what service will you perform in Virata's kingdom having lived all these years as a king?"

"O sons of the Kuru race," Yudhisthira replied "listen to what service I will perform in Virata's kingdom. Presenting myself as a brahmana, Kanka by name, I shall become the advisor of the King. Expert in dice and chess, I shall entertain the King and his followers. Bhima, how will you disguise yourself from the spies of Duryodhana?"

"I intend to present myself before the King as a cook," Bhima replied, "bearing the name Vallabha. I will profess that I am skilled in the culinary art, and I shall prepare very delicious food for the King. For the king's pleasure I shall wrestle with elephants and strong men alike. I will tell the King that formerly I was the wrestler and cook for King Yudhisthira. Thus, O King, I shall maintain myself."

"O Partha," Yudhisthira inquired, "how will you disguise yourself upon entering the kingdom of Virata?"

"O lord of the earth," Arjuna replied, "I shall declare in front of the King that I am a eunuch, one of the neuter sex. In order to hide the bow marks on my arms, I shall wear bangles. I will decorate my ears with brilliant rings and braid my hair down my back. I shall, O King, appear as one of the third sex, Brihannala by name. I shall also instruct the women of Virata's palace in singing and delightful styles of dancing. I will tell the King I lived as a maidservant to Draupadi, the queen of the Pandavas."

"O heroic Nakula," Yudhisthira inquired, "you are deserving of every luxury. What position will you assume while living in Virata's kingdom?"

"Under the name Granthika," Nakula replied, "I shall become the keeper of Virata's horses. I have thorough knowledge of this art, and I am skillful in tending horses. O bull of the Bharata race, I will tell the King that formerly I was employed by Yudhisthira in taking care of the horses in his stables."

Yudhisthira then questioned Sahadeva, "How, O Sahadeva, will you keep yourself hidden in the kingdom of Virata for this last year of exile?"

"I will take care of the King's cows," Sahadeva replied. "I am skilled in milking cows, how to tame them, and take their history. No one will be able to recognize me, and I will be very pleasing to the King. I will go by the name Tantripal."

Yudhisthira then turned to his queen and inquired, "O dearest Draupadi, how will you be able to hide your beauty for this period of one year. You have only known garlands, perfumes and the finest clothing. How will you disguise yourself in this last year of our exile?"

"I will present myself before the queen as a maidservant," Draupadi replied, "and my name will be Sairindhri, skilled in dressing hair. I shall serve Sudeshna, the King's favorite wife, and thus I shall pass my days in concealment."

"Let those who are with us," Yudhisthira ordered, "the brahmanas, the maidservants, the charioteers with the chariots, and the cooks go to Drupada's kingdom and inform him, 'We have been left by the Pandavas in the Dvaitavana forest, and we do not know where they have gone.'" After giving this order and bidding farewell to Dhaumya and the others, the Pandavas set out for the kingdom of Virata.

When they arrived near the outskirts of the kingdom, Yudhisthira questioned Arjuna, "O Dhananjaya, where shall we leave our weapons for this one year period? If we enter this city armed, the citizens will become alarmed. Also this bow Gandiva is known to everyone, and if we are discovered, we will surely have to enter the forest for another twelve years."

"Just on top of this hill is a Shami tree that is not easily accessible," Arjuna replied. "If we leave our weapons in an animal skin on top of that tree, then we can enter the city free from anxiety." The brothers then climbed the hill and piled their weapons at the bottom of the tree. The weapons were then wrapped in an animal skin, and hung from the strongest tree branch. On being asked by the local men what the corpse was, the Pandavas told them that it was the dead body of their mother who was one hundred and eighty years old. The Pandavas then entered the city of Virata. Yudhisthira kept five names other than the ones they would identify themselves by. In cases of emergency they would refer to themselves as Jaya, Jayanta, Vijaya, Jayatsena, and Jayatvala.

As Yudhisthira was entering the Virata's capital, he began to offer his prayers to the goddess Durga and asked her for protection in this last year of exile. The goddess was pleased with his prayers and appeared before him offering benedictions, "O mighty armed King, listen to my words. After having slain the ranks of the Kauravas in battle, you will be successful in regaining the throne. You and your brothers shall again rule this earth planet with all its kingdoms. By my grace you will be victorious, and during this thirteenth year, you will not be discovered by the spies of Duryodhana." Having said this much, the goddess disappeared.

Yudhisthira then entered Virata's imperial court at the time when the King was seated with his counselors. As Yudhisthira was approaching the throne, Virata could see that this was no ordinary person. In the dress of a brahmana Yudhisthira informed the King, "O great King, know me to be a brahmana, who has lost all his possessions and come to you seeking sustenance. My name is Kanka, and I was previously an adviser to the great King Yudhisthira. Since that pious King has gone to the forest, I have now come to you for shelter."

"I will grant you whatever benediction you desire," Virata replied. "You appear to be capable of ruling the kingdom of the Matsyas. By your demeanor it appears that I should remain a servant to you. You appear to be a demigod who deserves a kingdom."

"Grant me the benediction," Yudhisthira replied, "that whoever I defeat at dice will not be able to keep their wager. I also do not want to argue with low born people I may defeat at the game."

"I shall certainly kill anyone who displeases you," King Virata replied, "or I shall banish him from this kingdom. Let the assembled subjects listen to this order. Kanka is as much a lord of this kingdom as I myself. He shall ride the same chariot that I ride, and eat the same food that I eat. We shall make decisions about the future of the Kingdom together. He need not fear anything as long as he lives in my kingdom."

On another day there came to the court, Bhima, walking with a playful gait like a lion, and holding a cooking ladle and a spoon. He was also holding a spotless stainless steel sword. When Virata saw Bhima, he questioned him in wonder, "Who is this youth that walks like a lion. He is radiant like the rising sun, and his handsome features are like the heavenly denizens."

Bowing before the King, Bhima informed the him of his identity, "O foremost of Kings, I am a chef, Vallabha by name. I am skilled in culinary art and also in wrestling. Will you please employ me in your kitchen? I was formerly King Yudhisthira's cook, and he used to relish the delicacies that I prepared. I can also wrestle and fight with lions and tigers for your pleasure."

"I will offer you benedictions," Virata replied. "You do not appear to be a chef but the emperor of this entire earth. However, if you desire, you may be the head cook

in my kitchen." Thus appointed by the King, Bhima soon became a favorite to Virata who relished the meals he prepared.

After Bhima had been established in the king's court, Draupadi entered the city of Virata. She wore dirty clothes, and tried to hide her beautiful black hair by covering it with a cloth. Her eyes and smile were charming to anyone who saw them. Out of curiosity, the women approached her and asked who she was seeking. She told them that she was formerly a maidservant to a queen, and she was looking for shelter. When the women saw her extreme beauty, they doubted that she was telling the truth. While she was wandering here and there, Virata's queen, Sudeshna saw her and questioned her, "O beautiful one, who are you, and what are you seeking?"

"O foremost queen," Draupadi replied, "I am Sairindhri, and my desire is to serve you, and see to your comforts."

"I cannot believe that you are a maidservant," the queen said. "Your beauty is unexcelled in this world. Your body is well developed, and you appear to be the goddess of fortune herself. Are you an Apsara, a Gandharva or Indra's queen? Please tell me where you have come from."

"I tell you truthfully that I am a maidservant," Draupadi replied, "Formerly I served Krishna's favorite queen Satyabhama, and also the wife of the Pandavas, Draupadi. I wander about alone earning good food and dress."

Hearing Draupadi's explanation, Sudeshna said, "If the King sees your beauty, he will surely renounce me and accept you as his only queen. What man who sees your faultless features could resist you? How shall I protect you in my court?"

"O fair lady," Draupadi replied, "neither Virata nor any other person will be able to touch me for I am married to five Gandharva husbands, who are the sons of a King. They always protect me. It is my husbands' wish that I should serve only such persons who will give me food not touched by another, or persons who do not demand that I wash their feet. Any man who attempts to seduce me meets death that very night."

"If you have told me the truth," Sudeshna said, "then I will offer you service in my chambers, for you bring delight to my heart. You will not have to eat another's food or touch another's feet."

Then dressed like a cowherdsman and carrying a staff, Sahadeva entered Virata's capital. He came to the cowpens of Virata, and when the King saw him, he marveled at his stature. He questioned him, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

"I am a vaishya," Sahadeva replied, "Tantripal by name. I was formerly employed by Emperor Yudhishthira, and used to tend his cows. Now that he has been exiled to the forest, I wish to be employed in taking care of your cows."

"Your stature indicates a monarch able to rule this earth with all its seas and islands," Virata said. "However, I have one hundred thousand cows that you may take charge of. They are divided into distinct herds and are of the best breed." After receiving permission from the King, Sahadeva took charge of the cows.

Next came to the city, Arjuna, who was wearing the ornaments of a woman. He wore jeweled earrings and bracelets made of conch, overlaid with gold. His hair was braided like that of a woman. When Virata saw that bull among men dressed in this fashion, he was astonished. He spoke to Arjuna, "You are like a demigod, for power and beauty emanates from every part of your body, and you walk with a lion's gait. Certainly, you are not a eunuch as you appear to be dressed. I have grown old, and you are a fit person to inherit my kingdom."

"I sing, dance and play on musical instruments," Arjuna replied. "My name is Brihannala, and I have no father or mother. I will prove to be a good teacher to your daughter, Uttara."

"I will grant your desire," King Virata said, "but it does not seem the proper position for you. You seem to have the capabilities to rule this entire world." The King then had Arjuna examined, and when it was learned that actually he was impotent, the King sent Arjuna into his daughter's chambers to give instructions in dancing.

There then came to Virata's capital, Nakula, the last of the Pandavas to enter the city. When the King saw him, he summoned Nakula and inquired, "You appear to be a great warrior, and your handsome features are divine. Please tell me who you are, and where you have come from?"

"O King," Nakula replied, "my name is Granthika, and I used to serve Emperor Yudhishthira by taking care of his horses. I am familiar with the mood of horses, and I know how to tame them. I also know how to treat their diseases and keep them from becoming diseased. Please allow me to take care of your horses."

"Whatever horses are in my domain," Virata replied, "I put under your charge, but this office does not suit you. You look as much a King as I do. Your presence here pleases me as much as if the great King Yudhishthira were present himself."

When the disguised Pandavas were thus respectfully received by King Virata, they began to dwell in that kingdom without being detected by anyone. Even though the spies of Duryodhana came to that region, they could not find the Pandavas, because they were protected by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna Himself. Thus the spies of Duryodhana were deluded by the external potency of the Lord, and they could not recognize the Pandavas even though they were standing right in front of them.

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Virata Parva, Entitled, Plans for the Thirteenth Year.

## Chapter Commentary

One may ask why the Pandavas took so much effort to remain concealed when they were blessed by demigods such as Yamaraja and the goddess Durga. The answer is that a devotee is always humble and never proud. Yamaraja had benedicted them they they could walk the earth in their very same forms and dress, and not be discovered. So why bother trying to hide? The Pandavas business was to remain concealed for the thirteenth year, and therefore, they followed their plan despite being benedicted by the devas. The Pandavas never thwarted their benedictions.

One may also ask why Yudhisthira prayed to the goddess Durga for protection from being detected. To facilitate one's service, one may pray to the demigods for help. What was Yudhisthira's service? Lord Krishna wanted him to reign as emperor of the entire world. The last year of exile had to be passed incognito before Yudhisthira could accept the throne. The Gopis prayed to the Goddess Durga to have Lord Krishna as their husband, and Yudhisthira prayed for assistance in his service to Lord Krishna. Yudhisthira never considered the Goddess Durga supreme.

## Chapter Two

### Kichaka

The Pandavas resided for three months in the kingdom of Virata, serving each others demands and remaining undetected. In the fourth month of the thirteenth year of exile a grand festival was planned, and wrestlers and athletes came from all parts of the country. They were strongly built, and their thick necks resembled those of a lion. They had all won many contests in the presence of great kings, and they so hoped to win the competition in Virata's kingdom. Amongst the wrestlers was one who excelled the rest, because he was taller and stronger than all others. He defeated anyone who came before him, and this disappointed the other wrestlers.

Not tolerating the prowess of this wrestler, King Virata called for his cook, Vallabha and ordered him to fight in the competition. Bhima was a little reluctant for fear of being discovered, but he couldn't disobey the king's orders. Bhima approached the arena to the delight of the assembled crowd. The wrestler's name was Jimuta and was compared to the demon Vritrasura in prowess. They faced each other like a couple of angry elephants. Each opponent was able to pick the other up and throw him on the ground. There was fighting, pushing, shoving, and embracing; all

executed with great expertise. Both looked equally qualified, and both were hopeful of victory. They kicked each other and dug their nails into each others body. Their heads collided like two boulders making a great sound. Those two broad-chested, long-armed heroes pulled and pressed, and whirled and hurled each other and struck each other with their knees, expressing their disgust for one another. They began to fight with bare arms which were like iron spiked maces. At last the invincible and mighty-armed Bhima, the slayer of his enemies, shouting aloud, seized Jimuta by his sturdy arms, and lifted him up. He began to whirl him round and round, to the great astonishment of the audience. And having whirled him around a hundred times till he was insensible, the stout-armed Vikrodara dashed him to his death on the ground. When the famed Jimuta was killed in this way, Virata and the Matsyas were very pleased and congratulated him. The King then caused him to fight with the other wrestlers and when all were defeated, he ordered Bhima to fight with lions and tigers, and also elephants. Witnessing the unearthly power of Bhima, King Virata was pleased and bestowed upon him all kinds of wealth.

Ten months had now passed in the Virata's capital, and the Pandavas were living peacefully without being discovered. One day, toward the end of the year, the commander in chief of Virata's army, Kichaka, returned to the city. He seemed invincible and had conquered many lands including the powerful Trigartas. His sister, Sudeshna, was the King's wife. It so happened that will going to visit his sister he saw the attractive Draupadi in Sudeshna's garden, and he was struck with love. He approached his sister and asked who the beautiful girl was. Sudeshna told him that she was her maidservant. Kichaka said, "This woman has the beauty of a celestial Apsara and is fit to decorate my palace. She is surely the cure for my ailing heart. Certainly she is ill-suited to serve you, and therefore, she may rule over me and whatever is mine."

Kichaka then left his sister and approached Draupadi like a jackal in the forest attacking a lioness. He flattered her with sweet words, "Who are you and who is your husband? You appear to be a goddess like Laksmi or perhaps a heavenly maiden. Every part of your body is perfectly formed, and your speech is just like nectar. Upon seeing your uncommon features, a burning desire has arisen in my heart. If you become my queen, I will give you all the opulence that you deserve. Give up this lowly life of a maidservant and become my wife. Kuvera's opulence awaits you, and I will serve you like a slave."

Hearing this marriage proposal, Draupadi replied, "A maidservant of a low caste does not deserve to become the wife of a king. Besides I am already married, and therefore, you should not let adultery enter your mind for it does not befit the conduct of a great king. You should take delight only in your own queens and not in the wives of others. This leads only to calamity."

Conquered by lust and losing control over his senses, forgetting the reactions to sinful activities, the wicked Kichaka again tried to seduce Draupadi with his words, "You should not neglect me for I have come under your influence. Try to understand that I am the real lord of this kingdom, and there is no one on earth who can defeat

me. I excel all in handsome features, strength, youth and prosperity. Upon becoming my wife, I will confer upon you all my kingdom. Therefore accept me and enjoy the opulence you deserve."

When Kichaka proposed again with these lusty words, the chaste daughter of King Drupada replied, "Do not act so foolishly, and do not throw away your life. Know that I am protected, and you cannot force me to be your wife. I have five Gandharva husbands, and if they are provoked, they will certainly kill you. Therefore, do not unnecessarily cause your own death. You are desiring an object that can never be yours. You are like a child laying in the lap of its mother and crying for the moon. Give up this sinful idea of taking another's wife and save yourself from a hellish reaction."

Kichaka could not be swayed from his determination. He went to his sister and requested her, "You should act in such a way that I may win this woman for my wife. I am craving a great lust for her, and I can think of nothing else."

Sudeshna offered a solution, "When the next festival comes, I will request from you some of the best wines. At that time I will send Sairindhri to your palace. When she has arrived, you may speak to her in solitude about this matter, and perhaps she may become inclined toward you."

As it so happened when the next festival day came, Sudeshna approached Draupadi and ordered her, "Get up my maidservant, and make your way to my brother's palace. I am thirsty for the finest wine, and it is he only who can satisfy my thirst."

"O princess," Draupadi replied, "I shall not be able to go to Kichaka's palace for he is shameless. I cannot lead a lustful life, unchaste to my husbands. Do you remember the conditions upon which I agreed to become your maidservant? The foolish Kichaka, upon seeing me, will try to violate my chastity. Therefore do not send me, for you have many others who can go in my place."

"Kichaka is not one to molest women," The queen said. "This I can promise you. Now go quickly, and do as I ask. I do not want to hear another word."

Draupadi was forced by circumstances to follow her order. She started to make her way to Kichaka's palace, taking with her a golden vessel for carrying wine. She began to mentally pray to the demigods to help her, and answering her prayers, the sun god sent one very powerful Rakshasa to guard her. He remained invisible and could not be seen by anyone. When Draupadi entered the palace of Kichaka, that wicked person rose from his seat and came to her. "O princess," He said, "today is auspicious because you have become the mistress of my house. I will bring you the finest dresses as well as jewelry set with rubies, diamonds, emeralds and sapphires. Come sit with me and enjoy life. I have a beautiful bed prepared for you that we both can enjoy."

Hearing this licentious proposal, Draupadi replied, "I have been sent here by the queen to bring wine back to her palace. Please fill this vessel for I must leave soon."

As Draupadi began to leave the palace, Kichaka grabbed her arm. Draupadi, looking like an angered cobra, rebuked him, "I have never been unfaithful to my husbands even at heart. O wicked person, I shall see you beaten and lying dead on the ground." Kichaka then seized her by her upper garment as she attempted to run away. As Kichaka attempted to bring her near him, she was unable to tolerate it, and slapped him to the ground. She then ran to Virata's imperial court where she hoped to receive protection from Yudhisthira and the King. As she was running into the court, Kichaka again grabbed her and kicked her in the side in the presence of the King. The invisible Rakshasa, who was protecting Draupadi, then gave Kichaka a shove, and overpowered by that force, he fell down to the ground senseless. Both Bhima and Yudhisthira witnessed the outrage against Draupadi. Bhima, desiring to finish Kichaka's life, gnashed his teeth, and his forehead was covered with sweat. Fire appeared in his eyes, as he rose from his chair next to the King. However, before he could take another step, he was grabbed by Yudhisthira who was bent on keeping the disguise for the last month of exile. He ordered Bhima, "Go look for trees to use as cooking fuel. Take your passions out on them."

Draupadi then pleaded with the King, "Alas, this Suta's son has kicked the wife of those who will take his life for this insult. He has offended the wife of those whose prowess knows no bounds. Alas, this son of a Suta has kicked the proud and beloved wife of those who, although in disguise, always grant protection to those who ask for it. Why do those heroes not take action when their wife is insulted in this manner. Oh, where is the wrath of my husbands who cannot stand to see their wife insulted by this wicked wretch. O King, why do you sit there and allow this injustice to go on. Your behavior is like a coward and does not befit your court. These assistants of yours have the same mentality."

When the Matsya King heard Draupadi's rebuking words, he instructed her, "Whatever happened to you has happened out of our sight. Not knowing the real circumstances, how can I administer justice impartially?" However, when the King's counselors heard what had happened, they endorsed Draupadi and chastised Kichaka.

Yudhisthira then advised Draupadi, "Do not stay here, O Sairindhri, but retire to the apartments of the queen. Your Gandharva husbands do not consider this an occasion for manifesting their wrath, for they have not come to your aid. In the future your husbands will fulfill your desire and take the life of him who has harmed you."

Hearing Yudhisthira's advice Draupadi replied, "Those husbands of mine to whom I am wedded, I think, are kind. The oldest of them is addicted to dice and is liable to be oppressed by all." After saying these words, Draupadi ran from the palace to the quarters of Sudeshna. When the Queen saw her weeping, she inquired what had happened, and Draupadi told her everything. The queen said, "I will today order my brother's death if it pleases you." Draupadi replied, "There are others who will kill him. For this wrong he will have to enter Yamaraja's abode."

Draupadi then went to her quarters and thought of how Virata's general could be killed. She reflected for a while and thought of her husband, Bhima. After dark when everyone was asleep, Draupadi made her way to the place where her lord was sleeping. Draupadi entered her husband's quarters intending to provoke Bhima to action, "How can you sleep while that wretched Kichaka lives. Are you not affected by the sinful act he committed against me?" Upon embracing her husband she said, "Arise, arise! Why do you sleep there like a dead person. Only a dead person could tolerate the wrong that has happened to me today."

Upon hearing Draupadi's distraught words, Bhima rose up from his bed half dazed and inquired, "Please tell me why you have come here in the dead of night. I will accomplish what ever you want, but it must be done before others awaken from sleep. I alone, O Krishna, am able to deliver you from the suffering you feel."

"Do you remember," Draupadi asked, "when that monstrous Duhshasana tried to disrobe me in the assembly hall at Hastinapura? I had to tolerate that insult while you elder brother gambled away our kingdom as well as myself. I also had to tolerate the attack by the sinful Jayadratha, and today I had to tolerate another insult, even while my husbands looked on. Is it that all my husbands are cowards? I cannot go to Yudhisthira for help, nor can Arjuna help me. Nakula and Sahadeva will only act according to the desires of Yudhisthira. You alone love me, and therefore, I have come to you. I have been suffering all these months, serving as a menial servant to this queen. Look at my hands that are filled with callouses from grinding sandal paste for that woman." Draupadi then showed Bhima her delicate hands that were not fit for menial work.

Bhima was aroused to action, and encouraged her, "After seeing what happened today, I would have slaughtered the entire house of the Matsyas if it had not been for the restraining glance of Yudhisthira. I can understand his intentions. The thought of our being deprived of our kingdom, and the thought that the unscrupulous Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Karna and Shakuni are still living is burning my heart like a javelin. O beautiful lady, do not sacrifice our disguise, and try to subdue your wrath. If King Yudhisthira were to hear your reprimand, he would give up his life, as would Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Remember the hardships Sita endured on behalf of Rama, and also remember the outcome of such patience. There is now only half a month left till the exile is finished. If you wait till that time, I promise you I will mutilate the body of the wicked Kichaka."

Draupadi's anger only increased as Bhima tried to pacify her. She then prodded him further, "This sinful Kichaka will not be satisfied with what has happened today. He will come again to fulfill his lusty desires. I told him that my five Gandharva husbands would protect me, but when they did not come, surely he will not think twice to approach me again. If tomorrow the sun shines on the head of this Kichaka, I will take poison and kill myself rather than see that sinful person's face." Then crying, Draupadi pressed her face on the chest of her lord. Bhima tried to console Draupadi as much as possible, but an anger then arose in his heart at the thought of the wicked Kichaka. Bhima then promised his dear wife, "I will do as you say. I will kill Kichaka and all his friends. Near here is the dancing hall that the King has

erected for the use of dancing girls. It is used during the day and vacant at night. There in that hall is an excellent bed. Tell Kichaka to come there in the middle of the night. While you are talking with him make sure that no one sees you." Feeling satisfied that she was protected, Draupadi then returned to her quarters.

In the morning the vain Kichaka approached Draupadi and spoke to her the following words, "In the presence of the King I threw you down and kicked you, but still he did not act. Virata is the Matsya king in name only. I am in truth the real monarch for it is I who protect and guard this kingdom. Come and be my wife, and I will give you all the opulence you deserve. I will become your slave; do not deny me. Let our union take place."

"O Kichaka," Draupadi replied, "I will fulfill your lusty desires, but only under my conditions. Neither your brothers nor your friends should know of our secret meeting, for I am in great fear of being detected by my husbands. Just near here is a dancing hall recently erected by King Virata. It is vacant at night. Come there in the middle of the night so that our love affair will not be known by others."

"Afflicted by the god of love," Kichaka said, "I will come alone so that your five husbands will not know of our love affair."

Reflecting on the conversation with Draupadi, Kichaka spent the rest of the day as if it were many years. The stupid Kichaka did not know that death was on his head. Deprived of his senses by lust, he spent his time adorning his person with valuable oils, the finest silken clothes, garlands and many valuable ornaments. Thinking of Draupadi's beauty, he was like a burning wick that was about to expire.

While Kichaka was preparing himself for his evening escapade, Draupadi went to the kitchen and informed Bhima of everything that had taken place. Bhima promised to kill the vile Suta's son that night in the dancing hall. Draupadi then retired to her apartments. When nightfall came Bhima disguised himself and went to the dancing hall, waiting under the bed covers for the sinful Kichaka. He was like a lion waiting for a deer. Kichaka then entered the dark hall and came to the bed that was in one corner of that room. As he approached the bed, he could see that someone was lying there, and he took the person to be Draupadi. Kneeling next to the bed, he lustfully spoke to who he thought was Draupadi, "O beautiful lady, I have already arranged all kinds of wealth for your pleasure. A beautiful mansion awaits you as well as a hundred maidservants. Gold, silver, jewels, and whatever you desire is at your disposal. After arranging all these opulences for your enjoyment, I have come to you. Upon seeing me leave the palace, the women have commented, 'There is none in this world equal to you in handsome features and dress.'"

Hearing the seductive words of Kichaka, Bhima imitated Draupadi's voice, "It is very good that you are handsome, and it is very good that you praise yourself so much. I think, however, that you have not experienced power of my hands. You are skilled in the art of love making and are a favorite of women. There is none like you in the world." Saying this and laughing, Bhima rose up and roared, "You diabolic wretch, I

shall, today, mutilate your body for kicking my wife. When you are killed, my wife will feel satisfaction, and we, also, will live in peace."

After saying this, Bhima seized Kichaka by his beautifully combed hair, which was adorned with garlands. Kichaka quickly grabbed Bhima's hands, and there ensued a hand to hand combat like that of two powerful elephants. Kichaka was furious and embarrassed, and attacked Bhima with all his potency. Bhima, however, did not waver a step. Locked in each other's tight grip and dragging each other, they fought like two bulls for the sake of a cow. Bhima then squeezed Kichaka with all his might, but Kichaka threw Bhima to the ground. Those mighty warriors fought on, and the crashing of their arms sounded like bamboos splitting. Vikrodara threw Kichaka down with great force. He tossed him about by his arms till he grew weak and began to tremble. Despite his weakness, Kichaka attacked Bhima, kicked him with his knees and brought him down to the ground. Overthrown by the powerful Kichaka, Bhima rose up again like Yamaraja after defeating his enemies.

And thus the powerful Bhima and the Suta wrestled in that great hall in the middle of the night. They thundered at each other and shouted abusive words. As they moved gracefully around each other, the whole building began to tremble. Bhima hit Kichaka on the chest with all his power, but the mighty Kichaka did not move an inch. However, this was all the Suta could withstand. Kichaka was growing feeble, and seeing his faltering condition, Bhima forcibly embraced Kichaka and began to press hard. Kichaka could not breathe and Bhima, seeing him exhausted, began to whirl him around till he began to scream frightfully like a broken trumpet. In order to pacify Krishna's (Draupadi) wrath, Vikrodara began to squeeze Kichaka's throat while kicking his body with his knees. When all the bones in Kichaka's body were broken, he lay there deprived of life. His eyes were still rolling and his body was trembling. Bhima, emotional with intense hatred, then thrust Kichaka's arms, legs, and head into his body. Crushing Kichaka in this astonishing way, he reduced him to a ball of flesh. The invincible Bhima then revealed to Draupadi Kichaka's mutilated body. He lit a torch and showed her the ball of flesh. "Come, O princess of Panchala," he said, "and see what has become of this immoral person." He then kicked Kichaka's body, showing his wife the reaction that will come to those who insult her. He then said, "O my wife, those who will harm you shall meet the same end as Kichaka has met." Bhima then left Draupadi and went back to his quarters.

Draupadi went to the door of the dancing hall and awakened all the nearby people with the sound of her voice. When the people came with lit torches and saw Kichaka's mutilated body, they exclaimed, "Where are his arms and where is his head?"

Draupadi announced to all assembled, "Behold Kichaka's mutilated body! He tried to violate my chastity, but my five Gandharva husbands came here and killed him in the same way a lion kills a deer."

Soon all the brothers and relatives of Kichaka arrived, and when they saw Kichaka's mangled body lying there like a tortoise, the hairs on their body stood on end out of fear. Kichaka's brothers then cast their angry eyes upon Draupadi who was nearby

leaning against a pillar. "Let this unchaste woman be killed for causing our brother's death," they said. "Since he wanted her for his wife, let her be cremated along with our brother so that in the next life all his desires will be fulfilled." Kichaka's brothers forcibly grabbed Draupadi and took her into the presence of the King. They requested Virata, "It is for her sake that Kichaka has lost his life. Let her, therefore, be cremated along with him. It is your obligation to allow this to take place since he was your commander in chief." Virata immediately gave his assent to the proposal, remembering the victorious battles Kichaka had won for him.

Binding Draupadi to the same palanquin as Kichaka's, Kichaka's brothers proceeded to the burial grounds. Draupadi cried aloud exclaiming, "Oh, Jaya, Jayanta, Vijaya, Jayatsena and Jayatvala! Listen to my words! The Sutas are taking me away. Let my Gandharva husbands come immediately and save my life!"

Hearing the distraught calls of Draupadi, Bhima arose from his bed and exclaimed, "I have heard your words, O timid lady, and you have nothing to fear at the Sutas' hands!" Bhima then left the palace and jumped over the city walls by means of a tree. He then rushed to cremation grounds and beheld a huge tree, forty feet in height. He uprooted it, stripped it of branches, and placed it on his shoulders. He then rushed towards the Sutas in the same way Yamaraja rushes at his enemies with mace in hand. Seeing Bhima running toward them with that upraised tree, Kichaka's brothers, numbering one hundred and five, became panic stricken. They immediately left Draupadi and ran toward the city. However, they were not quick enough, for Bhima pounded thirty brothers into the ground with several blows of the tree. With several more swings he knocked the remaining brothers into shapeless masses. He thus dispatched them all to Yamaraja's abode by means of that tree. Setting Draupadi free, Bhima consoled her, "This is what happens to those who have offended you. Return to the city. You will no longer have any fear. I, myself, will return to Virata's kitchen by another path."

When the citizens of Virata's capital learned what had happened, they were horror stricken. After Draupadi again entered the city, they fled in different directions. Some went to Virata and told him that Sairindhri's five Gandharva husbands had slain Kichaka's one hundred and five brothers, and that they now lay on the ground like huge mountain peaks. For the protection of the city, they asked that she not be allowed to enter. The King then called for Sudeshna and ordered her, "Tell Sairindhri that she may go to whatever province she likes, but she can no longer stay here." He then sent the queen back to her apartments. When Draupadi arrived, the queen gave her the King's order, "The King has ordered you to leave the kingdom. You are undoubtedly unparalleled in beauty to any other woman on earth. You will be the object of lusty desire by all men. Your husbands are exceedingly wrathful."

"O beautiful lady," Draupadi replied, "Let the King allow me to live here for thirteen days more. Without doubt my husbands will then take me away, and you will certainly be benefitted. I will not leave the palace until that time." Agreeing with the desires of her maidservant, Sudeshna allowed Draupadi to remain in the palace unseen by others.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Virata Parva, Entitled, Kichaka.

### Chapter Commentary

Here we see the reaction to adulterous activity. All the scriptures of the world say that one should not commit adultery. In the Islamic tradition if a man is not satisfied with one wife, he may take up to four. In the Christian tradition only one wife is allowed. In the days of Vedic culture, if a man was not satisfied with one wife, he could take as many wives as he could support. But in all bona fide scriptures adultery is forbidden, because the reaction to such activity is severe. One has to suffer in Yamaraja's abode after this life. Sex life is the binding force in this world, and only in the animal species can one have unlimited sex life. Those desiring unlimited sex are born in those species that facilitate such activity, like a rabbit, monkey or pigeon. Therefore, in the human form of life, sex is regulated with the idea that it will be eventually given up. As long as one is addicted to gross sex desire, he must be reborn in this world.

The Vedic system trains a person to be free from sex desire. First a person is trained to be a brahmachary or celibate student. If the student cannot maintain such a vow, he is allowed to marry. When the householder reaches the age of 50, he should become a Vanaprastha. This is a time when the children are grown up, and the household couple are free to travel to different places of pilgrimage. They take a vow of celibacy. When the man reaches the age of 75, he should take sannyasa and completely devote his time to spiritual activities. The wife then lives with the eldest son and trains the grandchildren in spiritual life. In this way the Vedic culture would gradually purify a person of sex desire.

Kichaka was fortunate to receive his reaction immediately rather than wait till the next life. Unfortunately, people today don't believe in next life, and therefore they commit all kinds of forbidden activities for which they suffer in this life and the next. People don't believe in the law of karma or the next life, so the suffering will continue until we learn the hard way to follow God's law.

## Chapter Three

### The Trigartas attack the Kingdom of Virata

While the Pandavas were secretly living in the kingdom of Virata, the spies of Duryodhana searched intently all the kingdoms and provinces trying to find the sons of Pandu, and not being successful, they returned to Hastinapura. They entered the King's imperial court, and in the assembly of great warriors made the following submission, "Dear King, we have searched the entire earth, but nowhere could we find the Pandavas. After leaving the Dvaitavana forest, they have disappeared. We followed their charioteers and servants to the city of Dvaraka, but nowhere could we find them in the city of the Yadavas. We followed their footprints from the forest of Dvaitavana, but the path disappeared, and it appears they have perished without leaving a mark. O bull of the Bharata race, we have not been able to discover their path or their present abode. We now wait for further instructions concerning Pandu's sons. During our search for the Pandavas, we have gathered one interesting bit of information that you will like to hear. King Virata's commander, Kichaka, by whom the Trigarta's have been repeatedly routed with force, has now been killed violently along with his one hundred and five brothers. They have been slain by five Gandharvas during the hours of darkness. Having heard this delightful news about the position of the enemy, we have come here quickly to inform you."

Having listened to the report of his spies, King Duryodhana reflected for a while and addressed the assembled Kings, "It is difficult to understand exactly where the sons of Pandu have hidden themselves during this last year. The one year period has now almost expired, and if they are not discovered, they will return like enraged elephants or serpents spitting poison. They will inflict heavy casualties upon the Kuru host. Therefore, we should again send spies to the different provinces to discover their whereabouts. Certainly this time our spies will be able to uncover their hiding place, forcing them to enter the forest for another twelve years."

Hearing Duryodhana's opinion, Karna spoke, "Other spies, who are more qualified and intelligent, should seek out the Pandavas. Let them examine every person at places where people take shelter, such as holy places, towns, villages, and even the forests. We should send out spies in greater number."

When Karna had given his counsel, the scheming Duhshasana spoke in that assembly, "Give the spies advance payment, and once more send them out. Karna's recommendation has our full approval. It is my belief, however, that the Pandavas will not be discovered. Perhaps, they have gone to the other side of the ocean, or perhaps, they have been devoured in the forest by fierce beasts of prey. Therefore, O prince of the Kuru race, relieve yourself of all anxiety, and rule the kingdom as your own property."

When Duhshasana had spoken, Drona advised the assembled Kings, "Persons like the Pandavas never experience pain or death. The Pandavas are saintly, virtuous,

moral, learned in the Vedas, sense controlled, and are always truthful. They will never perish under any circumstances. They associate only with the most pious men, and therefore, if we are to discover them, the spies should search those regions where the demigods and saintly persons reside."

Then the Kuru grandsire, Bhishma, who was conversant with Vedic knowledge, spoke to the assembly, "Drona's words of wisdom have my approval. The Pandavas can never experience misfortune at anytime. They are reservoirs of all good qualities and are always subordinate to the Lord of the universe, Keshava. Where is the question of harm coming to them? Wherever the Pandavas have gone, that place has become prosperous in all respects. Wherever Yudhisthira resides there will be Vedic hymns chanted at all times; the clouds will pour abundant rain; the breezes will blow cool; the rice will be the best quality; the fruits will be full of juice; the garlands will be full of scent; the cows will be numerous and happy. Everyone will follow his respective duty, and everyone will be contented, cheerful, pure in conduct and free from any misery. Wherever Yudhisthira resides people will be inclined to charity, inclined toward religion, and inclined toward doing good to others. The wise Yudhisthira is living in those regions whose characteristics I have described. Reflecting on what I have said, you must quickly execute a plan that will benefit your cause."

After the great devotee, Bhishma, had spoken, the King of the Trigartas, Susharma, who owned innumerable chariots and who was a great warrior, then spoke to the assembled princes, "Taking advantage of Kichaka's death, I suggest we attack Virata's kingdom. Formerly the King was aided by this commander in chief, who was wicked and powerful. I was defeated many times in battle by Kichaka, who had attained worldly fame for his prowess. Now that he has been killed, we should take advantage of the situation, and subjugate the Matsyas. Using our combined forces, let us steal his wealth which he had hoarded for so long. Let us steal his cows, and bring King Virata under our control. We will then live peacefully in our kingdom."

Agreeing with King Susharman, Karna advised, "Susharma has spoken well. This is an opportune time to challenge Virata, and the outcome will be profitable. Forget about Pandu's sons, for they have lost their wealth and prowess. They have either disappeared for good or entered the abode of Yamaraja."

Accepting Karna's advice, Duryodhana ordered King Susharman, "Organize your army and attack Virata's kingdom from the southeastern direction. On the following day, the Kuru host headed by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Ashvatthama, Karna and myself will attack from another direction. We will plunder his cows and other kinds of wealth." After making their plan, the Trigartas and the Kuru host organized their vast forces. The Trigartas set out on the seventh night of the waning moon, and the Kurus set out on the eighth night of the waning moon, hoping to catch the Matsyas by surprise.

While living in the city of the Matsyas, the Pandavas completed the promised period of disguised exile. And it was at the end of the thirteenth year that Susharman attack the kingdom of Virata and took away his cows. When the cows had been

seized, the cowherdsmen went to Virata's royal court and anxiously explained what had happened, "O foremost of Kings, King Susharma, after defeating and humiliating us, has stolen your cows. His army has taken tens of thousands of your best cows and is herding them away to his kingdom. Please, therefore, speedily rescue them before they are lost for good."

Hearing about the attack on his Kingdom, King Virata ordered his forces to prepare for battle. The princes put on their armor and mounted their chariots. Virata's brother, Satanika, put on a dazzling, golden coat of mail, and his other brother, Madirakshya, also put on his golden armor and ascended his chariot. King Virata ordered that weapons and chariots be given to Kanka, Vallabha, Tantripal and Grantika. The sons of Pandu put on their armor, and happily accepted the weapons and chariots. They then set out to subdue the Trigarta king. They were followed by eighty thousand chariots, a thousand elephants and sixty thousand horses.

Marching out of the city in battle formation, those heroes overtook the Trigartas when half the day had gone. Both parties were anxious for victory and both sent up thunderous roars. The encounter that took place between the Trigartas and the Matsyas was like the encounter between the demigods and the asuras. The combatants rushed against each other with the intent of sending the other party to Yamaraja's abode. With upraised weapons the forces collided causing a huge dust storm to rise into the sky. The sky was thick with arrows, and because of the dust, and the weapons thrown by the enemy, the sun could not be seen. Chariots encountered chariots, foot soldiers fought with foot soldiers, and horsemen fought with horsemen. The battlefield was thick with flying axes, darts, javelins, iron clubs and arrows. Soon, severed heads began to decorate the battlefield, and arms and legs were strewn here and there. The ground became muddy from the blood flowing from the trunks of decapitated warriors. Satanika penetrated the Trigarta divisions and killed a hundred enemy soldiers, and Visalakshya also killed another four hundred. They both penetrated deep into the Trigarta host. King Virata, accompanied by his brothers Madirakshya and Suryadatta, destroyed five hundred chariots, eight hundred horses and five great fighters on Susharman's side. Infuriated, King Susharman challenged Virata to single combat. They rushed at each other releasing their powerful weapons. King Virata pierced Susharma with ten arrows and each of his horses with five arrows each. And King Susharman also pierced Virata with fifty sharp pointed arrows. King Susharman, followed by his brother, descended from their chariots and attacked the Matsya army with their maces in hand. Driving deep into the infantry ranks, they approached King Virata's chariot. King Susharman killed Virata's horses and the charioteer. He then jumped on Virata's chariot, and in hand to hand combat, Susharman knocked Virata unconscious and threw him down from the chariot. He then drug the unconscious king to his own chariot and proceeded to leave the battlefield. Seeing this the Matsyas began to flee in all directions.

Upon witnessing the rout of the Matsya host, Yudhisthira commanded Bhima, "The Matsya king has been taken by the vile Trigartas. Dear Bhima, do rescue him so that he may not be killed by the enemy. We have lived long in this pious king's city, and we must show our gratitude for his hospitality."

Eager for combat and following the order of his brother, the stout armed Bhima set out on his chariot to fight with King Susharman. Nakula and Sahadeva accompanied him to defend his chariot wheels. Bhima rushed toward Susharma ordering, "Stand your ground and fight! Do not run from the battlefield like a coward." When challenged, King Susharman stood his ground, and taking up his bow, he faced the oncoming enemy protected by his powerful brothers. Thousands of chariots attacked Bhima; and thousands of chariots were destroyed by him within a twinkling of an eye. He soon again decimated thousands of elephants and thousands of foot soldiers within King Virata's sight. Looking on in horror, Susharman thought, "Is my army going to be annihilated?" Angered at the loss of so many soldiers, Susharman took up his bow, and drawing the string back to his ear began to release his forceful arrows.

Seeing the Pandavas penetrating deep into the Trigarta ranks, King Virata's army returned, releasing their weapons against the Trigarta host. Yudhisthira then killed a thousand soldiers and Bhima sent to Yamaraja's abode another seven thousand. Nakula killed seven hundred and Sahadeva killed three hundred. Greatly provoked, Yudhisthira rushed at Susharman with an anger like that of Yamaraja. Susharman quickly pierced Yudhisthira with nine arrows. Then, Bhima, the son of Kunti, killed Susharman's horses and dragged the wicked King from his chariot. King Susharma escaped from Bhima and quickly ran away. When Bhima saw that King Virata had come to his senses, he chased after Susharman mace in hand. Bhima called to him, "Stand your ground! Do not flee!" When challenged in these words, Susharman turned back and rushed at Bhima. Bhima immediately seized Susharman by the hair, and raising him up in the air, dashed him to the ground. As he lay there crying in agony, Bhima kicked him in the head. Pandu's second son then placed his knee on Susharman's chest and slapped his head around like a balloon. At this the Trigarta became senseless. Witnessing their King's defeat, the Trigarta army, stricken with fear, fled the battlefield. Bhimasena then took Susharman by the hair and drug him before King Virata inquiring, "This wretched person does not deserve to live. What should I do with him?"

"His life should be spared," Virata replied. Virata then commanded Susharman, "Do not foolishly attack my kingdom again. If you do, you and your followers will be annihilated."

Bhima then took Susharman to the presence of Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira, seeing Susharman in such an half conscious state, spoke to Bhima smilingly, "Set free this lowest of men."

When ordered by his elder brother, Bhima said to Susharman, "If, O wretched person, you wish to live, listen to my order. You must say in every court and assembly of men, 'I am a slave to King Yudhisthira.' On this condition only will I spare your life. This is the law for those that have been conquered." With no other choice, Susharman had to agree with the proposal. Bhima then set Susharma free, and the humiliated King left with his head lowered in shame. He went to King Virata, offered his respects, and then went back to his kingdom a defeated man.

King Virata was very pleased with the Pandavas and wanted to benedict them, "This kingdom is as much yours as it is mine. By your prowess you have defeated the enemy and liberated me from a dangerous condition. I will crown you as the Kings of the Matsyas and bestow upon you all kinds of wealth. It is by your grace that I can once again see my brothers and friends. You have saved me from a certain death."

"We are honored with your kind offer," Yudhisthira replied, "but we are content to see you happily ruling your kingdom. Messengers should be sent to the city informing the citizens of the good news." The Matsya king then sent messengers into the city proclaiming the dawn hour as the victory for the King.

Thus Ends the Third Chapter of the Virata Parva, Entitled, The Trigartas Attack the Kingdom of Virata.

#### Chapter Commentary

Before this age of Kali, some five thousand years ago, the earth had become overburdened with military forces antagonistic to the will of the Lord. At Brahma's request the Lord descended to decrease this burden. When the Lord descends so do His associates to assist him. The Pandavas were assistants to decrease the military burden. King Susharman was antagonistic to the will of the Lord, and later, in the great battle of the Bharatas, we will see how Arjuna kills him.

In the age of Kali practically everyone is infected with demoniac qualities. It is not possible to kill everyone so the Lord descends as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and annihilates the demoniac mentality with the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This transcendental sound has be chosen to cleanse the heart of all impurities in this fallen age. This is confirmed in the Kali Santarana Upanishad, "The sixteen words of the Hare Krishna mantra are especially meant for counteracting the sins of the age of Kali. To save oneself from the contamination of this age there is no alternative but to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. After searching through all the Vedic literatures one cannot find a method of religion for this age so sublime as the chanting of Hare Krishna." (Kali-Santarana Upanishad 5-6) This is part of a conversation where Lord Brahma instructs Narada muni.

## Chapter Four

### Arjuna Challenges the Kaurava Army

After the Matsya King had recovered his cows, Duryodhana and the Kuru host invaded the kingdom of Virata. With Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna, Ashvatthama, and Duhshasana, Duryodhana succeeded in driving away the cowherdsmen and stealing sixty thousand cows. When the cowherdsmen were defeated, they hurried went to King Virata to complain of the Kuru's action. When the cowherdsmen saw that the city was empty of men, they approached Uttara Kumara, the son of the King. They related to him everything that had happened and asked that he free the cows at once. Hearing the appeals of the cowherdsmen, Uttara Kumara assured them, "As expert as I am in the use of the bow, I would set out this very day if only I could find someone who could be my charioteer. Therefore, look for someone competent to manage my horses, and I will without delay enter the battlefield and penetrate deep into the ranks of the Kaurava army. I will fight with Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Duryodhana and Ashvatthama, and defeat them all. The Kaurava army shall witness my prowess. Seeing me raining arrows from my chariot, they will ask if it is not Arjuna returned to take back the kingdom."

Hearing these boastful words, Arjuna whispered in private to his dear wife Draupadi, "Tell Uttara that Brihannala was formerly the Arjuna's charioteer, and has been tested in many previous battles." While the prince was still glorifying himself, Panchali bashfully spoke out from among the women, "The handsome youth of the name Brihannala was formerly Arjuna's charioteer. It was he who held the reins of Arjuna's chariot when Agni consumed the Khandava forest. It was with him that Partha conquered all creatures at Khandavaprastha. In fact, there is no charioteer equal to him."

"O Sairindhri," Uttara said, "you may know what this youths past history may be. You may know what this one of the neuter sex may or may not have done. I cannot, however, request Brihannala to hold the reins of my chariot."

"Brihannala, O hero, will without doubt, obey the words of your younger sister," Draupadi replied. "If he consents to become your charioteer, you will, without doubt, return, having vanquished the Kurus and rescued the cows."

Thus informed by Sairindhri, Uttara asked his sister to go to the dancing hall and bring Brihannala to him. The princess then hurriedly went to the dancing hall and requested Brihannala to become the charioteer of Uttara Kumara. The princess stated that if he did not do so, she would give up her life. Brihannala quickly agreed and came into the presence of the young prince. Uttara then inquired, "O Brihannala, Sairindhri has said that formerly you drove the chariot of Arjuna when he conquered the whole world. Will you not, therefore, drive my chariot, and help me conquer the Kuru host who have stolen our cows?"

"O prince," Arjuna replied, "what ability do I have to act as a charioteer? I only know about music, dance, and songs. I can entertain you in this way, but little do I know about holding the reins of a chariot."

"O Brihannala," Uttara ordered, "whether you are a dancer or a singer, take the reins of my chariot, and together let us challenge the Kuru warriors." Although Arjuna knew perfectly how to put on armor, in the presence of all he began to make many mistakes trying to attire his armor. All the women began to laugh at his attempts to put on the golden mail. Seeing Arjuna failing to garb the armor properly, Uttara Kumara helped him equip himself for battle. Together they then mounted the chariot and hoisted the chariot's flag bearing the sign of a lion. As they were leaving, the girls of the palace requested, "O Brihannala, bring us some fine sample of clothes from Bhishma and Drona after Kumara has defeated them in battle." Agreeing with their proposal, Arjuna urged the horses on, and they left the capital city. Having left the city, Virata's heroic son commanded Brihannala, "Proceed quickly to where the Kurus are. I will rescue the cows and bring them back to the city bringing great joy to my father."

Arjuna quickly caught up to the retreating Kuru army. It looked like a vast sea and was causing dust to rise up into the sky. Beholding the ocean of Kuru warriors, headed by Bhishma, Drona, Karna, and Duryodhana, the hairs of Uttara's body stood on end out of fear. He then revealed to Partha his anxiety, "I am incapable of fighting with so many warriors. These heroes cannot be vanquished even by the heavenly denizens. My mind is overcome with fear at the very sight of Bhishma and Drona. My father has gone out to meet the Trigartas and has left me alone to encounter these innumerable warriors. Therefore, O Brihannala, cease to advance any further."

"Why do you look so pale and fearful," Brihannala scornfully replied. "This will only bring joy to your enemy? As of yet you have not encountered one warrior in battle. It was you who ordered me to drive your chariot and challenge the enemy. I will, therefore, take you to the front line of the battlefield. In the presence of the women you boasted your prowess. Why do you now want to run from the battlefield? If you were to return home without fighting, men and women would meet together and laugh at you. As for myself, I will not return from the battlefield without rescuing the cows. I have been praised highly by Sairindhri and yourself, and therefore I will give battle to the Kurus."

Uttara, his knees shaking, falteringly said, "Let the Kurus rob the Matsyas of all their wealth. Let the men and women laugh at me. Let the cows perish, and let the city be a desert. Let me stand exposed before my father. Still there is no need for battle." Saying this much, the prince panicked, jumped from his chariot and ran away, sacrificing honor and pride.

Brihannala called to him, "This is not the practice of those who are brave. A kshatriya never runs from his enemies. Even death in battle is better than running from the battlefield." Saying this and descending from the chariot, Arjuna, the son of Kunti, ran after the prince while his braid and red garments fluttered in the air.

When the Kuru warriors saw this scene, they burst into laughter. They began to talk amongst themselves, "Who is this person who is part man and part women. Although bearing a neuter form, he resembles Arjuna. He has the same head, arms, neck and he walks in the same way as Arjuna. He is certainly none other than Arjuna. Who else but Arjuna would dare to challenge us alone? The one running away is Uttara, the King's son. He has come out of the city due to childishness and not from true heroism. Arjuna is running after him to bring him back." Some generals disagreed with this, and thus they could not come to any conclusion.

Meanwhile, Arjuna caught up to Uttara within a hundred steps and grabbed him by the hair. Apprehend in this way, he pleaded with Arjuna, "Listen, O Brihannala, let us turn the chariot and go back to the city. He that lives meets with prosperity. I will give you all kinds of wealth and beautiful women as well. Only please set me free."

When offered material benediction, Arjuna laughed and dragged Uttara back to the chariot. Arjuna, through compassion for the frightened prince, tried to encourage him, "If, O chastiser of the enemy, you do not wish to fight with them, then hold the reins of the chariot, and I will fight with them. Protected by the potency of my arms, we will penetrate the enemies ranks and subdue them. Do not succumb to fear." In this way Arjuna comforted the frightened prince and asked him to ascend the chariot. He then told Uttara to drive the chariot toward the Shami tree that was just out side the city. This was the place where the Pandavas had left their weapons.

Beholding that person of the third sex seated on the chariot, the Kurus headed by Bhishma and Drona became frightened at the thought that it might be Arjuna. They then noticed evil omens in all directions. Violent and hot winds began to blow. The sky became overcast with a dark gloom. The clouds presented a strange sight, and Jackals began howling from all directions. Seeing this, Drona ordered the troops into battle formation. He ordered them, "Stand your ground, and do not flee out of fear. Protect yourselves and expect a terrible slaughter. This person on the chariot dressed like a eunuch is definitely Arjuna. There is no doubt about this. After defeating our forces, he will take away the cows. I do not see any hero amongst us who can withstand him. He has even defeated the demigods including Lord Shiva and Indra."

Hearing the cautious words of Drona, Karna boasted, "You always speak of the glories of Arjuna, but he is not even equal to a sixteenth part of myself or Duryodhana."

"If this is Arjuna," Duryodhana said, "they my purpose has been served. He will have to return to the forest for another twelve years. However, if this be anyone else in a eunuch's garb, I will prostrate him on the ground with my arrows."

Upon reaching the Shami tree, Arjuna ordered Uttara Kumara, "Climb this tree, and bring down that bag covered with the skin of an animal. It appears like a corpse, but it contains the weapons of the Pandavas. Out of all the weapons I want the Gandiva bow that is owned by Arjuna. It is the strongest of all bows and can withstand the enemy's weapons. With it I will defeat the Kuru host." Uttara then climbed the tree

and cut the wrappings from around the bag and beheld the weapons of the Pandavas shining like the sun. He saw the Gandiva along with four other bows, and he was struck with wonder. His hair stood on end, and while touching those bows, he questioned Arjuna, "To what warrior does this magnificent bow belong, and to what warrior does this bow belong which has golden elephants embossed on it. Whose bow is this that has radiant golden suns embossed on it? Whose bow is this that has gold inlay and precious gems? Whose quivers are these covered in gold and holding a thousands arrows with golden heads? All these swords, maces, bows and arrows have an effulgence that is hard to bear. Tell me truly, O Brihannala, to whom do these weapons belong?"

"The bow of which you have inquired about first is Arjuna's bow called the Gandiva," Brihannala replied, "It is famed throughout the universe and equals a hundred thousand weapons. It was originally owned by Lord Shiva for the period of a thousand years. It was then owned by Indra for eighty years and Soma for five hundred years. Varuna has owned it for a hundred years, and now Arjuna has owned it for sixty-five years. Partha has obtained this bow from Varuna. The other bows belong to the other Pandavas. The quivers you asked about belong to Arjuna and are inexhaustible. The other quivers and weapons belong to Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva respectively."

Uttara then questioned Brihannala, "These weapons are very beautiful, but where is the son of Pritha, Arjuna, as well as Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. We have heard that they have lost their kingdom and are now in exile. Also where is Draupadi who followed her lords into the forest although she was a princess accustomed to great comforts?"

Arjuna replied, "I am Arjuna, also called Partha. Your father's counselor, named Kanka, is Yudhisthira. Your father's chef is Bhima. The caretaker of your father's horses is Nakula, and the cowherdsmen that takes care of your father's cows is Sahadeva. Know the maidservant of Sudeshna, Sairindhri, to be Draupadi. For her sake Kichaka was slain."

Skeptical, Uttara questioned Arjuna, "I will believe you if you can tell me the ten names of Arjuna."

"I will tell you, O son of Virata, my ten names," Arjuna replied. "Listen to them with close attention. They are Arjuna, Phalgunya, Jishnu, Kiritin, Svetavahana, Vibhatsu, Vijaya, Krishna, Savyasachin and Dhananjaya. I am known as Dhananjaya because I have defeated all countries and taken away their wealth. They call me Vijaya because I enter the battlefield and never return without vanquishing my enemy. I am called Svetavahana because of the white horses yoked to my chariot. They call me Phalgunya because I was born on the mountain crest of Himavat at the auspicious time when the constellation Uttara Phalgunya was on the ascendent. I am named Kiritin because of the crown given by Indra that is as effulgent as the sun. I am known as Vibhatsu, among demigods and men, for never having committed an unworthy deed on the battlefield. I am known as Savyasachin, because by drawing the string of my bow with both hands, I can release countless arrows. I am known

as Arjuna because my complexion has no equal on earth. I am known as Jishnu because I am invincible on the battlefield. And I was given the name Krishna because I always meditate on Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Lord of the Yadu dynasty."

After hearing Arjuna's description, Uttara was pleased and offered respects and worship to Arjuna. He begged his forgiveness for acting out of fear and then agreed to drive his chariot. Ascending the chariot, he requested Arjuna, "Order me as to where I should drive this chariot."

Uttara Kumara had taken all the weapons of the Pandavas and put them in the chariot. He cast off all fear and was prepared to do as he was ordered. He said to Arjuna, "I will drive this chariot as Daruka drives the chariot of Lord Krishna, or as Matali drives the chariot of Indra."

Then Arjuna took off his bracelets and wore on his hands a pair of beautiful gloves embroidered with gold. He then tied his hair in the back with a white cloth. Seated on that excellent chariot, he turned toward the east, purifying his body and concentrating his attention on Lord Krishna's form. He recalled to mind all his weapons, and they appeared before him saying, "We are here, O illustrious one. We are your servants, O son of Indra." Obtaining the celestial weapons, Arjuna looked cheerful. After stringing his bow, he pulled back the string and released it, causing the earth to tremble, and the Kuru's hearts were seized with fear. He then hoisted on the chariot his own golden banner, bearing the insignia of an ape who was none other than Hanuman. Then Arjuna, his fingers encased in leather gloves, set out in a northerly direction. He blew his conchshell causing a tremendous sound to vibrate in all directions. The hairs of the Kuru warriors stood and end, and Uttara Kumara fell to his knees at the sound of the blast. Even Arjuna's horses fell to the ground at the sound of his conch. Arjuna then took the reins of the chariot, raised the horses and comforted Uttara, "Why do you fear the sound of a conch. You are a kshatriya by birth and have heard the blast of many conchshells. Why are you so terrified now?"

"I have heard the sounds of many conchshells on the field of battle," Uttara Kumara replied, "but none like this. Nor Have I ever seen a banner like this one with a monkey shouting heartrending screams. The sound of your bow, and the blaring of your conch, as well as the screams of this superhuman creature on the banner have greatly bewildered me. The whole sky seems to be affected by the monkey on this banner, and the sound of your Gandiva bow has deafened my ears."

Arjuna laughed heartedly and said, "Firmly stand on the chariot and tightly catch the reins, for I will blow the conch again." Arjuna then blew his conchshell which was so loud that the mountains seemed to split, and the clouds dispersed from the sky.

Sizing up the situation, Drona informed the others, "It appears from the sound of his conchshell that this is none other than Arjuna. The evil omens in all directions indicate misfortune for the Kurus. Our whole army is stepping backwards out of fear of that ape on the banner of Arjuna's chariot. Send the cows ahead, for we should stand here prepared to meet the onslaught of Arjuna."

"It appears that Arjuna has come out of hiding before completing the last year of exile," Duryodhana then said to the Kuru generals. "This being the case, they will have to enter the forest for another twelve years. We will have to consult Grandfather in this regard. We must now prepare ourselves to fight. Why are all these great warriors sitting on their chariots panic stricken?"

"Everything is in confusion because Drona has come under the sway of fear," Karna spoke condescendingly. "He is affectionate towards Arjuna, and he doesn't want to fight. I see that all our generals are seized with fear. I don't care if it is Indra himself that we have to encounter, I will fight with all my weapons and kill this Arjuna. I am in no way inferior to Arjuna, and today, I will slay him as promised in the gambling match to my friend Duryodhana. I will grind this Arjuna into the ground, and with my javelin, I will kill this monkey that rides on the banner. You will behold today Arjuna's chariot broken, his horses killed, his prowess gone and himself lying on the ground sighing like a snake."

"O Karna," Kripacharya said, "your heart is crooked and always inclined to war. Do you not remember that Arjuna alone stopped the onslaught of the Gandharvas in the Dvaitavana forest while you ran from the battlefield. Do you not remember that Arjuna alone killed the Nivatakavachas which were incapable of being slain by the demigods. Even Indra himself is unfit to fight with Arjuna. Therefore, he, who would fight with Arjuna, should take sleeping pills. You are like a fool that wants to enter blazing fire. You want to tie a stone around your neck and enter the deepest part of a river. Although he is undefeatable, still we should stand and array our troops in battle formation. Do not, out of foolishness, fight with Arjuna alone. If all six of the great warriors fight with him at one time, then maybe we can defeat him."

"O Karna," Ashvatthama advised, "you cannot win battles with words. Why then do you boast? What kshatriya is there that expresses delight at winning a kingdom with dice like the wicked son of Dhritarastra? In single combat did you defeat the Pandavas for their kingdom? What act of prowess caused you to order Draupadi to be brought into the assembly of Kings, and by what act of prowess did you endeavor to see her stripped naked? Take out your dice now and throw them at Arjuna. Let the sinful Shakuni come and fight with Arjuna. The Gandiva does not throw dice, but arrows as deadly as virulent poison. Let this battle be lead by Shakuni, if he chooses to fight. I shall, however, not fight with one who is greater than all the demigods combined."

Bhishma, the great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, then gave his counsel, "Drona's son has spoken well as well as Kripa. As for Karna, he fights only out of duty trying to enliven the troops. I am of the opinion that we should fight. When the son of Kunti has come, it is not a time for quarrel. Let us arrange our troops in battle array and protect Duryodhana from Arjuna's onslaught. He should take the cows and return to Hastinapura. Arjuna has not come out of hiding unless the time period of exile has expired. The wheel of time revolves with it divisions. At certain times there are excesses which add up to two months every five years. Thus being the case, there would be an excess of five months in thirteen years. Arjuna has not come out

of hiding unless he knew this fact. Therefore, O King, you can make the decision on whether to battle is proper. Arrange the forces quickly for Dhananjaya is at hand."

"I will not, O grandsire, give back the Pandavas their kingdom," Duryodhana said. "Let all preparations for the battle be made without delay."

"Listen to what I regard as good advice," Bhishma said. "Take one fourth of the army and proceed to Hastinapura. Another fourth of the army will escort the cows to our city. With half of the troops will fight with Arjuna. Myself, Drona, Karna, Ashvatthaman, and Kripa will fight with Vibhatsu when he approaches. We will try to withstand him like the bank withstanding the surging sea."

Grandfather Bhishma then gave orders for the army formation. Having sent away Duryodhana with one fourth of the troops, Bhishma ordered Drona to guard the middle of the formation. He ordered Ashvatthama to guard the left and Kripa to guard the right. He ordered Karna to stand in front of the army, and he himself chose to guard the army from the back.

As Arjuna approached the Kuru army, he released two arrows that fell to the ground in front of Bhishma and Drona. After thirteen years of exile, he was offering obeisances to his grandfather and his martial guru. He then released two more arrows that barely grazed the ears of each, indicating that he was now ready to fight with them. Hanuman was roaring from the banner striking terror into the troops. Seeing the Kurus ready for battle, Arjuna ordered Uttara Kumara, "O charioteer, keep the horses at a distance so that my arrows may reach them. I want to find that vain prince of the Kurus, Duryodhana. Disregard all the other great warriors and single him out. After defeating him, all the others will cease battle. There in the distance stands Drona and beyond him his son Ashvatthama. And there are the great bowmen--Bhishma, Kripa and Karna. I do not see the King, and I suspect he has taken the southern road anxious to save his life. Follow the Duryodhana's path, for after defeating him I will come back, bringing with me the cows."

Arjuna encircled the ocean of troops trying to make his way to Duryodhana. Understanding his intentions, Kripa and the others began to chase after him. Arjuna soon caught up with Duryodhana and challenged his troops to battle. From Arjuna's bow issued a thick shower of arrows. Soon the whole sky was covered with those arrows, and the soldiers of Duryodhana fell into confusion. While those warriors were in a confused state, he again blew his conchshell which struck terror into the hearts of the Kuru warriors. They gave up all hope for life and fled the battlefield. In this state of confusion, the cows turned back and headed for the city of Virata. As Arjuna was approaching Duryodhana, the Kuru host headed by Karna fell upon him. The first warrior to reach him was Vikarna. He rained arrows upon Arjuna, but it was no use. Arjuna cut his bowstring and the standard from his chariot. Losing the use of his bow, he fled the battlefield. The next warrior to reach Arjuna was King Satruntapa. He was provoked and desired to put an end to Pandu's son. Arjuna, however, killed his four horses and his chariot driver and then with an arrow capable of piercing his heavy coat of armor, he sent him to Yamaraja's court.

Arjuna then ranged the field of battle depriving life from the Kuru host. The next warrior to approach Arjuna was Sangramajit, the brother of Karna. He challenged Arjuna like a tempest, but Arjuna quickly killed his four red horses and with a crescent shaped arrow, severed his head. When his brother had fallen on the battlefield, Karna quickly pierced Arjuna with twelve arrows. He covered his horses with arrows and pierced Virata's son in the hand where he held the chariot's reins. Seeing the duel that was taking place, the Kuru host looked on, not taking any part. Arjuna covered the Karna's chariot with thousands of arrows so that it could not be seen. However, Karna soon released himself from that network of arrows and sent forth a thunderous roar competing with the monkey on the banner of Arjuna's chariot. Karna then released a multitude of arrows that covered Arjuna's chariot. Highly annoyed, and drawing his bow back to his ear, Arjuna pierced Karna in every part of his body. Mangled by Arjuna's crescent shaped arrows, Karna fled the battlefield.

After Radha's son had been routed, the Kuru host fell upon Arjuna like the ocean attacks the beach. Using his celestial weapons, Partha pierced every warrior on the battlefield whether he was a foot soldier, charioteer, horseman, or elephant rider. Every warrior was not pierced with enough arrows so that there was not two fingers breadth between each wound. Horses were running here and there, dragging behind them the remnants of broken chariots. Elephants, pierced by thousands of arrows, were dropping on the field of battle, and looked like huge hills with streams of water running from them. Arjuna struck terror, besides arrows, into the hearts of Duryodhana's troops. As soon as anyone reached Arjuna he was sent to the other world. The whole battlefield soon turned into a nightmare of mangled bodies and severed heads. The Gandiva bow was in a perfect circle at all times, and the celestial weapons were drinking the blood of all who opposed. The earth became muddied by the river that was created from the dead soldiers of the Kurus. Arjuna pierced Drona with seventy arrows and Duryodhana with a hundred. He then pierced Karna in the ear with a bearded arrow and destroyed his chariot and horses. With this act, the troops that were supporting him fled in all directions.

Dhananjaya then ordered Uttara Kumara to head in the direction where Kripa was the commander of a division of soldiers. Seeing Arjuna coming, Kripa pierced Arjuna with twelve arrows. Arjuna was furious and pierced Kripa's horses with four arrows, causing the horses to rear, and Kripa fell from his chariot. Greatly angered by his defeat, Kripa mounted his chariot, and by means of a celestial weapon, pierced Arjuna with ten thousand arrows. Arjuna shook off that network of arrows, and with his own arrows, cut the armor from Kripa's body. He then cut his bow string and the standard from his chariot. Kripa picked up another bow, but that string was cut by Arjuna. Each bow that Kripa picked up was cut by Arjuna, and having no more bows, Saradwat's son picked up a javelin that resembled a blazing thunderbolt. Kripacharya released it with a meteor's speed, but Arjuna cut it to pieces with ten arrows. When Arjuna had smashed his chariot, killed his horses and charioteer, Kripa took up a mace, and descending from his chariot, ran at Arjuna. Kripa released the mace with all his might, but Arjuna sent it in another direction by means of his forceful arrows. When the warriors in Kripa's division saw that Kripa was in danger of being killed,

they surrounded Arjuna and covered him with arrows. Taking Saradwat's son onto a chariot, they took him to another part of the battlefield.

After Kripacharya had been taken away, the invincible Drona rushed towards Arjuna on his golden chariot drawn by red horses. Arjuna then spoke to Drona, "Having completed our exile in the forest, we are not desirous of avenging offenses committed against us. O sinless one, I will not strike you unless you strike me first. This in my intention." Thus addressed by Arjuna, Drona released twenty arrows at the son of Kunti. Arjuna countered those arrows and released a shower of arrows so that Drona could not be seen. With his celestial weapons, Drona tried to overcome Arjuna, but Partha countered the Aindra, the Vayavya and the Agneya weapons. While engaged in a fight with Drona, Arjuna was being attacked on all sides. By means of his celestial weapons, Arjuna pierced thousands of warriors with thousands of arrows, and all that approached the chariot of Arjuna were sent to Yamaraja's abode. Suddenly Arjuna released from his bow hundreds of arrows that covered Drona's chariot, and the Kuru army thought that Drona was finished. Coming to his father's aid, Ashvatthama challenged Arjuna to fight. Drona's armor and weapons were gone, and this gave him a chance to slip away from the battlefield.

Arjuna immediately attacked Ashvatthama's horses and threw them into confusion. Ashvatthama countered and found the opportunity to cut the string of the Gandiva bow. He then released an arrow that pierced the Arjuna's chest. Arjuna laughed loudly, and placing another string on his bow, again attacked Drona's son. Arjuna's quivers were inexhaustible, and he was releasing a constant flow of arrows, creating a slaughter on the field of battle. The stench of the dead bodies was overwhelming, and Uttara Kumara was fainting under the strain. When Ashvatthama's arrows were exhausted, he left the battlefield with no more weapons to fight with.

While havoc was being created on the battlefield, grandfather Bhishma rushed at Arjuna. He blew his conchshell cheering the sons of Dhritarastra. The demigods as well as the sages assembled in the heavens to see the wonderful fight with the son of Ganga and the son of Kunti. Bhishma quickly pierced the monkey on the flagstaff with eight arrows. Arjuna, taking up a mighty javelin, cut off the top of Bhishma's chariot. The battle became fierce, and both were using celestial weapons received from such demigods as Prajapati, Indra, Agni, Rudra, Kuvera, Varuna, Yamaraja and Vayu. The demigods and the sages exclaimed the glories of both, and the Kauravas sent up loud roars, encouraging the aged Bhishma. Then, suddenly, Partha cut the bow of Bhishma into pieces. He then pierced Bhishma in the chest with ten arrows, and Ganga's son fell to the floor of his chariot in a swoon. The charioteer, seeing the critical situation, took grandfather Bhishma from the battlefield.

After Bhishma had fled, Duryodhana attacked Arjuna with a murderous intention. He released an arrow that struck Arjuna in the forehead, causing blood to flow from his wound. Greatly incensed, Kunti's son pierced the King in return. In order to save Duryodhana's life, Vikarna, riding on the back of a huge elephant, attacked Arjuna. Seeing the elephant approaching like a mountain, Arjuna pulled out a golden arrow, and drawing the string of his bow back to his ears, released that arrow which entered into the elephant's forehead up to the feathers. The elephant trembled and

fell to the earth screaming in agony. Vikarna jumped off the dead beast, ran backwards a full eight hundred feet and ascended his brother's chariot.

Arjuna then pierced Duryodhana's chest, and that great warrior, vomiting blood, tried to run from the battlefield. However, Arjuna would not let him go. He challenged him again, "Sacrificing your name and fame, why do you flee from the battlefield? I am Arjuna, the third son of Pritha. Turn back and show me your face, bearing in mind the behavior of kings. Why are you running away from the battlefield like a coward. I do not see any body guards around your chariot. They have all fled like you. Stand and fight!" Being stung by the words of Arjuna, Dhritarastra's son returned like a snake trampled under foot. Suddenly all the divisions of the army, headed by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Ashvatthama, and Karna, attacked Arjuna, trying to save the King's life. Seeing them coming at once, Arjuna called for the Sanmohana weapon received from Indra. Releasing this weapon and blowing on his conchshell, the whole of the army fell to the ground deprived of their senses. Arjuna then addressed Uttara Kumara, "O best of men, go to the Kurus and take away their scarfs. Take some garment from Drona, Kripa, Duryodhana, Karna and Ashvatthama. Bhishma is still conscious for he knows how to counter this astra." Jumping down from the chariot, Kumara took some garment from each of the great generals and came back to the chariot. Feeling satisfied after his victory, Arjuna decided to leave the battlefield. However, Bhishma again attacked Arjuna, but Partha killed his horses and his charioteer, and with a smile on his face headed for the city of Virata.

Duryodhana awoke, and seeing Arjuna leaving the battlefield, chastised Bhishma in strong words. "Why don't you rise and challenge him," Bhishma replied. "While you were unconsciousness, he could have taken your life. He, however, is not inclined to sin, and therefore, you are still alive. Let us go back to the city of the Kurus, and let Partha return to Virata's kingdom, having retrieved the cows. Do not foolishly throw away your life." Following the advice of the grandsire, Duryodhana, accompanied by the rest of his army, went back to Hastinapura humiliated by the prowess of Arjuna.

Arjuna then had Uttara Kumara return to the Shami tree. Again the weapons and the ape banner were put into the corpse-like covering and hoisted into the tree. Arjuna then told Prince Uttara that he should take credit for what had happened, and that he should not reveal their disguise to the King. Prince Uttara agreed not to disclose the Pandava's secret, but refused to take credit for such super human activities. That afternoon Uttara Kumara ordered the cowherdsmen to go to the capital and announce the King's victory. The son of Kunti and the son of Virata rested for the afternoon and then entered the city of the Matsyas.

Thus Ends the Fourth Chapter of the Virata Parva, Entitled, Arjuna Challenges the Kaurava Army.

## Chapter Commentary

Arjuna was like the full moon in the sky. He was an empowered representative of the Lord. It is stated in the Chaitanya Charitamrita, *krishna shakti vina nahe tara pravartana*, "Unless empowered by the Lord one cannot propagate the Lord's mission." (C.c. Antya 7.11) One who receives the Lord's empowerment is called a *shaktavesha avatara*. Arjuna was empowered to relieve the earth's burden in the form of numerous military divisions. Arjuna alone killed many millions and millions of men during his lifetime, but it was all for the service of the Lord. We have seen in the life of our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, that he alone came to the Western world to spread the Krishna consciousness movement. Because he surrendered everything, the Lord Krishna empowered him to spread this movement and to lighten the earth's burden in the form of demoniac mentality. Shрила Prabhupada carried with him the empowerment of chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra. He made this transcendental sound vibration a household word throughout the entire world. If one becomes empowered by the Lord, he can do wondrous and marvelous things that no ordinary human can perform, as we have heard from this chapter.

## Chapter Five

### The Pandavas Reveal Their Disguise

When Virata had defeated the Trigartas, he entered his city accompanied by four of the Pandavas. He entered his palace and sat upon his throne. He was then worshiped by the brahmanas and by the citizens. While listening to his glorification, he inquired about Uttara. The women in the palace replied, "The cows were taken away by the Kuru host, and Uttara, being upset, set out on a single chariot with Brihannala as his charioteer. He set out to fearlessly challenge the Kuru elders: Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna, Duryodhana and Ashvatthaman."

When the King heard that his son had single-handedly challenged the enemy, his heart filled with grief. He ordered that troops leave the city arrayed in battle formation for Uttara Kumara's protection, "Immediately go out of the city, and find out whether the prince is still alive. I think that with only Brihannala as his assistant, he no longer lives."

King Yudhisthira then advised Virata, "If Brihannala is the charioteer of Uttara Kumara, then there is no need to worry for your son's safety or the safety of your

cows. Protected by Brihannala, your son will be able to vanquish the demigods, the asuras and the Yakshas combined."

As Yudhisthira was speaking to King Virata, the messengers arrived with the news that the Kauravas had been defeated and the cows recovered. The messengers exclaimed, "Your son, O King, is well, having defeated the Kurus in battle! The cows have also been brought back. Soon, your blessed son will be in your presence." On hearing this, King Virata's hair stood on end out of excessive joy, and he could not control himself. Yudhisthira then said to him, "It is by good luck that the cows have been recovered and the Kurus defeated. I don't think it very wonderful, however, that your son defeated the Kurus as long as Brihannala was his chariot driver." The King was in ecstasy and paid little attention to Yudhisthira's words. He ordered that the citizens greet the prince at the city gate with all kinds of auspicious presentations. He then desired to play a game of dice with Yudhisthira. When Yudhisthira saw his excessive joy like a fever, he spoke to the King, "O monarch, what business do you have with gambling which is accompanied by many evils? It should not be indulged in. You may have heard how Pandu's sons lost their extensive kingdom in this evil game. For this reason I dislike the game. If, however, you are insistent, then let the game begin."

While the dice game was going on, King Virata joyfully said, "Just imagine, the Kauravas, who are invincible in battle, have been routed by my son."

"Uttara would be able to conquer anyone as long as he had Brihannala for his chariot driver," Yudhisthira replied.

The King became angry with Yudhisthira's response, "You foolish brahmana, how can you compare a eunuch to my son. Have you no knowledge of what is proper, and what is improper to say? Are you disregarding my statements? It is possible for my son to crush all the Kuru leaders such as Bhishma and Drona. Because of our friendship, I will pardon this offense. Do not make this statement again if you wish to live."

Boldly, Yudhisthira replied, "There was Bhishma, Drona, and Drona's son, Karna, Kripa and King Duryodhana, and other royal and stalwart car warriors. Even if Indra was there along with the Maruts, there could be none other than Brihannala who could conquer them. There has been none, there is none and there will be none who can be his equal. He can vanquish the celestial demigods, the demons and the human beings combined. With such a person as an ally, why can he not conquer the enemy?"

Becoming offended, Virata angrily said, "I have repeatedly forbidden you, and still you do not restrain your tongue. If I do not punish you, you will not learn virtue."

Saying this, the King threw the dice at Yudhisthira's face exclaiming, "Do not let this happen again!" When struck in this way, blood began to flow from Yudhisthira's nose. He held his hand out and prevented it from touching the ground. The first son of Kunti then indicated to Draupadi that she should bring something to catch the

blood. She immediately brought a golden water jug and caught the blood that flowed from his wound. It was at this time that Prince Uttara entered the palace followed by Brihannala. When it was announced that the prince was to enter the court, Yudhisthira whispered to Sairindhri, "Indicate to Arjuna that he should not enter the court with Prince Uttara. He has taken a vow that anyone who sheds my blood, other than at the time of battle, shall not live. If he sees what has happened, he will kill Virata along with the whole Matsya army." Draupadi quickly did as she was told, and Prince Uttara entered the assembly alone.

Then the Prince entered and approached his father to worship him. After offering respects to the King and receiving his blessings, Uttara Kumara saw Kanka, sitting off a little ways, his face covered in blood. He was waited upon by Sairindhri. Overwhelmed with fear, he spoke to his father, "Who has performed the heinous act of drawing blood from this greatest of men, Kanka. The reaction to this sin will be very great."

"I hit this proud brahmana," Virata replied. "He deserves more than this, for while I was glorifying your prowess, he was praising Brihannala for conquering the enemy."

"Father, I think that you have unnecessarily offended a great soul," Uttara Kumara said. "You should seek his forgiveness so that his curse will not consume your whole dynasty at the roots!"

Coming to his senses, King Virata went to Yudhisthira, comforted him and sought his forgiveness.

"O King," Yudhisthira replied, "I have already forgiven you, for anger does not exist in me. Had this blood fallen to the ground, you would have been devastated along with your kingdom. I do not blame you for striking an innocent person for such are the ways of powerful persons. They generally act with unreasoning severity."

At this time Brihannala entered the court. He offered respects to the King and also Kanka. As he stood there, King Virata began to glorify his son in the presence of all, "O my son, please tell us how you were able to challenge and defeat the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, Bhishma. Relate to us also how you defeated the preceptor of the Kurus, the mighty Drona, who prowess knows now bounds. Please, also, tell us also how you conquered the invincible Karna. who can pierce a thousand warriors at a time. Relate to us how you encountered Kripa, Ashvatthaman and the very powerful Duryodhana, Dhritarastra's son. Please tell us for we are anxious to hear."

Uttara Kumara replied, "Actually, I have not recovered the cows, nor did I defeat in battle the great Kuru generals. This was all accomplished by a demigod of celestial origin. When I saw the vast ocean of Kuru warriors, I ran from the battlefield. However, this youth stopped me and encouraged me to fight with them. He asked me to drive his chariot, and thus it was he who repulsed the arrows of Kripa, Drona and Bhishma. It was his prowess alone that sent Duryodhana running from the battlefield. Also, Karna was stripped of his prowess and defeated by this youth, and Drona's son was also defeated. It was he that mowed down the Kuru troops in

thousands like a hurricane destroying trees. He released the cows and sent them running back to your city. I witnessed all of this, but I was simply the chariot driver."

"Where is that heavenly youth," Virata asked, "who has recovered my wealth. I am anxious to behold and worship that powerful warrior who has defeated the greatest generals on earth."

"The powerful youth disappeared after he had accomplished his purpose," Uttara replied. "However, he told me that he would appear in your palace within a few days."

Virata could not understand that the youth his son was referring to was Brihannala, and thus he remained ignorant of the Pandava's disguise. Brihannala then went to the princess, the daughter of the King, and presented to her the garments of the great warriors. Princess Uttara was overjoyed to receive those garments and asked for a detailed report on what had happened. Thus Brihannala entered the ladies chambers and began to relate all that had happened.

Then on the third day, the Pandavas entered Virata's imperial court wearing golden ornaments, valuable gems, and the white robes of Kings. They entered the council hall and sat on the seats reserved for Kings. After taking their seats, Virata came there to perform his daily duties. He saw the Pandavas seated on the royal thrones, effulgent as the sun, appearing like five demigods descended from the heavens. He was, however, overwhelmed with anger and rebuked Yudhisthira, "Yesterday, you were a dice player and my subordinate counselor. How can you now claim to occupy the royal throne, and wear kingly dress?"

Hearing the resentful words of Virata, Arjuna smilingly informed him, "This person, O King, deserves to sit on Indra's throne. He is devoted to the brahmanas and learned in Vedic knowledge. He is indifferent to opulence and bodily enjoyments, and as such he is superior to everyone on earth. He is intelligent, devoted to asceticism, and kind to all living entities. There is none amongst the demigods, demons or human beings who is his equal. As a performer of sacrifices to Vishnu, he is a royal sage in kingly dress. He is equal in wealth to Indra and Kuvera, and in prowess for protecting the citizens, he is like Manu, the father of mankind. Devoted to the cause of justice, he is none other than the foremost of all men, King Yudhisthira. His fame is known all over the universe just like the sun. Ten thousands elephants used to follow him wherever he traveled, as well as thirty thousand chariots bedecked with gold and drawn by the best horses. To perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, he made all the kings of the earth pay tribute to him. The good qualities of this person cannot be fully expounded. Why then can he not sit on the royal throne and rule everyone?"

King Virata was in a bewildered state, and he inquired from Arjuna, "If this is King Yudhisthira, then where is Bhima, and which one of these heroes is the great archer Arjuna. Which of these men is Nakula and which is Sahadeva? Also where is Draupadi? We have heard that the Pandavas have gone to the forest and have not been seen or heard of for the period of one year."

"O King," Arjuna replied, "the cook in your kitchen, the one known as Vallabha, is the stout-armed Bhima. It was by him that the great Rakshasas, Hidimva and Baka were slain. It is by the force of his arms, alone, that Kichaka and his relatives were killed. It is by his prowess, alone, that you were saved from death at the hands of the mighty Trigarta, Susharman. The eminent chariot fighter, Nakula, is the one who has been taking care of your horses. The highly intelligent Sahadeva is the one who has been taking care of your cows. There is none equal in beauty to these two twins, not even in the heavenly planets. These great chariot warriors are an equal match for a thousand great chariot fighters. Your wife's maidservant Sairindhri, for whom Kichaka was killed, is the beautiful and chaste Draupadi. She is like a demigoddess and is a second expansion to Laksmi, the goddess of fortune. I am, O King, Arjuna, by whose prowess all the great Kuru warriors were defeated the other day. We have happily passed, in your abode the last year of our exile."

After revealing themselves to Virata and hearing confirmation from the King's son, Uttara, the King considered that he had committed a grave offense against Yudhisthira. He said to his son, "I think the time has come for me to worship the sons of Pandu. I should bestow my daughter Uttara upon Arjuna."

Virata then addressed the Pandavas, "When I had been defeated by the enemy, it was Bhima who rescued me. And by the grace of Arjuna, all the great heroes in the Kuru dynasty were defeated and my cows saved. Such being the case, please accept our worship and forgive any offenses that we may have committed against you in ignorance."

The Matsya King was overjoyed at the presence of such exalted personalities and made an alliance with them. He offered them his kingdom along with his wealth and cities. He also requested Arjuna, "Please accept, along with my kingdom, my beautiful daughter in marriage."

"O monarch," Arjuna replied, "I will accept your daughter as my daughter-in-law. While in her association, she trusted me as her father, and I also protected her as one would protect a daughter. While associating with her, I have remained pure with controlled senses. My son, Abhimanyu, is a fit husband for your daughter. He resembles a celestial denizen and is knowledgeable of all the weapons of warfare. He is a favorite of Lord Krishna and thus an equal to your daughter."

Greatly pleased that the Pandavas would be his allies through marriage, Virata began to arrange a wedding ceremony. Arjuna sent for his son Abhimanyu, and also invited Lord Krishna and the members of the Yadu dynasty. All the favorable kings of the earth were invited to come and participate in the festival. After thirteen years of exile, the Pandavas had now taken up their abode in Virata's kingdom.

Upon hearing that the Pandavas were living in the kingdom of the Matsyas, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, came there along with His most powerful brother, Balarama. Kritavarman arrived as well as Satyaki, the commander in chief of the Yadu dynasty. The King of Kashi arrived accompanied by an akshauhini division of troops. Also King Saivya, being very friendly with Yudhisthira,

arrived with another Akshauhini division. The mighty King Drupada arrived along with his powerful sons, Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi, the foremost wielders of weapons. They came with another akshauhini division of soldiers. Many kings with their troops arrived ready to die for the cause of Yudhisthira. All these kings bestowed great wealth upon the Pandavas during the marriage ceremony of Abhimanyu and Princess Uttara. A great ceremony was held and all enjoyed it. While sitting on the royal throne in the imperial court of Virata, King Yudhisthira appeared like Indra, the king of heaven, surrounded by all the subordinate demigods.

Thus Ends the Fifth Chapter of the Virata Parva, Entitled, The Pandavas Reveal Their Disguise.

Thus ends the Virata Parva to the summary study of the Mahabharata

#### Chapter Commentary

King Virata was ignorant of the fact that the Pandavas were in disguise. Thus he committed an offense by throwing dice at Yudhisthira's nose and drawing blood. Yudhisthira forgave Virata by saying that Kings generally act with unreasoning severity. When a person achieves a high position by the result of his pious activities, he sometimes commits offenses against saintly persons which cause his downfall. Indra lost his kingdom by offending his spiritual master, Brishaspati. Maharaja Rahugana offended Jad Bharata, a great devotee of the Lord. Fortunately, he realized his mistake and requested forgiveness from the saint. Ramachandra Khan offended both Haridas Thakur and Lord Nityananda for which he lost his family, wealth and position. Gopal Chakravarty offended Haridas Thakur for which he contracted leprosy. This caused his handsome nose to wither and his artistic fingers to fall off.

It was said of Maharaja Prithu that although he was praised by everyone, he never became proud. He always knew that he was not the cause of his success, but always glorified the Lord. He thus offered respect to all living beings. It is the teaching of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, *trinad api sunichena, taror api sahisnuna, amanina amanadena, kirtaniya sada hari.* "One should chant the Holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all false prestige and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." (Shikshastaka 3)

Yudhisthira was always humble, although achieving a high position in life. He respected all others, including the most insignificant citizen, and thus he was loved by all. Generally, Lord Krishna keeps his devotees in a poverty stricken condition so they can remain humble and make spiritual advancement. When the Lord sees that a devotee is completely free of material desire, He may bestow upon him uncommon material opulence as the Lord did with Yudhisthira, Sudama brahmana and our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Shrila Prabhupada's life was dedicated to the order of his spiritual master to preach Krishna consciousness in the Western countries. He cared nothing for material opulence and came to America with only \$7.00. He preached in poverty for one year, living in such lowly places as the bowery in New York City. When the Lord saw Shrila Prabhupada's unswerving determination, he bestowed upon him wealth, disciple and position. Shrila Prabhupada never misused these material assets nor became proud, but always remained a humble servant of his spiritual master. Without humility all our attempts at material or spiritual success will end up in disaster.

## Udyoga Parva

### Chapter One

#### The Pandavas Prepare for War

After Abhimanyu's marriage, there was royal festival and everyone was pleased that the son of Arjuna was united with the daughter of King Virata. The next day all the Kings, who had assembled for Yudhisthira's cause, came to Virata's imperial court to discuss future plans. The assembly consisted of King Virata, King Drupada, Satyaki, King Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Also present were Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His very powerful brother, Balarama. From the Yadu house came Pradyumna and Samba. Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu was present, as well as the sons of Draupadi, appearing like their fathers in prowess. Drupada's sons and Virata's sons were also seated in the court. They all talked on varied subjects for some time, and after conversing with each other, they sat in a thoughtful mood, their eyes fixed on the beautiful form of Lord Krishna. The Lord sat in the midst of the assembled kings like the full moon amidst the many stars in the sky. With His lotus like eyes and bluish complexion, He was attracting the minds of everyone. While gazing upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead with insatiable glances, they waited for Him to speak. After due contemplation, the Lord of the universe spoke, It is known to all that the Pandavas were unfairly defeated in gambling by Suvala's son, and thus swindled out of their kingdom. They were then exiled to the forest for the thirteen year period, which they faithfully carried out. Dhritarastra's sons still maintain their illicit desires for complete sovereignty of the world, although the sons of Pandu also have a right to share half that kingdom. What Duryodhana exactly thinks is not completely known, so what opinion can be formed? Therefore, a competent person should be selected who can go to Hastinapura and induce the Kauravas to give half the kingdom to the Pandavas.

After listening to the words of His younger brother, Lord Baladeva, the carrier of the club and plow, spoke to the assembled Kings, You have heard the advice of Krishna which is pregnant with virtue and beneficial to both Yudhisthira and Duryodhana. Dhritarastra's sons should give half their kingdom joyfully so this quarrel can be settled. It is known that when Yudhisthira was in possession of the throne, he unnecessarily engaged in gambling, although he was not able to play the game well. He foolishly gambled away his kingdom, and no blame can be put on Shakuni. Therefore, the messenger should approach the sons of Dhritarastra with words of humility intended to pacify Duryodhana. Nothing can be gained by war with the Kurus.

After Lord Balarama finished expressing His opinion, the scion of Shini's dynasty, Satyaki, rose up and condemned Lord Balarama's words which favored Duryodhana. Satyaki proclaimed, A man will certainly speak what is in his heart. It is well known that You cherish affection for Duryodhana although he is unprincipled. By his deceitful nature, he tricked the sons of Pandu out of their kingdom. Instead of facing them on the battlefield, they chose to cheat them out of their kingdom by throwing dice. They are cowards of the highest order. Why should Yudhisthira, who is entitled to the ancestral throne, humble himself before the uncivilized Duryodhana, who tried to see the Pandava's beloved wife stripped naked in the imperial court. They should either give back the kingdom or be ready to fight. Who can withstand Arjuna on the battlefield? Who can stand in front of Lord Krishna as He wields His Sudarshana discus to destroy the entire array of the Kurus? Who can withstand the tenacious Bhima, mace in hand, ready to destroy the ranks of the oncoming enemy? There is no need to approach them like beggars. Either Yudhisthira is given back his kingdom this very day, or Dhritarastra's sons will lie on the earth slain by me!

After Satyaki's speech, the eminent king Drupada gave his opinion, You have spoken well. Never will Duryodhana agree to give up his kingdom by peaceful means. Dhritarastra will agree with his son's wishes, and Bhishma and Drona will follow out of stupidity. Karna and Shakuni will certainly join forces with Duryodhana out of folly. The words of Baladeva are, indeed, righteous, but Duryodhana should never be addressed in mild words. Sweet words are never spoken to a snake, but a weapon must be used to kill it. An envoy should be sent to Duryodhana demanding half the kingdom. At the same time a message should be sent to all kings of the earth who favor Yudhisthira's cause. Let them come here to support us.

Lord Krishna then gave the final opinion, King Drupada's words are well spoken and meant to promote the interests of Pandu's sons. However, our relationship to both the Kurus and the Pandavas is equal. We have been invited here for the marriage ceremony of Abhimanyu. The marriage ceremony is now complete, and we should return to our kingdoms. Since you, King Drupada, are the eldest and most respected amongst us, you should send a message to Duryodhana, requesting half the kingdom. If Dhritarastra's son should make peace, then there should be no hard feelings on either side. However, if Duryodhana refuses to make peace, then after calling others for war, also call upon us. The wicked will have to face the onslaught of the Gandiva bow as well as My wrath. Saying this much, Lord Krishna made preparations to leave the Matsya capital. He was worshiped by King Virata as well as by all the kings present. After the departure of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Lord of heaven and earth, King Yudhisthira, along with King Virata, began making preparations for war. King Drupada sent for one of his most trusted priests and gave him a message to be spoken in the midst of the Kaurava leaders. The priest then departed.

Meanwhile, the Pandavas proceeded with their preparations for a future offensive, knowing well the mentality of their diabolic cousin. The third son of Kunti, Arjuna, then left for Dvaraka in hopes of obtaining the favor of both Lord Krishna and Lord Baladeva. When Duryodhana learned through spies of the Pandava's intentions, he also set out for Dvaraka, accompanied by a small number of troops. Both Arjuna and

Dhritarastra's son arrived in the city of the Yadus on the same day. At the time they arrived, Lord Krishna was sleeping, and they both entered His room together. Duryodhana sat at the head of the bed whereas Arjuna sat at Lord Krishna's lotus feet. When Lord Krishna awoke, He saw Arjuna first, seated at the end of the bed. He greeted both Arjuna and Duryodhana and asked about their welfare. Duryodhana then solicited Lord Krishna, I am requesting Your support for a future war. Arjuna and myself are equally Your friends. O descendent of Madhu, You bear the same relationship to both families. Therefore, since I have come to You first, please follow the path of virtuous men. You are listed at the top of all who are righteous, and therefore I ask You assist me at this time.

It is, indeed, true, Lord Krishna replied, that you have come to Me first. However, I have cast My glance upon Partha first. Since you have both come here, I shall lend My assistance to both causes. Those who are junior in years should have the first choice. I have a body of soldiers known as the Narayanas, numbering one million men; that is one choice. The other choice is Myself. However, I will not fight in the battle. Arjuna, you may choose between Myself and My Own men. Since you are the youngest, you may pick first.

When given first choice by Lord Krishna, Arjuna chose his most intimate friend, Lord Krishna. Joyfully, Duryodhana chose Lord Krishna's division of troops, shunning the personal power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After this meeting, Duryodhana went to Lord Balarama, the possessor of infinite power. Duryodhana explained how Krishna was chosen by Arjuna, although He Himself would not fight. Duryodhana then requested Lord Balarama to fight for his cause. Hearing this appeal, Balarama replied to Duryodhana, When we were present at Abhimanyu's marriage ceremony, I spoke in your favor. I supported affection for both parties, although Krishna did not agree. Krishna has now chosen Arjuna's side, and under no circumstances can I fight against Him. Therefore, I will fight neither for the sons of Pandu nor the sons of Dhritarastra.

Duryodhana was pleased to hear that Balarama would not take either side. Embracing the wielder of the club and plough, he considered Arjuna already vanquished. The royal son of Dhritarastra then went to Kritavarman and requested him to take up weapons against the Pandavas. Kritavarman agreed and gave Duryodhana one akshauhini division of soldiers.

After Duryodhana had departed with Kritavarman and the great military phalanxes of the Narayanas, Krishna, the most merciful Lord, questioned Arjuna, Why is it, O Partha, that you have chosen Myself, who will not take up any weapons?

There is no doubt in my mind, Arjuna replied, that You are able to kill all these soldiers. O best among men, I am also capable of slaying all of Duryodhana's troops. However, I know that wherever You are present, there will also be victory, fame and opulence. These qualities are present wherever You are. For this reason I have selected You, although I know You will not fight. It is my desire that You ride upon my chariot and drive my horses. Please fulfill this desire for with Your assistance there is no chance that the Kurus will be victorious.

I will without doubt ride upon your chariot and direct you to victory, Lord Keshava said. By My grace all your opponents will perish in this enormous battle to come. Thrilled at the thought of having Lord Krishna, the slayer of Madhu, riding on his chariot, Partha caused the Personality of Godhead to accompany him to Upaplavya, the city of Virata.

Having heard from Drupada's messengers of the upcoming war, Salya, the king of Madras and the brother of Madri, directed one akshauhini division to Yudhisthira. So large was that division of troops that when it was encamped, it covered twelve miles. When Duryodhana learned of Salya's intentions, he ordered the best accommodations be made for his comfort. Different houses were erected along his route, and when Salya was entertained in those houses, he became joyful at the thought that Yudhisthira had gone to so much trouble for his comfort. He was given the most royal treatment, on an equal level with the demigods. Still thinking that it was Yudhisthira who had made the arrangements, he called for those men who had supervised the accommodations. He vowed that he would grant a benediction to whoever made such nice arrangements. When Duryodhana came before Salya, and Salya understood that it was Duryodhana who had made all the arrangements, Salya said, You may take a benediction from me.

If your words are truthful, Duryodhana replied, then I ask you to be the leader of my army.

I will fulfill this benediction, Salya said, for what can I do? I have agreed to give a benediction. Before coming to Hastinapura, however, I will visit Yudhisthira for he is my beloved nephew. It, therefore, behooves me to meet with him.

O ruler of the earth, Duryodhana said, after talking with the Pandavas, come to my city with great speed. I depend upon you entirely, O king of kings. Salya then left for the city of Upaplavya, the city of Virata.

Upon reaching the Matsya's city, King Salya met Yudhisthira and was royally received. The King then informed Yudhisthira of what had happened in his meeting with Duryodhana.

O valiant king, Yudhisthira said, you must act as you have promised. However, I request a favor, and I hope that you will execute it for my sake only. O great King, you are an equal to Krishna on the battlefield. When single combat takes place between Arjuna and Karna, I have no doubt that you will drive Karna's chariot. When this event takes place, I hope that you will give protection to Arjuna. With insulting words you must dishearten Karna in battle, and then victory will be ours. It is improper, but still, for our sake, I request you comply with my wish.

To be sure, Salya replied, I will be his charioteer for he considers me to be an equal with Lord Krishna. At that time I will demoralize the vicious son of a suta, and in that condition, it will be easier for Arjuna to kill him. Whatever else I may do, I will do it for your sake. You have suffered from the gambling match and the insults to Draupadi. They all deserve to die for these immoral acts, and certainly it will happen,

for providence is supreme. After being treated royally by the Pandavas, Salya went to Hastinapura to fulfill his commitment to Duryodhana.

Then Yuyudhana (Satyaki), the celebrated hero of the Satvata race, came to the Pandava's camp. He brought with him an akshauhini division, consisting of thousands of chariots, tens of thousands of cavalry, tens of thousands of Infantry and thousands upon thousands of beautifully decorated elephants. Also coming to the side of the Pandavas was the stalwart Chedi king, Dhristaketu, accompanied by an akshauhini division of soldiers. The Magadha King, Jayatsena, brought to the Pandava's side another akshauhini division of soldiers consisting of warriors with unlimited prowess. King Pandya, who lived near the ocean, came to the Pandava's side bringing with him a veritable sea of troops. King Drupada brought with him his sons, undefeatable in battle, as well as an akshauhini division of soldiers, consisting of the four kinds of troops. King Virata also gave to Yudhisthira another akshauhini division of soldiers to help conquer the wicked sons of Dhritarastra. Altogether Yudhisthira had collected seven akshauhini divisions eager to fight with the Kurus.

Many kings also came to Duryodhana's camp, intending to help him retain his kingdom. These kings each brought with them an akshauhini division of soldiers. They were King Bhagadatta, Bhurisravas, King Salya of Madras, Kritavarman, the son of Hridika, accompanied by the Bhojas and the Andakas. Jayadratha, the King of Sindu, came to the aid of Duryodhana as well as Sudakshina, the leader of the Kambhojas. King Nila, the ruler of Mahismati, also came there with an akshauhini division of troops as well as the Avantipura Kings, Vinda and Anuvinda. The Kekeya princes also came to Duryodhana, gladdening his heart with a large number of troops.

Thus King Duryodhana had collected eleven akshauhini divisions of soldiers to fight against Pandu's sons. There were so many warriors that the leaders of the troops could not fit in Hastinapura. Their encampment spread over many provinces and along many rivers. Thus the two sides amassed their armies and arsenals, intending to aid either Pandu's sons or Dhritarastra's sons. It was all a part of Lord Krishna's plan to decrease the unnecessary military burden of the world. All those soldiers would die in a colossal battle that was to last for eighteen days. Thus Lord Krishna fulfilled his promise in Bhagavad-gita, In order to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium. (Bg.4.8)

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Udyoga Parva, Entitled, The Pandavas prepare for war.

## Chapter Commentary

There is certainly a difference between a devotee of the Lord like Arjuna, and a materialistic person like Duryodhana. The materialist always thinks in terms of profit, and a devotee always wants to please Lord Krishna. Duryodhana had come to Krishna, not to please him, but for material benefit. Lord Krishna gave Arjuna the first choice: men or Himself. Arjuna did not think in material terms. He just want to serve Krishna and get Lord Krishna's constant association. He knew that was the perfect formula for success. Duryodhana was very happy to get an akshauhini division of soldiers, thinking that if he outnumbered Yudhisthira, he would be the victor. Materialists never take into consideration the mercy of the Lord. Arjuna was perfectly happy to have Lord Krishna's association for he knew that wherever there was Krishna, there would certainly be victory.

Duryodhana was constantly thinking of ways to be successful materially. He tricked Salya into taking his side during the battle of Kurukshetra. It really didn't make any difference if Duryodhana had an unlimited number of akshauhini divisions, for it was the Lord's desire that Duryodhana be punished for his sinful activities. Whoever Krishna wants to kill, no one can protect, and whoever Krishna wants to save, no one can kill. Because Duryodhana was lacking any farthing of pious activity, he could never catch up this point.

## Chapter Two

### Discussions of Peace Between the Pandavas and the Kauravas

When the brahmana priest, representing King Drupada, had arrived in Hastinapura, he entered the Kuru imperial court and relayed a message on Yudhisthira's behalf. He spoke in the presence of Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarastra, Duryodhana, Karna, Vidura and others. It is well known that Dhritarastra and Pandu were born of the same father. There is no doubt that they should equally share the wealth of the father. Why now are Pandu's sons not given an equal portion of that wealth? Dhritarastra's sons have tried in the past to exterminate the Pandavas from the face of the earth, but have not been successful. Even after the sons of Pandu acquired a kingdom by their own endeavors, the scheming Duryodhana cheated them out of it with the aid of Suvala's son, Shakuni. Their beautiful wife was also insulted by Duhshasana, and they were then sent to the forest for thirteen years. This was all with the consent of Dhritarastra. Those pious sons of Pandu have now emerged from exile and want a peaceful settlement with the Kurus. Despite all the offenses that have been committed in the past, they are willing to forget them, and are not

eager for war with Dhritarastra's sons. They desire to get back their own kingdom with out involving the world in ruin. The sons of Pandu are now more powerful. Although the Pandavas have only seven akshauhini divisions of soldiers, while the Kurus have eleven, these are counteracted by men who equal a thousand akshauhini division of troops, such as Bhima and Satyaki. There is also the mighty-armed Dhananjaya who has the strength alone to defeat these forces. For his chariot driver, Arjuna now has Vasudeva's son, Krishna, who possesses infinite wisdom. Who is there in the world who will oppose them? Therefore, give back to the Pandavas what is rightly theirs and avoid any unnecessary bloodshed.

After hearing the brahmana's message, Bhishma spoke to all assembled, How fortunate that the Pandavas are well and have Krishna, the Supreme Lord, as their ally. They are entitled to the ancestral kingdom left by their father. Arjuna, the son of Pritha, can not be defeated in battle. Even the King of heaven, Indra, cannot challenge Partha as he releases arrows from his Gandiva bow. Other bowmen cannot even compare to him.

Unable to tolerate hearing about Arjuna's prowess, Karna interrupted grandfather Bhishma, What benefit is there in repeating Arjuna's glories again and again. The sons of Pandu have been discovered before the end of their year of exile. They should go back to the forest for another thirteen years, and then live as Duryodhana's servants. If they turn their faces from the path of righteousness and desire war, then they will be slain on the battlefield.

Why do you talk so much? Bhishma replied, Do you not remember when Arjuna single-handedly overpowered in battle the six great chariot fighters. If we do not act as this brahmana has requested, then certainly we shall be slain in battle.

Dhritarastra pacified Grandfather Bhishma and spoke to the assembled Kings and princes, Bhishma's advice is unquestionably meant for our well being, and the good of the Pandavas. I will send this brahmana back to Upaplavya, and Sanjaya shall journey there also to offer greetings to them. Drupada's priest then left for the city of the Matsyas.

Dhritarastra then called for Sanjaya, instructing him to proceed to Upaplavya and inquire about the Pandava's welfare. He also gave him messages for the Pandavas. Sanjaya then went to Upaplavya and was welcomed warmly by the Pandu's sons. Yudhisthira questioned Sanjaya about his relatives in the Kuru house, and then asked him to repeat King Dhritarastra's message. Sanjaya said, I hope that Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva are faring well as Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. Let there be peace among the sons of Pandu and my sons. We have heard that you are protected by many kings of the earth as are we. With all these forces assembled, what is the need for unnecessary bloodshed. My desire and the desire of the Kuru elders is for peace. Therefore, let us make some arrangement so that the whole kshatriya race be saved from annihilation.

Yudhisthira replied to Sanjaya, What makes you think that we desire war? Peace is preferable to total annihilation of the earth's warriors. Why does Dhritarastra speak

of peace now? Why did he not try to stop the injustice at the gambling match? Why did he not try to stop the injustice to Draupadi? Why did he not listen to Vidura's words of wisdom? Why suddenly does he want peace? Why does Dhritarastra nourish his envious son whose companions are the disgraceful Karna, Shakuni and Duhshasana? The fact is that he is not willing to part with half the kingdom due to affection for his dishonest son. If he is serious about this proposal for peace then let him return to me my kingdom of Indraprastha.

O Pandava, Sanjaya replied, I have heard your words which are full of righteousness. O son of Pritha, listen to my counsel that I now offer you. Life in this world is transient. Material fame and name last only for a few seconds in this temporary world. If the Kurus are not willing to give your share of the kingdom, then live in the Andaka and Vrishni kingdom by begging alms. This mortal existence is subject to constant suffering and is unstable. One who seeks after wealth in this world suffers from material attraction, but one who acquires virtue and truthfulness never laments, for these treasures no one can take from him. Therefore, desist from the desire for kingdom and wealth so that humanity can be saved from a dreaded war. When you went to the forest for exile, all the kings of the earth came to your aid. You could have at that time humbled the pride of the puffed-up Duryodhana. Why have you allowed your enemies to grow so powerful? To give up this idea of gaining a kingdom would be preferable to seeing Bhishma or Drona slain on the battlefield. What will you gain from this. Having killed all the heroes of the Kuru house, what joy will you experience?

It is true, O Sanjaya, Yudhisthira replied, that one should not seek wealth in this world by unrighteous means. But it must be decided first whether it is virtue or vice that I seek. Everyone is controlled by the Supreme Being. Here next to me is the Lord of all created beings. Here is the celebrated Krishna who has humbled all the great earthly kings. He is able to judge whether my actions are from lust or virtue. I never reject the counsel that Krishna has given me.

Lord Krishna said, I desire, O Sanjaya, that Pandu's sons grow in prosperity and not suffer. I also pray for the prosperity of the Kurus as well. However, there cannot be peace as long as Dhritarastra's sons are envious of the Pandavas. How can you say that Yudhisthira is unmindful of his duties? How can you say that his desire for his kingdom is a desire of lust? Yudhisthira is ever mindful of his duties, and has never even known lust or wickedness in his heart. The kshatriya's duty is to protect those around him. If a kshatriya unlawfully takes the property of another, then he is subject to be punished. Duryodhana has unlawfully taken the Pandava's kingdom, and therefore he deserves to be punished. What is the difference between thieves and Dhritarastra's sons. Duryodhana has seized the Pandava's wealth and is therefore subject to death. Those dull headed fools, assembled together as Dhritarastra's sons, are under the clutches of death. I would have sympathy for the Kuru elders, if they had spoken up against the unrighteous acts performed against Draupadi and her husbands in the imperial court at Hastinapura. However, this was not the case. How can you say that Yudhisthira acts out of vice? I will personally go to Hastinapura to settle this matter with the Kurus. I hope they treat Me well and listen to my counsel for peace. If not, they will be burnt by wrath of Bhima and

Arjuna. The sons of Dhritarastra have offended the Pandavas in many ways, and the reactions of these activities will be their ruin.

Yudhisthira then bid farewell to Sanjaya and sent kind words to all the members of the Kuru family. He told Sanjaya, Speak the following words to Duryodhana, Your desire for absolute domination, which torments your heart, is very unreasonable. It has no justification. We have no desire to harm you in any way. O foremost of the Bharatas, either give me back my kingdom of Indraprastha or fight with me! Peace is what we really want. Therefore, if you will not grant us a province then at least give us five villages. Even this will end the quarrel.' Having spoken thus, Yudhisthira, the foremost pious man, sent Sanjaya back to the city of Hastinapura.

Sanjaya then returned and reported all messages given by the Pandavas. In the presence of Dhritarastra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Duryodhana, Ashvatthama, Karna, Jayadratha, and all the Kings assembled for the cause of Duryodhana, Sanjaya relayed all messages given by the Pandavas. The Kuru elders agreed with the Pandava's request for peace, but Duryodhana showed little respect and left the assembly refusing to return anything to the Pandavas.

After all had left, Dhritarastra questioned Sanjaya about the Pandava's strength. Present in the room were Gandhari, Vyasa and Vidura. Please tell me truly, O Sanjaya, of the strength of Krishna and Arjuna.

Krishna and Arjuna have appeared on earth for the protection of the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, Sanjaya replied. With Lord Krishna sitting on Arjuna's chariot, the Kurus will not survive. If the whole universe were to be placed on one scale and Lord Keshava on the other, that same Supreme Lord, who creates the whole cosmos, would tip the scale. Janardana can, at His pleasure, reduce the whole universe to ashes. All good qualities rest in this Divine Being, for He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of this manifested world. Therefore, wherever there is Krishna, then there must certainly be victory. Through Arjuna, Lord Krishna will kill your wicked sons who are addicted to sin. It is by the will of the Supreme Lord Krishna that the wheel of time revolves causing the destruction of all creatures. I tell you truly He is the Lord of time, of death, of this universe, and of movable and immovable objects. The Supreme Personality of Godhead has descended on earth in human form and is perplexing everyone with his internal potency. Those who are devoted to Him can know Him as He is and no one else.

Dhritarastra then called Duryodhana into his room and inquired again about Lord Krishna, O Sanjaya, you say that the one we know as Keshava is the Lord of the Universe. How is it that I am unable to know Him as such?

O King, Sanjaya replied, because you have no knowledge of the Absolute Truth, you are covered by the darkness of ignorance. Even though the Supreme Lord stands in front of you, you will not recognize Him. Aided only by my knowledge, O sire, can you know who this renowned entity really is. That same one who is known as Madhusudana is the cause of material creation. He is the beginning, the middle

and the end of all that be. One who has become devoted to Him can never be vanquished by material existence.

Dhritarastra inquired, How can one come to know Krishna as the Supreme Lord of this entire creation?

One who has given up all worldly pleasures, Sanjaya replied, and taken shelter of His lotus feet, can know Krishna as the universal Lord. One who has cleansed his heart of all impurities can see that same Lord Krishna seated in the heart of every living being as the Supersoul. One can only know that Supreme Being by controlling the senses and restraining from worldly temptations. Fixing the mind on His divine form, one can attain liberation from the imprisonment of birth and death.

Dhritarastra again questioned Sanjaya, I request you, O Sanjaya, to tell me again of the lotus-eyed Krishna. Please tell me of His various names by which one may obtain that most exalted of beings.

O King, Sanjaya replied, I will tell you as many names of the Supreme Lord as I know. Keshava, however, is immeasurable and is above the power of speech to describe. He is called Vasudeva in consequence of his covering all creatures with the curtain of illusion, or of His glorious splendor, or of His being the support of the mighty creation. He is called Vishnu because of his all pervading nature. He is called Madhava because He is the husband of the goddess of fortune. O Bharata, He is called Madhusudana, because he once killed the powerful demon Madhu. He was born in the Satvata race and given the name Krishna. The word krish is the attractive feature of the Lord's existence, and na, means pleasure. When the verb krish is added to the affix na, it becomes Krishna, which indicates the Absolute Truth or the reservoir of all pleasure. He is called Pundarikaksha, meaning one who has lotus-like eyes. He is called Janardana, because he strikes fear into the heart of all atheistic persons. He is also known as Vrishabhakshana. Vrishabha means the Vedas and ikshana means the eye. The union of the two means through the eyes of the scripture He can be seen. The conqueror of hosts is called Aja which means that He is unborn. Krishna is like the sun. The sun appears to take birth on the horizon, but it always exists. Similarly, Krishna appears to take birth from the womb of Devaki, but in actuality He eternally exists. That Supreme Soul is known as Damodara, meaning one who was bound around the waist by His foster mother Yashoda. He is called Hrishikesha because He is the Lord of the senses, and only by His grace can the fleeting senses be controlled. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called Mahavahu, because He holds up the Earth and the sky with His two arms. He is also known as Adhoksaja because He never falls down or suffers deterioration. He is called Narayana because He is the resting place of all living beings. That Supreme Lord is called Purushottama because he is the foremost of all living beings. He possesses knowledge of all things, and is therefore known as Sarva. Truth always resides in Krishna, and He is therefore known as Satya. He is called Ananta because He holds all the planets in their proper orbits. Krishna is the Divine Lord of all beings, and it is He who will come here tomorrow to prevent the slaughter of the Kurus.

Dhritarastra then pleaded with Duryodhana, O my son, let us together seek Lord Krishna's protection and live happily in our kingdom. He is certainly our best friend and a worthy shelter of all.

If the divine son of Devaki, Duryodhana replied, united in friendship with Arjuna, were to kill all persons in the universe, I still would not take shelter of He who is my enemy.

Inflamed, Dhritarastra chastised his evil son, This stupid son of mine has taken his vow to destroy our whole dynasty. Envious, wicked, and proud, he rejects the words of his superiors.

Gandhari then tried to correct her son, You are a fool! You never listen to wisdom that is meant for your own interest. All the elders have spoken in favor of peace, but you alone desire war which will destroy our family. You will remember your father's words when struck dead by Bhimasena's mace.

Dhritarastra then spoke to Sanjaya, I envy those, who, gifted with proper vision, are able to see Vasudeva as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We will soon be able to behold that Supreme Person when He comes here on behalf of the Pandavas. I will then put myself under the protection of Him who has created the whole cosmic manifestation. I can now understand that He is the primeval cause of all causes and the creator of the universe. Every living being sings his glories. He is the foremost learned person and has previously descended as the younger brother of Indra. O, when will I take shelter of Him? Thus Sanjaya and Dhritarastra discussed the glories of the Lord, but Duryodhana could not bear to hear such praise. Due to his envy of Pandu's sons and his insubordination to the Supreme Lord, he was destined for death along with all his brothers, friends and followers.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Udyoga Parva, Entitled, Discussions of Peace Between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

### Chapter Commentary

The Pandavas, obviously, were not interested in war. Yudhishthira requested his kingdom of Indraprastha, and he was willing to overlook all offenses. However, Duryodhana was not interested in peace. Even after he heard the glories of Lord Krishna, he was not willing for peace. He was a determined demon and headed for certain death. This shows that personal association with the Lord is not everything. Many demons had the association of Lord Krishna, but could not surrender to the will of the Lord. Personal association with the Lord is not as important as a pure heart. Those with pure hearts can see the Lord within, and thus they have the

constant association of the Lord. This is confirmed in the Brahma Samhita, premanjana cchurita-bhakti-vilochanena, santah sadaiva hridayeshu viokayanti, yam shyamasundarm achintya-guna-svarupam, govindam adi purusham tam aham bhajami, I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is Shyamasundar, Krishna Himself, with inconceivable, innumerable attributes, whom the pure devotee see with heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love. (B.S. 5.38)

## Chapter Three

### Lord Krishna Instructs the Assembly of Kings

With the permission of King Yudhisthira, Lord Krishna set out for Hastinapura. He took with Him the messages from the Pandavas. The son of Devaki rode on His beautiful chariot drawn by His favorite horses, Saivya, Sugriva, Meghapuspa, and Balahaka. He was followed by ten mighty chariot warriors as well as a thousand horsemen and a thousand foot soldiers.

Understanding through spies that Lord Krishna had left Upaplavya for Hastinapura, Dhritarastra addressed Bhishma, Drona and Vidura in the following words, O scions of the Kuru race, the news we hear is wonderful. Men, women and children are talking about it, and all are speaking respectfully. The citizens are congregating together and discussing it in the open market places. All are saying that Lord Krishna, the slayer of Madhu, is coming to Hastinapura. He is the Lord of all creatures, and on Him rests the creation, maintenance and destruction of this universe. Indeed, intelligence, prowess, wisdom and energy all reside in this best among men. If He is worshiped, he is sure to bestow happiness, and if He is not worshiped, He is sure to be the cause of our suffering. If He is pleased with us, then all our plans will fructify. Let us immediately make arrangements for His reception. Pavilions should be set up along the road, furnished with every object of enjoyment. O Duryodhana, carry out this order, and all our desires will be fulfilled. Following the instructions of the King, Duryodhana made arrangements for many pavilions to be erected along the road to Hastinapura. They were decorated with garlands, pictures, costly silks, and rugs of the finest quality. The finest foods were prepared, and the finest drinks were set aside for Lord Krishna. It was opulence on the level of the heavenly denizens and was meant to bring the Lord of the Universe to the Kaurava's side. However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, did not even cast His glance upon the arrangements of Duryodhana. He stopped at intervals of His Own choosing, and very soon He arrived at Hastinapura.

Before the arrival of Lord Krishna, King Dhritarastra called for Vidura and said to him, O Vidura, Janardana will soon be in Hastinapura. I propose to worship Him with all the opulence that I can afford. I will give Him sixteen golden chariots drawn by the finest horses. I will bestow upon Him eight elephants with large white tusks. I will give Him one hundred maidservants with golden complexions. I will offer Him eighteen thousand woolen blankets, soft to the touch and a thousand deerskins brought from China. Duhshasana's abode, which is more opulent than Duryodhana's, should be cleansed and prepared for His use. All the citizens of Hastinapura should go out of the city to greet Lord Krishna. Bhishma, Drona, as well as my sons may also go out of the city to offer greetings to the universal Lord.

I do not think that you have adopted the path of sincerity, Vidura replied. Do not, from stupidity, cause the destruction of your family members. You desire to give this small token of wealth to Krishna, but He deserves this and much more. I can understand that you don't wish to give this opulence out of a motive to please Him. Behind this gift is deception, falsehood and insincerity. These external acts have revealed your real intention. The Pandavas desire five villages, but you don't want to give them even that. You want to win over the Lord of the Yadu dynasty to your own side by means of wealth. You want to separate Krishna from the Pandavas. I will tell you, however, that you will be unable, by wealth, or attention, or worship, to separate Lord Krishna from Dhananjaya. Keshava will accept from you only a vessel of water for washing His feet and inquiries about His welfare. Other than this, He will not accept your hospitality, for it is saturated with deception. If you actually want to please Krishna, then you should give him what He has come for. After receiving the kingdom due to the Pandavas, He will accept all that you offer Him.

In the presence of Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarastra, Vidura and others, the wicked Duryodhana expressed his ill motivated desire, I can by no means share my wealth with the Pandavas. This is my final decision. Tomorrow, I will imprison Krishna when He comes to our court. When He is confined within the walls of the palace, the Vrishnis and the Pandavas, as well as the whole world, will submit to me. We should carry out this plan in such a way that Krishna will not suspect our intentions.

Responding to the foolish son of Dhritarastra, the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, Bhishma angrily addressed Dhritarastra, Your wicked son, O Dhritarastra, will soon experience death. He disregards our advice and is paving his way toward hellish life. You are also following his path for you allow him to carry out these plans without restraining him. If out of stupidity this imbecile tries to capture Krishna, he will be destroyed in a moment. I will not listen anymore to the words of this foolish person who has abandoned all virtue. Bhishma then rose from his seat and left the assembly inflamed with rage.

It was then announced that Lord Krishna was nearing the city of elephants. All of Dhritarastra's sons except Duryodhana went out of the city to greet him. Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and others also went out to offer a fine reception. Citizens by the thousands came out of the city to glance upon the radiant features of the Supreme Person. There was not one citizen who remained inside his home when he heard that Lord Krishna had entered Hastinapura. The people bowed their heads unto the

slayer of the Madhu demon, and those who could not see the Lord from the ground, ascended to the tops of the mansions to gaze upon the faultless features of the Lord of all creation. They ladies showered upon Him flowers of every description and embraced the transcendental form of the Lord within core of their hearts to their full satisfaction.

Lord Krishna then entered the ash colored palace of Dhritarastra and came into to the beautifully decorated imperial court where the numerous Kings and princes were assembled. The blind monarch stood up along with Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Somadatta. Lord Krishna greeted the kings according to seniority in years. He was then offered a spacious golden seat, set with multicolored jewels, which, at the request of Dhritarastra, Lord Achyuta sat down. Lord Krishna remained there for sometime, laughing and joking with the Kurus, according to their relationship with Him.

After bestowing His association upon the Karuavas, Lord Krishna left their association and went to the abode of Vidura. Vidura was overwhelmed with ecstasy and worshiped Lord Krishna with every auspicious article he had in his possession. While massaging the lotus feet of the Lord, Vidura praised Lord Krishna, I cannot express, O lotus-eyed one, the joy I feel since You have entered my home. You are the inner soul of all creatures and the Lord of all creations. My home has certainly become blessed by Your auspicious presence. Appearing in the Yadu dynasty like an ordinary person, You are bewildering everyone with Your internal potency. It is a great wonder, my Lord, that these fools do not recognize your exalted position. My Lord, I pray that I may always be engaged in Your pure devotional service, and that I may never forget You at any time. Lord Krishna smilingly accepted Vidura's prayers, and they then talked about the situation at hand. Later in the afternoon, Krishna visited Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas. He offered His respects to His aunt who had suffered so much on account of Duryodhana's atrocities. He informed Kunti of her son's welfare and gave her all messages from them.

After pacifying His aunt, He went to Duryodhana's palace. The Supreme Personality of Godhead entered the palace of Dhritarastra's son and saw him seated on a throne surrounded by a thousand kings. He saw Duhshasana, Karna and Shakuni seated near the King, and as He approached, they all rose from their seats and greeted Him. They offered Him a opulent golden throne covered with the finest cloth. They offered the Supreme Personality of Godhead many auspicious gifts and a bounty of wealth. Then Duryodhana invited Lord Krishna to dine at his palace, but Krishna did not accept the invitation. The Kuru King inquired from Lord Krishna with sweet words, which were simply a front for deception and wickedness, Why, O Janardana, have you not accepted the hospitality that is being offered You. You are kind to both the Pandavas and the Kurus. Therefore, please accept our worship.

At the present moment, O King, Lord Krishna replied, you have not inspired me with love. Without any reason you have, from the moment of your birth, been envious of the Pandavas, who are endowed with all magnificent qualities. Who, indeed, could do them the least injury? He who hates them, hates Me; he who loves them also loves Me. Know that the Pandavas and Myself are like a common soul. That

wrathful, uncontrolled person who hates and seeks to injure those who are pious, can never enjoy prosperity in this life. He, however, who tries to win over, by good intentions, persons endowed with good qualities, even though he is adverse to them in his heart, enjoys prosperity in this life. All these offerings are contaminated by sinful intentions, and I will not accept them. The food supplied by Vidura is the only food fit to be eaten.

After saying this, Lord Krishna rose from His seat and left Duryodhana's Palace which was like unto a pit of snakes. He made His way to the abode of Vidura and took His meals there. While Lord Krishna was staying there, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Bahlika came and requested Him in the following words, O best of the Vrishni race, we place at your disposal all our mansions, as well as the wealth in them. However, Lord Krishna did not accept their offers and sent them away with kind words. Lord Krishna and Vidura then spent the rest of the night, discussing about the future of the Pandavas and the chances of a peace proposal.

In the morning Lord Krishna mounted His chariot, and followed by Vidura, Satyaki, Kritavarman and others, made his way to the palace of King Dhritarastra. Upon entering the palace, he was greeted by the assembled kings and given an ornately opulent seat especially made for Him. When Lord Krishna was seated, the great rishis descended from the heavens and arrived at the palace gate. They were escorted into the palace and offered elegant sitting places and duly worshiped. The assembly consisted of King Dhritarastra, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Drona's son, Duryodhana, Duhshasana, and the other brothers, Salya, Karna, Shakuni and the other Kings who were to fight for the cause of Duryodhana. Vidura was given a special seat next to Lord Krishna. All the Kings and rishis in that assembly had their eyes fixed on the transcendental form of Lord Krishna, and so breath taking was that form, that they could not take their eyes away. Even though they drank Lord Krishna's divine form through their eyes, they were not satiated with their repeated gazing.

After Lord Krishna had taken His seat and glanced over all the assembled Princes and Kings, there was complete silence in the imperial court. Then Lord Krishna, whose voice was as deep as that of a drum, spoke to King Dhritarastra the following words, In order that peace may be established in the world, O Bharata, I have come to this city. Your race, owing to its learning and behavior, is most distinguished among the royal dynasties. Joy in seeing others happy, unhappiness at the sight of other's sorrow, sincerity, forgiveness, and truthfulness,-these qualities, O Bharata, prevail amongst the Kurus. Since you are the chief of the Kuru dynasty, you should be the first to restrain one who does not show these virtues. You should know that those wicked sons of yours, headed by Duryodhana, have abandoned virtue, morality and religion-for they behave inimically towards their relatives, the Pandavas. If you are indifferent to your son's actions, it will cause the destruction, of not only your dynasty, but the destruction of all the warrior races of the world. The establishment of peace depends on our joint decision, O descendent of Bharata. If you correct your sons, then they must obey your commands, and if I give orders to the Pandavas, then they will obey My command. If you are backed by the mighty Pandavas, then who in the three worlds could defeat you. If Pandu's sons and your

sons are united, then there is no power on this earth that can destroy them. There will be no profit if all the earthly kings are destroyed. There will be no profit if your sons lie prostrate on the battlefield, their life extinguished from their bodies. Yudhisthira has tolerated untold injustices from your sons. Duryodhana has tried to burn them to death in a house of lac. He has humiliated them and stolen their wealth at a deceitful gambling match. He has tried to unclothe their beloved queen, and this is all with your consent. Still, Yudhisthira is desiring a peaceful solution. It is your duty to give back to the Pandavas the kingdom that is theirs, and thus put a halt to the massacre of the world's population. The decision is yours. The sons of Pandu are ready to act as your obedient order carriers, or they are prepared to fight. Everything depends on you.

After Lord Krishna had spoken words conducive to the Kaurava's benefit, the great sage Parashurama also spoke words of wisdom for Duryodhana and his followers. The great sage Narada then spoke as well as the rishi Kanva. Bhishma, Drona and Vidura also spoke in favor of peace, and after hearing all the good council, Dhritarastra said, O Keshava, the advice You have given is beneficial for the whole world. The great sages and the Kuru elders have spoken the same words of wisdom. I am not, however, independent. Duryodhana never follows the instructions I give to him. Please, therefore, persuade my son whose heart is full of sinful desires. Direct Your good counsel to him, so that his heart may change and our dynasty saved.

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Authority for all living beings, then glanced upon the unscrupulous son of Dhritarastra and advised him as follows, O Duryodhana, listen to My counsel which is meant for your welfare and those that follow you. You are born in a superior dynasty which is known for its wisdom. Those who are born of wicked families have sons that are cruel and shameless. How is it that you are acting like a low born person? Persistence in such behavior is sinful, frightful, wicked and leads one to premature death. If you want to adopt a behavior that is worthy of your race, then make peace with the great and mighty sons of Pandu. This will please your father, as well as the Kuru elders headed by Bhishma. One who accepts the counsel of his elders, which is principled and virtuous, attains a higher destination after this life. One, who does not follow good counsel and follows the dictates of fools, never gains happiness in this world. You have persecuted the sons of Pandu from your birth, although they have never acted as aggressors toward you. All the kings present in this assembly are incapable of facing Bhima, when provoked, on the field of battle. You have in your following, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripa, Bhurisrava, Somadatta, Ashvatthama, and Jayadratha. All these great warriors taken together are incapable of fighting against Dhananjaya. Indeed, Arjuna cannot be defeated by all the heavenly lords combined. Do not set your heart on battle. Do you remember at Khandavaprastha when Arjuna defeated in battle all the gods, asuras and Gandharvas? Do you not remember when Partha encountered the Kuru host at the city of Virata and the consequences? Arjuna has even satisfied Lord Shiva in battle. With Myself driving his chariot, who will be able to face him in battle? Therefore, do not extinguish the Bharata dynasty. Live in peace by making a lasting agreement with the Pandavas. Give them the half of the kingdom they deserve and live in peace with your relatives. Supporting Lord Krishna's counsel, Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and Dhritarastra gave instructions to Duryodhana requesting peace.

When silence fell on the imperial court, all eyes were focused on Duryodhana. All the advice offered was unpleasant to him, and he replied to Lord Krishna as follows, You should not talk, O Keshava, until you have reflected on all circumstances. Indeed, you are uttering harsh words and finding fault in me alone without considering the faults of Pandu's sons. Yourself, Bhishma, Drona Vidura, and my father are chastising me, but I do not find the slightest fault in myself. All of you hate me without reason. O mighty armed Krishna, I do not, even after reflection, find any grave fault in myself. I can not even find any fault however small. The Pandavas joyfully accepted the gambling match, and according to the conditions, they went to the forest. For what reason do the Pandavas accept us as enemies? How will it be possible for them to kill in battle Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Karna, whom even the demigods cannot defeat? O slayer of Madhu, if we are vanquished in battle, then the doors to the heavenly planets will be open to us. We will gladly accept a bed of flowers rather than bow down to the sons of Pandu. That share of the kingdom which was formerly given by my father shall never be given again as long as I live. I will not give unto the Pandavas as much land as to drive the point of a needle.

Hearing these portentous words from the irrational son of Dhritarastra, Lord Krishna calmly replied, If it is your desire to die on a battlefield, then that desire shall be fulfilled. You will lay on the hard ground surrounded by your ministers, brothers and friends. For the injustices you have inflicted on the Pandavas, your whole dynasty will be decimated. You have tried to kill the Pandavas by poison, by fire, and by gambling. You have insulted their wife in an assembly of learned men, and you have attempted to insult them while in the forest. For these vile sins your whole family will be incinerated like trees in a forest fire.

Hearing the prophetic words of Lord Krishna, Duryodhana, who was wicked, cruel, sinful and arrogant, rose up from his seat and left the assembly hall. Lord Krishna then instructed the Kuru elders, All the Kuru family members seem to possess the same mentality, or else why don't you bind this iniquitous person and kill him. I think the time has come for this. In order to save the Bhoja dynasty from the hands of the sinful Kamsa, I killed him, and again enthroned his father Ugrasena. By killing a single person, the whole dynasty has now prospered. To save the Kuru dynasty from extinction, you should seize Duryodhana, Karna, Shakuni and Duhshasana. Binding them with ropes, you should hand them over to the Pandavas. Do not allow the whole warrior race to be slaughtered on one person's account.

When Duryodhana left the assembly, he began to consult with the fiendish Shakuni, The killer of Madhu seeks with Dhritarastra and Bhishma to bind us and turn us over to the Pandavas. We, however, shall seize Him first and throw Him in prison. When the Pandavas have heard that Keshava has been taken prisoner, they will lose their spirit, and in that condition, it will be easy to kill them. Therefore, disregarding my father's protests, let us capture Devaki's son in the presence of all.

When those unscrupulous demons had resolved to carry out their fool hearty plan, Satyaki came to know of it, for he can read the heart of any man. He ordered Kritavarman to array his troops outside the palace and be ready for action. Then, entering the court, he informed Lord Krishna, Dhritarastra and Vidura of the sinister

plot. Duryodhana soon entered the court intending to carry out his foolish plan. Seeing him coming, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Master of all mystics, addressed him, From illusion, O Duryodhana, you think Me alone, and therefore, desire to make Me a prisoner. Here, however, are all the Pandavas, the Vrishnis and the Andhakas. Here are all the Adityas, the Rudras and the Vasus. Saying this, Lord Krishna burst into a loud laughter. From His body came, like a river, the host of heavenly lords, each appearing like lightning. From His forehead appeared the four headed Brahma, and from His chest appeared Lord Shiva. From His arms appeared the great kings of the world. From His mouth, like fire, appeared Agni, the Adityas, the Sadhyas, the Vasus, the Asvins, the Marutas, with Indra and the Visvadevas. From Lord Krishna's two arms came Lord Balarama and Arjuna. Arjuna stood on His right, with Gandiva in hand and Balarama on His left with the club and plough in hand. Behind Him stood Yudhisthira, Nakula and Sahadeva. Before Lord Krishna stood the Yadus, headed by Pradyumna, all with upraised weapons. Lord Krishna manifested manifold arms, each with a weapon shining with great radiance. From His eyes, nose and ears came sparks of fire like the rays of the sun. Duryodhana could not look upon this supremely effulgent form, and all the Kings closed their eyes out of fear. Only Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and the sages present were able to behold this divine manifestation of the universal form. From the firmament the heavenly denizens showered flowers, and the sounds of kettledrums and conches sounded in all directions. When all the earthly Kings had been bewildered, Lord Krishna withdrew His universal form. Then, accompanied by Satyaki and Kritavarman, He walked past the stupid Duryodhana and left Dhritarastra's palace. All the Kuru elders followed Him to His chariot, and upon ascending it, Lord Krishna again advised them, You have witnessed how the uncivilized son of Dhritarastra has ignored the advice given to him. What is there left to say? Prepare yourselves for war. With your permission, I shall now return to Yudhisthira. Lord Krishna then left the palace grounds and headed for Vidura's residence.

That day Gandhari called for Duryodhana and requested him, My dear son, since you will not change your mind and make peace, your death on the battlefield is certain. Tomorrow I want you to come here completely naked. By the power of my chastity, I will protect your body from the attack of any weapon.

The next day Duryodhana was walking toward his mother's quarters, when, suddenly, Lord Krishna appeared before him. Why, O Duryodhana, are you naked?

Somewhat embarrassed, Duryodhana replied, My mother has asked me to come to her quarters completely naked.

You should at least wear some loincloth while in public, Lord Krishna said.

Duryodhana then put on a loin cloth and entered his mother's apartments. Mother, I have come as you have requested, Duryodhana announced. Gandhari then lifted her blindfold and for the first time since her marriage to Dhritarastra, she could see. However, when she saw the loincloth on Duryodhana, she exclaimed, I have told you to come here naked. I could only protect that part of the body that was not clothed.

On the way here, Duryodhana said, I met Krishna, and He asked me to wear this loincloth. Gandhari could then understand that Lord Krishna's plan was supreme and nothing could change the destiny of her son.

Thus Ends the Third Chapter of the Udyoga Parva , entitled, Lord Krishna Instructs the Assembly of Kings.

### Chapter Commentary

This chapter is very instructive on the quality of pure devotion. Lord Krishna went to Hastinapura to make peace. Duryodhana's plan was to induce Lord Krishna to take his side. He want to allure the Lord with material comforts. However, Lord Krishna is not attracted to material benefits for he already owns all material things. He, therefore, rejected Duryodhana's offers and went to the house of Vidura where there was pure devotion. This example should be instructive to us that we cannot buy Lord Krishna with material things. All we can do is saturate our offering with as much love and devotion as we have. This is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita, bhaktya mam abhijanati, yavan yas casmi tattvatah, tato mam tattvato jnatva, visate tad-anantaram, One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God. (B.g. 18.55)

Duryodhana was so foolish that even after seeing a display of the universal form, which was meant for his benefit, he still could not accept Lord Krishna's instructions. The nature of demons is that they will never accept good counsel. Duryodhana's mentality was leading him to a hellish condition. It is the duty of everyone to control lust, anger and greed. Lord Krishna advises this in Bhagavad-gita, tri-vidham narakasyedam, dvaram nasanam atmanah, kamahkrodhas tatha lobhas, tasmad etat trayam tyajet, There are three gates leading to this hell-lust, anger and greed. Every sane man should give these up, for they lead to the degradation of the soul. (B.g. 16.22)

One may ask why Bhishma, Drona or Kripa did not try to stop Duryodhana from his folly? Lord Krishna gave them direct instructions to bind Duryodhana and turn him over to the Pandavas or kill him. Bhishma was a great devotee, a mahajana, so why didn't he follow the Lord's instructions? Aren't pure devotees always subordinate to the will of the Lord? The answer is yes; pure devotees are always under yogamaya, and therefore, it must be seen that Bhishma and other Kuru elders, who were devotees, were bewildered and could not act because of yogamaya. In other words the Lord's mission was to reduce the military burden of the world, and if Bhishma and the others had acted, then the battle of Kurukshetra would have never taken place.

## Chapter Four

### Karna is Offered Kingship of the World

Before leaving Hastinapura, Lord Krishna took Karna, the son of Radha, on His chariot and spoke with him concerning his birth. Lord Krishna revealed the truth to him, O son of Radha, you have worshiped the brahmanas who have realized the truth of the Vedas. Therefore, you know what is the Vedic conclusion regarding the birth of a child. In the past you have not known who your real mother was. This remains a mystery to you. Actually you were born to Kunti before her marriage to Pandu. Your father is the sun god. The daughter of Surasena had received a benediction from Durvasa Muni that she could call any heavenly lord from the higher planets to conceive a child. In her youthful innocence, she called for the sun god, and because the mantra could not prove fruitless, a child was conceived. Out of fear that she would never be able to marry, she placed the child in a basket and cast it afloat on the Ganges. Thus, you are actually known as Kaunteya. The Pandavas are, in reality, your younger brothers. If you come to their side, they will bow at your feet, and you will become the emperor of the world. When you are coronated as King of the earth, Yudhishthira will stand behind you in your chariot. Bhimasena will hold the royal umbrella over your head, and Arjuna will hold the reins of the chariot. Nakula and Sahadeva, as well as Draupadi's five sons, will walk behind you. Let the Pandavas proclaim, 'Victory to Vasusena.' Surrounded by the Pandavas, you will appear like your father, the sun god, followed by his many assistants.

Bewildered upon hearing the shocking facts from Lord Krishna, Karna did not reply, but contemplated the words spoken to him. After a few moments of silence, Karna said, Without a doubt, O Keshava, I believe that your words are truth. From the moral and Vedic understanding, I am the son of Kunti by the Sun god, Vivasvan. I can understand that from the command of Surya, Kunti was forced to abandon me in the Ganges. This is certainly my past history. Why was she so cruel as to have abandoned me in the Ganges to die? What kind of mother is this? When I was found in the Ganges by Adiratha and Radha, they took me into their home and cared for me. Out of affection for me, Radha's breast filled with milk, and she cleaned the urine and stool from my body. My father, Adhiratha, caused all the purificatory performances to be performed by qualified brahmanas. Thus they bestowed upon me the name Vasusena. I have married wives according to his selection, and by them I now have sons and grandsons. O Krishna, my bonds of affection and love are fixed on them. O Govinda, I cannot destroy this affection by means of gold or the whole earth. Duryodhana has been kind to me all these years, and I have shared his kingdom for the last thirteen years. How can I give him up? If I become victorious in battle, then I shall hand over this kingdom to Duryodhana. Without doubt, O slayer of Madhu, You have given me good advice. With You on the chariot of Arjuna, there will be little chance of our victory. If Yudhishthira comes to know that I am the first born son of Kunti, he will not accept the throne. With You as his guide, he is fit to rule this world, assisted by Arjuna and Bhimasena. For the offense I committed in the gambling match to my younger brothers and their queen, I shall lay on the

battlefield slain by Arjuna. I shall witness the second son of Pandu, Bhimasena, drink the blood of Duhshasana on the field of battle. Those great heroes of the Kuru race, Bhishma and Drona, shall fall from their chariots, slain by the sons of Drupada, Shikhandin and Dhristadyumna. Before the end of this great struggle for lordship of the earth, everyone will witness Duryodhana slain by Bhima's mace. All these calamities will surely take place in the subsequent clash of dynasties.

I pray to you, O Hrishiksha, that the warriors of the royal dynasties perish honorably. Let them die on the most sacred of places, Kurukshetra. The achievements accomplished on this battlefield shall open the heavenly realms for those who die on this hallowed ground. As long as the rivers, hills and mountains last, so will the brahmanas recite this great warfare of the Bharatas. The fame achieved in this battle will be the only wealth that the kshatriyas will obtain. O Keshava, bring Kunti's son, Arjuna, before me in combat, and keep our discussion a secret forever.

Lord Krishna then instructed Karna, When you return, say unto Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, that the present month is a pleasurable one. It is spring time, and there are ample fruits and vegetables. The roads are dry, and it is neither too hot nor too cold. Seven days after today is the new moon. Let the battle commence on that day. Speak unto all the kings who have sided with Duryodhana. Tell them that I will fulfill all their desires. When they obtain death by the Pandava's weapons, they will attain the heavenly realm.

Without doubt, O Krishna, Karna replied, a mammoth and ferocious war will take place which will bloody the entire earth. O slayer of Madhu, I see evil omens for the Kurus and auspicious ones for the Pandavas. O descendent of the Vrishni dynasty, that vindictive planet of great effulgence, Saturn, is afflicting the constellation Rohini. This will cause suffering to the living entities of this earth. The planet Mars is heading toward the constellations Anuradhas and Jeshthya, indicating a great slaughter of friends. The planet Mahapat is afflicting the constellation Chitra, and Rahu is attacking the sun. They say that the appearance of these evil portents produces a great carnage. All the auspicious birds like the swans, peacocks and cranes are following the Pandavas, while vultures, hawks and crows follow the chariot of Duryodhana. The gods are showering flesh and blood upon the followers of Duryodhana, and a black circle is appearing about the sun globe. The jackals are howling and fierce birds utter terrible cries. These omens indicate the downfall of the Kauravas and victory for the Pandavas.

I have seen a vision of Yudhisthira ascending to a palace supported by a thousand columns. His brothers were accompanying him, and they were all dressed in white robes. I have also seen the sons of Dhritarastra, along with myself, headed for Yamaraja's abode. I have no doubt that the warriors aligned with Duryodhana shall have to enter the fire of the Gandiva bow.

The destruction of the world is at hand, Lord Krishna prophesied, when My words do not become acceptable to the heart. When the destruction of human life approaches, men take right for wrong and wrong for right.

If, O Krishna, Karna replied, I live through this great battle, then we shall meet here again. Otherwise, O Hrishiksha, we shall certainly meet in mystical worlds above. O sinless one, I think this is the only way we shall meet again. Saying this much, Karna embraced Lord Krishna, and ascending his own chariot, he returned to the presence of Duryodhana, feeling exceedingly disheartened. Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, having finished his business on behalf of King Yudhisthira, then left Hastinapura and returned to the city of Upaplavya.

Upon the failing to obtain peace, Vidura, quite saddened by the attitude of Duryodhana, approached Kunti to tell her what had happened. He informed her, Lord Krishna, as well as the Kuru elders, have failed to obtain peace. The wicked Duryodhana, Shakuni, Duhshasana and Karna are intoxicated with pride. When Krishna returns, without being able to effect peace, the Pandavas will certainly ready themselves for combat. Reflecting on all this, I cannot sleep day or night.

Our grandsire, Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, does not want war, Kunti replied. I also know that the preceptor, Drona, shows more affection for the Pandavas than even his own son. The deceitful Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Shakuni and Karna are the only ones who despise my sons. Out of all of them, Karna is especially powerful. I shall go to him, today, and disclose the truth about his birth. Kunti then related to Vidura how Karna was born from her womb by the sun god, Vivasvan. She told him everything about the benediction from Durvasa; how she set the newborn child in a basket, and let the child float down the river Ganges. She then said, Because he is my son, why should he not follow my orders? Kunti then decided to go to the banks of the Ganges and petition her son with parental words.

Having reached the sacred Ganges, Kunti saw her son, Karna, sitting in meditation and performing his daily worship. She stayed behind him till he had completed his prayers. When Karna felt the warmth of the sun's rays, he turned around and saw Kunti standing between himself and the sun. He was surprised to see such a woman, and he greeted her with joined palms. He said, I am Karna, the son of Radha and Adhiratha. For what reason have you come here? Tell me what I can offer you, for I am a bestower of charity?

Kunti then disclosed to Karna the truth of his birth, You are not actually the son of Radha and Adhiratha. Your birth is divine. You are not a suta by birth. Your real father is the sun god whom you worship daily, and I am your mother. Kunti was standing in the rays of the sun and Karna could not distinguish who she was. He therefore questioned her, Who are you?

I am Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas. Kunti replied. You are my first born son before my marriage to Pandu. Because of the shame of begetting a son while still not married, I had set you afloat on the waters of the Ganges. Your brothers are the Pandavas. It is time to take your place next to your brothers, and conquering the Kurus, enthrone yourself as King. Today, you can embrace your younger brother Arjuna and become the best of friends. If you two are united, there is nothing in this world that you will not accomplish.

After Kunti had spoken, a celestial voice from the solar orb spoke, The words spoken by Pritha are, indeed, true. O Karna, my son, act according to the instructions of your real mother. O tiger among men, you will benefit unlimitedly if you take your stand with the pious sons of Pandu.

When Karna had heard the advice of his real mother and father, he did not waver from his position and spoke to her, O blessed lady, I cannot agree with your statement that to obey your commands is the my highest duty. O mother, I was abandoned by you as soon as I was born. This stain of my birth, being recognized as the son of a suta, has darkened my achievements. I could have died within the river after you set me afloat. If, indeed, I am a kshatriya then I have been deprived of these rights by your neglect. What enemy would have done me a greater injury? Without showing mercy to me by performing my birth rites, you have abandoned me, and now, today, you would have me follow your command? Before today you never sought my welfare as a mother. Why are you now soliciting me except to benefit yourself. If I go to the side of the Pandavas, everyone will think that I have gone because of cowardice. If I take up the your son's cause, then all will consider I have done so for my personal fame, leaving aside my friendship with Duryodhana. Your instructions, however beneficial, I cannot obey. Your request, however, will not prove to be fruitless. I will promise you, though able to kill all your sons except Arjuna, I will not do so. Arjuna, alone, I will fight with, and killing him or being killed by him, I will achieve lasting fame. O blessed lady, the number of your sons will always remain not less than five. Either I will be killed by Arjuna, or Arjuna will be slain in battle.

Hearing these words, Kunti, who was trembling from grief, embraced her son who remained unmoved by the emotion of his real mother. She then requested, O my son, you have granted to four of your brothers the assurance of safety. Please remember this promise at the time of the battle.

Karna replied, Let it be so. Kunti then left her son at the bank of the Ganges and returned to her own apartments.

Thus Ends the Fourth Chapter of the Udyoga Parva, Entitled, Karna is offered Kingship of the World.

## Chapter Five

### The Colossal Armies Moved to Kurukshetra

After Lord Krishna had left Hastinapura, Dhritarastra invited Vidura for consultation. O pious Vidura, you always contemplate our family's welfare. Now that Duryodhana has defied Lord Krishna's orders, what should be our next course of action.

Your dynasty is doomed! Vidura replied, Why do you inquire after already being instructed by the Lord of all creation, Lord Shri Krishna? O King, You must now return the legitimate share to King Yudhisthira, who has no enemies and who has been forbearing through untold sufferings due to your offenses. He is waiting with his younger brothers, among whom is the revengeful Bhima, breathing heavily like a snake. Surely you are afraid of him. Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, has accepted the sons of Pritha as His kinsmen, and all the kings of the world are with Lord Shri Krishna. He is present in His home with all His family members, the Kings and princes of the Yadu dynasty, who have conquered a unlimited number of rulers, and He is their Lord. You are maintaining offense personified, Duryodhana, as your infallible son, but he is envious of Lord Krishna. And because you are thus maintaining a nondevotee of Krishna, you are devoid of all auspicious qualities. Relieve yourself of this ill fortune as soon as possible and do good to the whole family!

While speaking thus, Vidura, whose personal character was esteemed by respectable persons, was insulted by Duryodhana, who was swollen with anger and whose lips were trembling. Duryodhana was in company with Karna, his younger brothers, and his maternal uncle Shakuni. The wicked son of Dhritarastra spoke harshly to the gentle Vidura, Who asked him to come here, this son of a kept mistress? He is so crooked that he spies in the interest of the enemy against those on whose support he has grown up. Toss him out of the palace immediately and leave him with only his breath.

Thus being pierced by arrows through his ears and afflicted to the core of his heart, Vidura placed his bow on the door and quit his brother's palace. He was not sorry, for he considered the act of the external energy to be supreme. He left Hastinapura to travel on pilgrimage. He did not want to see the outcome of the fratricidal war.

By his piety, Vidura achieved the advantages of the pious Kauravas. After leaving Hastinapura, he took shelter of many places of pilgrimages, which are the Lord's lotus feet. With a desire to gain a high order of pious life, he traveled to holy places where thousand of transcendental forms of the Lord are situated. He began to travel alone, thinking only of Krishna, through various holy places like Ayodhya, Dvaraka and Mathura. He traveled where the air, hill, orchard, river and lake are all pure and sinless and where the forms of the Unlimited decorate the temples. Thus he performed the pilgrim's progress. While so traversing the earth, he simply performed duties to please the Supreme Lord Hari. His occupation was pure and independent.

He was constantly sanctified by taking his bath in holy places, although he was in the dress of a mendicant with hair matted and no bed on which to lie. Thus he was always unseen by his various relatives. On the bank of the River Sarasvati there are eleven places of pilgrimage, namely, Trita, Usana, Manu, Prithu, Agni, Asita, Vayu, Sudasa, Go, Guha and Sraddhadeva. Vidura visited all of them and duly performed rituals. There were also many other temples of various forms of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Vishnu, established by great sages and demigods. These temples were marked with the chief emblems of the Lord, and they reminded one always of the original Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna. While traveling on pilgrimage, Vidura met the great devotee, Maitreya and received transcendental knowledge from him. Thus he attained the lotus feet of the Lord, the aspiration of all liberated persons.

When Lord Krishna had returned to Upaplavya from Hastinapura, He gave to the Pandavas all messages. Lord Krishna related to them how Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Vidura, and Dhritarastra had requested peace. He also informed them of Gandhari's plea for peace to her son Duryodhana. Krishna then explained how the foolish Duryodhana had rejected all peace proposals and walked out of the assembly. He also explained to the Pandavas how He revealed the divine manifestation of Visvarupa and still the sinful Duryodhana could not be brought to a peaceful settlement. Lord Krishna then informed them, I asked for the minimum of five villages to settle the quarrel, but still that wicked soul would not part with that share. I can, therefore, see that chastisement, and nothing else, is the means to destroy their false pride. Indeed, all those kings followed by their massive armies are on the march to Kurukshetra. They will not, O son of Pandu, give back your kingdom without battle.

Hearing the ominous words of Lord Krishna, Maharaja Yudhisthira addressed his brothers, You have heard what has taken place in the court of the assembled Kurus. O best of men, let us take our army to the Holy Kurukshetra field and arrange them in proper formation. We now have seven akshauhini divisions of troops assembled for victory. The names of the leaders of these seven divisions are Drupada, Virata, Dhristadyumna, Sikhandin, Satyaki, Chekitana and Bhimasena. All of them are seasoned veterans of war and mature in the use of weapons. Please tell us Sahadeva, who amongst the great warriors is fit to be the commander in chief of this vast army.

That person who is closely related to us, Sahadeva replied, and who is skilled in the use of weapons and irresistible in battle, should be our commander. I am referring to the King of the Matsyas, Virata. Relying on him, we will certainly regain our lost kingdom. He will be able to contend in battle the mighty Bhishma and the other great chariot fighters.

After Sahadeva had spoken, Nakula gave his opinion, I think that person who is endowed with respectability, strength, prosperity, and knowledge of the scriptures should be our leader. There are many here who fit these qualifications. However, that bull among men, Drupada, our father in law, who seeks to challenge Drona and Bhishma, should be our leader.

After the two sons of Madri had given their opinion, Arjuna spoke to Yudhisthira as follows, That person of celestial birth, who was born from the sacrificial fire along with weapons and chariot, and who was born to conquer Drona should be our leader. I am referring to Dhristadyumna, the son of Drupada. He is a experienced general of weapons, warfare and the different kinds of formations necessary to defeat the opposing enemy. He will surely conquer Bhishma and Drona in battle and bring us victory.

Bhima then gave his assessment, In my opinion, the son of Drupada, Sikhandin, who was conceived for killing Bhishma, is the most qualified person to be our leader. While releasing weapons in battle, he resembles Lord Ramachandra Himself. I do not see any other person who can challenge grandfather Bhishma in battle and kill him. It is for this reason that he should be chosen as our commander in chief.

King Yudhisthira then gave his opinion, O assembled heroes, the strength and weakness of everything in the universe, and the intentions of every person here, are known to the virtuous Lord Krishna. Skilled or unskilled, old or young, let him be the leader of my forces whom Krishna chooses. Lord Krishna will be the cause of our success or failure. Let the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that foremost of persons, pick who shall lead the army. Having selected our leader, we will, under Krishna's orders, march to the holy field of Kurukshetra.

After hearing the of Maharaja Yudhisthira's humble submission and his brother's suggestion, the lotus-eyed Krishna spoke the following words, O King, I fully approve the selection of any of the warriors mentioned. All of them are competent to defeat the opposing army. Indeed, they can challenge Indra himself in battle, let alone the wicked and sinful sons of Dhritarastra. O great hero, for your good cause, I made great efforts to prevent this combat by peaceful means. Because of our endeavor, we are freed from our responsibility for righteous behavior. Indeed, the sons of Dhritarastra will never be able to hold their ground when they come face to face with Dhananjaya and Satyaki. Our army possesses invincible strength. As regards to our leader, I favor that illustrious champion of great warriors, Dhristadyumna.

When the commander in chief was selected, all the heroic generals made preparations to move their armies to the holy Kurukshetra where great sages had performed austerities and sacrifices, recently and in bygone ages. Followed by millions upon millions of men, who were uttering war cries, the Pandavas along with the other distinguished generals made their way to that holy place of pilgrimage. The ladies headed by Draupadi remained in Upaplavya. The Pandava's army appeared like a vast ocean, and as it headed for Kurukshetra, it could be observed from a hilltop that it covered one point of the horizon to the other. Upon reaching that sacred spot, Yudhisthira caused the troops to encamp on that part of the field that was level, cool and abounding in grass. Lord Krishna and Arjuna blew on their conchshells producing a rumble that sounded like thunder. Hearing this, the Pandava army was filled with joy.

Duryodhana also organized his eleven akshauhini divisions on the sacred plane of Kurukshetra. There were hundreds of thousands of huge tents that were filled with food and drink of various kinds. There was also bedding for the tired and wounded. There were thousands of physicians to take care of those who fell in battle. In the armies of both sides, there were hundreds and thousands of chariots filled with different kinds of weapons. There were also tents erected to repair the chariots that were damaged in battle. The chariots of both armies were filled with quivers of arrows, javelins, long handled spears, barbed darts, heavy maces, clubs made of wood and metal, long ropes, pots filled with poisonous snakes, clubs having iron spikes, swords, short and long bows, battle axes, forked lances and extra armor. Each chariot was made of the sturdiest material and intricately carved. Pearls and other valuable gems were embedded in an artistic way. There were characters embossed on the chariot with gold and silver. To each chariot was yoked four horses of the best breed. In each chariot there was one hundred bows.

There were thus thousands of chariots surrounded by thousands of elephants. The chariots were like a town and the elephants were like the walls of a town. On the backs of each of the elephants there were seven warriors. Two of those warriors were armed with hooks, two were excellent bowmen, two were first rate swordsmen, and one was armed with a lance and trident. There were innumerable elephants like these and each had innumerable weapons on their backs. There was also hundreds and thousands of horses who were well trained and bedecked with gold ornaments. The horsemen were well skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, the javelin and the sword. The foot soldiers were numbered in millions. According to divisions, they wore armor of different kinds and carried weapons of different kinds. Around each chariot there was ten elephants, and unto each elephant was assigned ten horses and around each horse was ten infantrymen to guard the horses. In the reserve army that was kept for emergencies, there was fifty elephants to guard each chariot; and unto each elephant there was a hundred horsemen and around each horseman there was attached seven foot soldiers. It was in this way that the Kaurava army was arrayed in force.

After everything was arranged according to King Duryodhana's desire, that mighty warrior approached Grandfather Bhishma and appealed to him as follows, Without a commander, even a mighty army is routed in battle. As regards to your prowess, you are like the great Indra himself. You are like the sun among the luminaries or the moon amongst the stars. You are incapable of being slain, and therefore I request that you become our commander.

It will be as you wish, Bhishma replied, I have given a promise to you that I will fight on your side, but I will not be able to kill the Pandavas. Protected by Lord Krishna, those heroes are incapable of being slain. There is not a warrior on earth that is equal to me except Arjuna, the son of Kunti. However, he will never seek to fight with me openly. With the power of my weapons, I can destroy the entire world along with all its planets, demigods and demons. The sons of Pandu, being protected by the Supreme Lord Krishna, cannot be killed by me or anyone else. I will, however, slaughter their forces at a rate of ten thousand a day. There is one other condition on which I will become your commander. That is either Karna should

fight first or I will fight first. This son of Radha always boasts of his prowess in battle, comparing it with mine.

Hearing the condition set down by the grandsire, Karna replied, As long as Shantanu's son lives, O King, I will not fight. After Bhishma is slain, I will take to the battlefield to duel with the wielder of the Gandiva bow.

When Ganga's son was officially placed as the commander in chief, the King became joyful and distributed an abundant amount of presents. He caused the musicians to play their instruments and blow their conchshells loudly. Suddenly, although the sky was cloudless, a bloody shower fell, making the ground muddy. Fierce whirlwinds rose and earthquakes shook the ground, depressing the hearts of all the warriors. Unembodied voices were heard and meteors fell from the heavens. Jackals and crows howled fiercely, indicating a great calamity. All this was observed after the installation of Bhishma as the commander in chief of Duryodhana's forces.

Knowing that a great slaughter of men was about to take place, Lord Balarama, the elder brother of Lord Krishna, came there along with Akrura, Gada, Samba, Uddhava, and Pradyumna. Seeing Him arrive, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, and the twins stood up out of respect. He was received royally, and that bull among the Yadus worshiped Drupada and Virata who were senior in years. He then sat on the same throne as that of Yudhisthira. He cast his glance upon His younger brother, Lord Krishna and began to speak, This slaughter of the warrior race is inevitable, O Krishna, and it is the will of providence. I hope, however, that I will be able to see all of you, with your friends, come out safely from this battle. I have repeatedly asked You, my dear brother, to be partial to both sides, but You have not listened to my plea. You have aligned Yourself with the Pandavas, and therefore, their victory is assured. As regards to Myself, I will not fight on either side. Whatever side You have chosen, I will give moral support, for Your desires are supreme. I shall now travel on pilgrimage, for I will not be able to watch with indifference the annihilation of the Kauravas. Lord Balarama then left their presence and started on His pilgrimage.

About this time there came to the Pandava's camp, the son of King Bhishmaka, named Rukmi. Rukmi was the student of Drona, and the ruler of the whole southern country. He had learned the science of warfare and was given a celestial bow named Vijaya that belonged to the great Indra. It was equal to the Gandiva bow given by Varuna, and the Sarnga owned by Lord Krishna. Rukmi had come to the Pandava camp with an akshauhini division of troops. He came into the midst of the assembly of Kings and offered them all respects. He then boasted to Dhananjaya, If, O son of Pandu, you are afraid, I am here to help you. The assistance I will give you will be unbearable to the enemy. There is no man who can equal my prowess. I will kill in battle any of the great heroes, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna or Ashvatthama. All of you may rest while I kill all these Kings of the earth. I will then hand over your ancestral kingdom which is yours according to birth.

To this puffed up fool, Arjuna replied, Born as the son of Pandu, having the great Drona as my teacher, having Lord Krishna as my ally, and bearing the bow Gandiva, how can I say that I am afraid? I have fought with the Gandharvas,

the Nivatakavachas, the Kalakeyas, and the heavenly lords combined, as well as the Kaurava host. O son of Bhishmaka, I am not afraid, nor do I have any need of your assistance! You may either go or stay as it pleases you.

Having been shunned because of his false pride, Rukmi left the Pandava's camp and went to Duryodhana. When Duryodhana heard the boastful words of Rukmi, he rejected him in the same way. Thus the two kings, Baladeva and Rukmi, desisted from battle and went their separate ways.

At this time Duryodhana called for Uluka, the son of Shakuni, and ordered him to deliver messages to the Pandavas. Uluka left the presence of Duryodhana and made his way to the Pandava camp. He presented himself before Yudhisthira and said, I have come as a messenger on behalf of King Duryodhana. I, therefore request you not to be angry with me if I repeat the words Duryodhana has instructed me to say!

Hearing this request, Maharaja Yudhisthira replied, You have nothing to fear, Uluka. Repeat the messages you have brought from the vile Duryodhana.

Uluka then said to Yudhisthira, These are the words Duryodhana has directed to you, You were defeated in dice and your dear wife was brought into the assembly. Any person who calls himself a man would have given way to anger. You have lived in exile for thirteen years, and now is the time to become a man. Tomorrow, engage us in battle, we who have Bhishma for our leader. Your pride will be destroyed, and your body will lay on the ground devoid of life. O fool of little understanding, how will you fight with me while I am stationed in the midst of my elephant army?

Uluka then turned to Arjuna and repeated the harsh words of Duryodhana, Can you fight without bragging, O Arjuna? You boast about yourself too much. I know you have Krishna for your ally, and I know you have the Gandiva bow which is a full six cubits long. However, I have ownership of the whole world. So what is the use of your weapons and allies? For thirteen years I have enjoyed sovereignty of the world, and I shall continue to rule in the same way. Previously it was Draupadi that saved you at the first gambling match and not the Gandiva. You have lived this last year as menial servants to Virata. This is manliness? You have worn braids in your hair as a eunuch and taught girls how to dance. This is the way heroes act? Once you have dived into the ocean of the Kaurava army which has Timingila fish for its leaders, you will not come out alive, nor will any of your friends. Indeed, it is impossible for you to win a kingdom, like one trying to obtain heaven without ascetic merit.

Uluka then addressed Bhima with Duryodhana's harsh message, O son of Pritha, I see that you have become a cook in Virata's kitchen. Is this evidence of your manhood? You have taken a vow to kill myself, Duhshasana, and my other brothers. Now, O cook, the time has come to carry out your boastful vow. There is a difference, However, between cooking and fighting. The fact of the matter is that you will have to lie on the Kurukshetra field, your head smashed by my mace. The promises that you made in the great assembly will then prove to be uttered in vain.

Uluka then turned to Nakula and Sahadeva and repeated the scathing words of Dhritarastra's sinful son. He also challenged Dhristadyumna and Sikhandin to carry out their vows of killing Drona and Bhishma respectively. It was known that Sikhandin was formerly a female in his previous life. She was known by the name of Amba who wanted Bhishma for her husband.

Uluka then addressed Lord Krishna with a message from Duryodhana, I challenge You to withstand my prowess on the field of battle. Exhibit once again that same form which you assumed in the Kaurava court. Your mystic tricks will not save You or Arjuna. We also are capable of assuming different forms by mystic power. Without any reason, O Krishna, You have achieved fame in the three worlds. You have been a slave to King Kamsa, and therefore, a King like myself should not dress in armor to fight You.

After hearing the piercing words of Duryodhana that were spoken out of ignorance, the Pandavas were thoroughly provoked to anger. They stood and began to stretch their arms. Their eyes were red, and there was great anger on their faces. Bhimasena, his face cast to the ground, began to breathe heavily like a snake. Arjuna wiped the sweat off his forehead, and tried to restrain himself from annihilating the Kaurava army at that moment. The other kings were also quite incensed at the words of Duryodhana and rose from their seats ready for battle. Bhima, gnashing his teeth, licking his tongue and squeezing his hands, spoke to Shakuni's son, Hear the message you should repeat to that deceitful person. We, the Pandavas, always seek to satisfy our older brother. It was for this reason that we tolerated your atrocious activities. Now is the time to fight and fulfill your words. I have vowed to kill you and all your brothers. O sinful fool, do not think that it will not happen. Even if Yamaraja assists you, the Pandavas will still accomplish what they have vowed! I will surely drink Duhshasana's blood. I swear this by my soul.

Arjuna's reply was short and to the point. He said, When tomorrow comes, stand across from my division. I will give you my answer from the Gandiva bow. Eunuchs answer in words, but kshatriyas reply in prowess! Hearing this reply to Duryodhana's abusive words, all the warriors applauded Arjuna.

Lord Krishna then spoke to Uluka, Tell Duryodhana this, O wicked soul, tomorrow, I hope that you can act like a man and face Arjuna and Myself on the battlefield. O fool, you think that I will not fight? If my anger is excited, I may annihilate all the warriors on the side of the Kauravas. You will not be able to hide from the Gandiva's arrows. Even if you run to the farthest corners of the world or sink into the ocean, you will see Arjuna's chariot behind you. You think, O fool, that Bhima's words will not come true, and I warn you that Duhshasana's blood has already been drunk. You are speaking boastful words, but we consider you no better than straw.'

Arjuna, before sending Uluka back to Duryodhana, sent this message, Listen, O Duryodhana, You are a coward. You are relying on the strength of others whom you have forced to fight for you. Having initiated Bhishma as your commander, whose passions are under control and who is endowed with great wisdom, you boast these annoying words. By this act, you have brought our grandfather under the sway of

death. You think that because he is our grandfather, we will not fight with him. However, I take this vow that I will kill Ganga's son in the presence of all warriors. After hearing all the messages to be communicated to Duryodhana, Uluka went back to the Kaurava's camp.

Maharaja Yudhishthira then ordered the troops be arrayed in battle formation. Millions upon millions of soldiers lined up in a formation which covered a twelve mile area. He gave encouragement to all the soldiers, and he ordered Arjuna to fight with Karna, Bhima to fight with Duryodhana, Dhristaketu with Salya, Uttamaujas with Kripa, Nakula with Kritavarman, and Satyaki was ordered to fight against Jayadratha, the ruler of the Sindus. He pitted Shikhandi against Bhishma, Sahadeva against Shakuni, Chekitana against Sala, and the five sons of Draupadi against the Trigartas. He urged Abhimanyu to fight with Karna's son, Vrishasena, and he ordered Dhristadyumna to fight with the preceptor Drona. And having arrayed his troops in battle formation, King Yudhishthira waited with a peaceful mind for the morning sun.

Thus Ends the Fifth Chapter of the Udyoga Parva, Entitled, The Colossal Armies Move to Kurukshetra.

## Chapter Six

### Bhishma Assesses the Heroes and Reveals Shikhandi's Mysterious Birth

When the veritable sea of troops had been arrayed in their proper positions, the grandsire, Bhishma, inspired Duryodhana's heart as follows, O my grandson, today I will take command of your army, for I am well educated in the science of formations. I know all the battle arrays of the celestial lords. With these I will confuse the Pandavas. I will fight the enemy protecting your army according to the rules of military science. Let your doubts be dispelled.

O Grandsire, Duryodhana replied, I have no fear, from even all the demigods and demons united, what to speak of these insignificant sons of Pandu. I now desire, O son of Ganga, to know who, amongst this vast ocean of warriors, are to be counted as rathis and adirathis. You are well acquainted with the prowess of the earth's heroes, and therefore, I, and the kings present, desire to hear this.

Listen, O son of Gandhari, Bhishma said, to the prowess of those principal warriors in both these armies. In your divisions there are many hundreds of thousands of rathis. I will, however, name only the principal ones. Dhritarastra's hundred sons headed by yourself are all rathis, out of which you are the most powerful. Then, O King, come myself, the leader of your troops. I will not speak of my own prowess, for I am already known to you. The foremost wielders of weapons, Kritavarman, the

chief of the Bhojas, is an adirathi. He will greatly assist you in this battle, and cannot be humiliated by the enemy. The ruler of Madras, Salya, in my opinion is a maharathi. He will fight with the other maharathis on the Pandava side. He will resemble the ocean as it heads toward the beach. The mighty bowman, Bhurisravas, the son of Somadatta, is a maharathi, and he will certainly create havoc amongst the enemy troops. The King of Sindhu, Jayadratha, is equal to two rathis. He has acquired a benediction from Lord Shiva that he can defeat the Pandavas in battle, and he is therefore reckless with his life. Sudhakshina, the ruler of the Kambhojas, is in my judgement equal to a single rathi. Coming from the province of Mahismati, King Nila, is one of your great rathis. The Kings of Avantipura, Vinda and Anuvinda, are considered to be excellent rathis. These two heroes will consume the enemy troops with spiked darts and maces. The Trigarta brothers headed by Susharman are all single rathis. They are distinguished warriors and will fight with the best soldiers on the Pandava's side. The mighty bowman, Kripa, the son of Saradwat is, O King, a maharathi. He is as invincible as Kartikeya himself. He will roam from one part of the battlefield to the other like a blazing fire.

Your maternal uncle, Shakuni, Bhishma continued, is equal to a single rathi. His troops are known for their prowess and will cut down the enemy troops like the wind. The mighty bowman, Ashvatthama, the son of Drona, is a maharathi. Like Arjuna, he can release arrows with such rapidity that they touch one another in flight. If he desires, he can destroy the whole world. There is, however, one defect in him for which I do not consider him a rathi or a maharathi. This person is too attached to the bodily conception of life, and therefore, does not want to die. Still he is powerful and can be compared to Yamaraja himself. The son of Bharadwaja, Drona, will achieve victory in many battles for your pleasure. Endowed with unsurpassable prowess, he can single-handedly fight, by means of his celestial weapons, all the heavenly lords, Gandharvas and human beings together. That illustrious warrior is a great maharathi. Vrishasena, the son of Karna, is one of the celebrated chariot warriors. He is to be considered a maharathi. That person who never retreats in battle and resembles Yamaraja himself, Bahluka, is in my judgement an adiratha. That cruel chief of the rakshasas, Alambhusa is a maharathi. He can surpass all the rakshasa warriors in the use of weapons. The ruler of Pragjyotisha, the heroic Bhagadatta, is also considered a adiratha. Riding on his elephant Supritika, he will annihilate the enemy forces. Regarding your dear friend, Karna, Surya's son, who is proud of his skill and who is devoid of any good sense, in my judgement he is neither a rathi or an adiratha. He has been stripped of his natural coat of mail and his celestial earrings by Indra. He has been cursed by his teacher, Parashurama, and also by a brahmana. When he challenges Arjuna, he will not leave the battlefield with his life. Therefore, he is, in my judgement, half a rathi.

Hearing this, Radha's son, expanded his eyes in fury, and spoke harshly to Bhishma, O grandsire, these derogatory words have entered my ears like steel arrows. I will tolerate it for Duryodhana's sake. Indicating that I am only half a rathi means you think me a coward. I speak truthfully when I say that you are an enemy to the Kurus. Who else would seek to disunite all the kings present here. Alone, I will decimate the Pandava army. Addressing Duryodhana, Karna said, I will not, O King,

fight as long as Bhishma is alive. After Bhishma has been slain, I will engage in combat with all the maharathis on Yudhisthira's side!

Look at me, O Grandfather, King Duryodhana said. Our business at hand is very urgent. Both of you will render me great service. I now desire to hear the prowess of the outstanding chariot fighters among the enemy. I desire to hear the strength and weaknesses of the foe. The night is almost over, and the dawn is coming, and with it, the great battle will commence.

I have indicated to you, Bhishma replied, your maharathis, rathis and half rathis. Now listen to the prowess of the warriors on the Pandava's side. The King himself, the son of Pandu and Kunti, is a mighty rathi. His chariot will ride above the ground like the chariots of the celestial heavenly gods. Bhimasena, O King, is regarded to equal eight rathis. He is endowed with the vitality of ten thousand elephants, and with a mace in hand there is none equal to him. Those two bulls among men, the twin sons of Madri, are great rathis. They equal in beauty and prowess the two Asvini-kumaras. Regarding Arjuna, who has Lord Narayana as his charioteer, there is none amongst the warriors on both sides who can be his equal. Indeed, even amongst the gods and demons, there is none his equal. The chariot on which Arjuna will fight is celestial and cannot be destroyed. The monkey that rides on the banner is also divine and cannot be slain. The Gandiva bow and the two inexhaustible quivers of Partha were given to him by Varuna. He has obtained all the celestial weapons from the heavenly gods, including the thunderbolt weapon and the Pashupati astra. Only myself and Drona can challenge him. However, he is young and skillful, whereas we are old and our energy is easily spent.

The five sons of Draupadi, O Monarch, Bhishma continued, are maharathis. Virata's son, Uttara Kumara is considered a great rathi. The mighty-armed Abhimanyu is as great a maharathi as Arjuna himself. Remembering his father's sufferings, he will slaughter the troops on your side. Satyaki, the descendant of Sini, is an esteemed chariot fighter and must be regarded as a maharathi. Uttamauja and Yudhamanyu are also great chariot fighters. They will fight recklessly, not considering their lives. They are in my opinion great rathis. The aged Kings, Virata and Drupada, both endowed with outstanding prowess, are maharathis. Though advanced in years they will combat the greatest warriors. Shikhandi, the son of Drupada, is, O King, one of Yudhisthira's foremost maharathis. Formerly he was a woman. In battle he will earn great fame. The great warrior, Dhristadyumna, is in my judgement a adirathi. He took birth from the sacrificial fire for the sole purpose of slaying Drona. His prowess is invincible. Dhristaketu, the heroic leader of the Chedis, the son of Shishupala, is a maharathi. The subjugator of the enemy, Kunitbhoja, the maternal uncle of the Pandavas, is in my opinion an adirathi. That prince of the rakshasas, Ghatotkacha, O King, born of Hidimva and Bhima, is in my opinion a mighty maharathi.

Grandfather Bhishma continued, I have now assessed all the rathis, adirathis and maharathis. I will fight with all these warriors with the exception of Shikhandi. I will not strike or kill that prince of the Panchalas. He was formerly in this life a woman and also in his previous life a woman. I have taken a vow that I will not kill such a person. I will not fight with this prince, nor will I be able to kill the sons of Kunti!

Duryodhana inquired, For what reason, O grandsire of the Bharatas, will you not kill Shikhandin even though he will approach you with upraised weapons?

Formerly this Shikhandi was a woman in his previous life, Bhishma replied. Once upon a time, when I saw that my brother Vichitravirya was ready for marriage, I went to the kingdom of Kashi and abducted the King's three beautiful daughters from the svayamvara ceremony. The names of these princesses were Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika. Taking them by force, I defeated all who opposed me, including King Salwa. When I arrived in Hastinapura, I bestowed those three beautiful princesses upon Vichitravirya. However, the eldest of the princesses, Amba, informed me that during the Svayamvara she had already chosen Salwa for her lord. She pleaded with me to allow her to go to his kingdom. In consultation with my mother and the brahmanas, I agreed to let her go. She went to Salwa's kingdom, but he rejected her and sent her out of his palace. She then went to the forest to practice austerities, but the great sages told her to go back to her father. She then informed them of all that had happened, and they advised her to speak to Parashurama, my preceptor. It so happened that in due course of time the son of Jamadagni, Parashurama, came to the sage's ashrama. When that powerful hero heard what had happened to her, he felt sympathy and said he would help her. He called for me requesting, This girl has been touched by you, and now even King Salwa will not take her. You should now save her by accepting her in marriage.' I replied to my martial guru, I cannot marry this girl to my brother, since she has chosen Salwa for her lord. She pleaded with Salwa, but he has rejected her. What can I do? I have taken a vow of celibacy, and that vow I will not break.' Parashurama then gave me the choice, either to marry the girl or fight with him. Since I could not agree to marry her, I chose to fight with my preceptor, although I tried to appease his anger with sweet words.

Then, mounting our chariots, Bhishma continued, we went to Kurukshetra. We fought for many days, but my preceptor was not able to defeat me. Desisting from any further fighting, he went to Amba and told her that he could not persuade me to marry her by commands or warfare. Amba, feeling frustrated, then went to the forest and performed severe austerities for many years. She desired to gratify the renowned demigod, Lord Shiva. When Lord Shiva was satisfied with her, he appeared before her and informed her that in her next life she would be born as the King Drupada's son and would cause my death. After receiving this benediction, she made a funeral pyre out of logs, and placing herself in the fire, she gave up her body. She has now taken birth as Shikhandi, who possesses extraordinary prowess. In my opinion he is a maharathi.

When Amba took birth in the family of Drupada, Bhishma continued, she took birth as a girl. Drupada himself had worshiped Lord Shiva for a child who would kill me. Lord Shiva appeared before him and told him that he would beget a female child that would later become a male. He then disappeared from that place. In due course Drupada's queen gave birth to a beautiful girl with lotus eyes. They named her Shikhandi. The queen told everyone that a boy had taken birth, remembering the promise of Lord Shiva. This secret was kept for many years. When it came time for Shikhandi to be married, Drupada arranged for the daughter of Hiranyavarman, the

King of the Dasarnakas, to be his wife. A wedding ceremony was arranged, but when Hiranyavarman's daughter came to know in due course that Shikhandi was a woman, she informed her father of the fraud. Outraged and feeling humiliated, Hiranyavarman gathered a huge army to attack King Drupada. When Drupada came to know of this, he felt like a thief caught in the act. However, remembering Lord Shiva's promise, he sent word to Hiranyavarman that the rumor was not true. In the meantime, he prepared himself for war. When Shikhandi found out the suffering her parents were going through, she left the city to end her life by fasting. She soon found a forest that was owned by a powerful yaksha. No human beings were allowed to go there. Despite this she roamed the forest and upon seeing a beautiful mansion, she entered it and began to perform austerities. The owner of the mansion, a yaksha named Stunakarna, saw her and asked why she was fasting. Shikhandi then told him everything. The yaksha, feeling compassion, promised to give her his manhood for a certain time. Both agreed and Shikhandi left the yaksha's mansion as a man, and the yaksha became a woman. Shikhandi returned to Drupada's capital and told her father about the temporary manhood. Drupada excitedly sent news to King Hiranyavarman and invited him to inspect his son regarding his manhood. King Hiranyavarman sent to Drupada's city many beautiful women who inspected Shikhandi and confirmed that he was a man. They told the King of the Dasarnakas that Shikhandi was actually a male, and the King again made friends with Drupada.

Bhishma continued, Meanwhile, the lord of wealth, Kuvera went to Stuna's mansion and requested his presence. When Kuvera saw and heard what had happened, he cursed Stuna to remain a woman forever. However, Stuna's servants begged Kuvera for a time limit on the curse, and Kuvera said that as long as Shikhandi lived, Stuna would have to be a woman. Upon the death of Shikhandi, he would receive his manhood.

After King Hiranyavarman had left Drupada's capital, Shikhandi returned to Stuna's abode to give back his manhood. When Shikhandi learned of Kuvera's curse, he considered it the will of providence. He then returned to the city of Drupada and remained a man, a great maharathi.

O King, this is the history of Shikhandin, who has been born a woman and now transformed to manhood. Formerly she was Amba, the daughter of the King of Kashi. If he challenges me to battle, I will not look at him for a moment, nor will I release my weapons at him. I will not, O son of Dhritarastra, release weapons upon a woman, or one that was a woman before, or even one that resembles a woman. I will not for this reason kill Shikhandi.

When the night had passed and the sun's rays were about to appear on the horizon, Duryodhana asked the great kings present, O heroes, before us is arrayed the Pandava army. It appears invincible and consists of mighty warriors. Please tell me how long it will take each of you to annihilate this host of men.

Bhishma then gave his estimate, I can, O King, annihilate the Pandava army at a rate of ten thousand common warriors every day. I will also be able to slay one thousand chariot fighters each day. If, however, I use my celestial weapons and kill hundreds and thousands at a time, I can, O Bharata, finish the slaughter in one month.

Drona, the preceptor, then gave his opinion, I have become old, O mighty-armed one. My prowess and energy have weakened. With the fire of my weapons I can consume the Pandava army within a month's time, like Shantanu's son Bhishma.

Then Saradwat's son opined he could annihilate the army in two month's time. Drona's son, Ashvatthama vowed that he could annihilate it in ten days, and the foolish Karna vowed he could annihilate it in five days. Hearing this, Ganga's son laughed and said, You boast impressive words as long as you have not met Partha and his chariot driver, Krishna. You can accomplish this act in words only.

Through spies, Yudhisthira learned of the time limit Duryodhana's principal generals estimated they could annihilate the Pandava army. In the presence of all the great fighters on his side, Yudhisthira inquired from Arjuna, O Dhananjaya, I have heard that Bhishma, our grandsire, has vowed to annihilate our army in one month's time. Drona has vowed the same and Kripa has vowed two months. Drona's son has said ten days and the wicked son of Radha has vowed five days. Therefore, I ask you, O Phalgun, how long will it take you to destroy the enemy.

Do not have any fear, O King, Arjuna replied. Unquestionably I say that with Vasudeva as my chariot driver, I can decimate the three worlds in a mere twinkling of an eye. I have in my possession the Pashupati astra given to me by Lord Shiva. It is not, however, proper to use it on common warriors. We shall, though, kill the enemy in a fair fight. All the great maharathis will slaughter the enemy forces, and even yourself will be competent to annihilate Duryodhana's forces.

After thus encouraging King Yudhisthira, Arjuna, in the first rays of sunlight, made final corrections in the battle lines of their massive army. Thousands of chariot fighters, thousands of horses, hundreds of thousands of foot soldiers and thousands of elephants were arrayed in their proper stations. Duryodhana also made final arrangements to align his forces in battle formation on the sacred field of Kurukshetra. Thus in the early morning calm those great forces, arrayed against each other, stood ready for combat. This was the dawn of a war so terrifying that it would be heard and spoken about for thousands upon thousands of years.

Thus Ends the Sixth Chapter of the Udyoga Parva, Entitled, Bhishma Assesses the Heroes and Reveals the Mystery of Shikhandi's Birth.

## Chapter Commentary

From the movement of millions upon millions of troops, we can see the level of management needed to organize such a massive battle. This is hardly possible for primitive civilizations. The amount of weapon, tents, food, water, doctors etc. is mind boggling. Today, we are being brain washed into believing that man is progressing, but in comparison to the Vedic historical records, man is regressing in this age of Kali. His memory, life span, bodily strength, luck, religious and pious activities all diminish in Kali Yuga. As this age progresses, more and more hellish environments will be created because of sinful activities. The best alternative is not to take birth again in this world, but to develop a spiritual body fit for the kingdom of God.

## Bhisma Parva

### Chapter One

#### The Bhagavad-gita

For Commentary on Bhagavad-gita one should read the Bhagavad-gita As It Is by his Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

<T>Thus both the armies stood ready for combat, and they faced each other like two gigantic oceans. The whole earth had concentrated her warriors on this sacred Kurukshetra field, so huge was the army of both parties. Only women and children were left in their homes. The Kurus, the Pandavas and the Somakas made certain rules of warfare before the battle. Persons who were equal should fight against each other. And if having fought fairly, the combatants withdraw, there should be no fear of another attack. A chariot fighter should fight with a chariot fighter, and one riding on an elephant should fight with another riding on an elephant. One riding on a horse should fight with an enemy riding on a horse, and infantry soldiers should fight with infantry soldiers. No warrior should strike another who is not prepared or panic stricken. One who was engaged with another, or one seeking shelter, or one retreating, one whose weapon was rendered unfit, or one who had no armor was never to be attacked. Those who carried drums and those who blew conches, should never be assaulted.

Upon seeing those vast armies ready for combat, Vyasadeva, the son of Satyawati, went to see his son, Dhritarastra, in Hastinapura. Vyasa then informed him, "O King, the clutches of death have fallen on your sons and the other monarchs in this great battle. They will all perish like flies in a fire. Therefore, do not lament. If you wish to see the battle, I will give you the proper vision."

"O best of the rishis," Dhritarastra replied, "I don't want to see the slaughter of my kinsmen. I will, however, hear about this great battle from another." Vyasa then gave a benediction to Sanjaya that he could envision the whole battlefield. He would have knowledge of everything, manifest or concealed, and happening by day or night. Even the thoughts of the mind would be known to Sanjaya.

"The fame of the Pandavas and the Kauravas," Vyasa prophesied, "shall be known for an eternity. Do not give way to grief, O King, for this slaughter cannot be prevented. It has been predestined. Regarding victory, it is where there is righteousness. They who desire victory do not conquer by means of brutal force as much as by truthfulness, compassion and virtue. As the sage Narada stated, 'Wherever there is Krishna, there will certainly be victory.' Krishna is the Supreme

Personality of Godhead, and if He protects the Pandava army, no one, including all the gods and demons combined, can defeat Him. Even if He does not take up any arms, by His energies, He will cause the annihilation of their forces." After speaking thus, Vyasadeva left the palace of his son.

## Chapter One

### Observing the Armies

Dhrtarastra said: O Sanjaya, after my sons and the sons of Pandu assembled in the place of pilgrimage at Kuruksetra, desiring to fight, what did they do?

Sanjaya said: O King, after looking over the army arranged in military formation by the sons of Pandu, King Duryodhana went to his teacher and spoke the following words. O my teacher, behold the great army of the sons of Pandu, so expertly arranged by your intelligent disciple the son of Drupada. Here in this army are many heroic bowmen equal in fighting to Bhima and Arjuna: great fighters like Yuyudhana, Virata and Drupada. There are also great, heroic, powerful fighters like Dhrtaketu, Cekitana, Kasiraja, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Saibya. There are the mighty Yudhamanyu, the very powerful Uttamauja, the son of Subhadra and the sons of Draupadi. All these warriors are great chariot fighters. But for your information, O best of the brahmanas, let me tell you about the captains who are especially qualified to lead my military force. There are personalities like you, Bhisma, Karna, Krpa, Asvatthama, Vikarna and the son of Somadatta called Bhurisrava, who are always victorious in battle. There are many other heroes who are prepared to lay down their lives for my sake. All of them are well equipped with different kinds of weapons, and all are experienced in military science. Our strength is immeasurable, and we are perfectly protected by Grandfather Bhisma, whereas the strength of the Pandavas, carefully protected by Bhima, is limited. All of you must now give full support to Grandfather Bhisma, as you stand at your respective strategic points of entrance into the phalanx of the army. Then Bhisma, the great valiant grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, the grandfather of the fighters, blew his conchshell very loudly, making a sound like the roar of a lion, giving Duryodhana joy. After that, the conchshells, drums, bugles, trumpets and horns were all suddenly sounded, and the combined sound was tumultuous. On the other side, both Lord Krishna and Arjuna, stationed on a great chariot drawn by white horses, sounded their transcendental conchshells. Lord Krishna blew His conchshell, called Pancajanya; Arjuna blew his, the Devadatta; and Bhima, the voracious eater and performer of herculean tasks, blew his terrific conchshell, called Paundra. King Yudhishthira, the son of Kunti, blew his conchshell, the Ananta-vijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosa and Manipuspaka. That great archer the King of Kasi, the great fighter Sikhandi, Dhrtadyumna, Virata, the unconquerable Satyaki, Drupada, the sons of Draupadi, and the others, O King, such as the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all blew their respective conchshells. The blowing of these different conchshells became

uproarious. Vibrating both in the sky and on the earth, it shattered the hearts of the sons of Dhrtarastra. At that time Arjuna, the son of Pandu, seated in the chariot bearing the flag marked with Hanuman, took up his bow and prepared to shoot his arrows. O King, after looking at the sons of Dhrtarastra drawn in military array, Arjuna then spoke to Lord Krishna these words. Arjuna said: O infallible one, please draw my chariot between the two armies so that I may see those present here, who desire to fight, and with whom I must contend in this great trial of arms. Let me see those who have come here to fight, wishing to please the evil-minded son of Dhrtarastra. Sanjaya said: O descendant of Bharata, having thus been addressed by Arjuna, Lord Krishna drew up the fine chariot in the midst of the armies of both parties. In the presence of Bhishma, Drona and all the other chieftains of the world, the Lord said, Just behold, Partha, all the Kurus assembled here. There Arjuna could see, within the midst of the armies of both parties, his fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and also his fathers-in-law and well-wishers. When the son of Kunti, Arjuna, saw all these different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion and spoke thus. Arjuna said: My dear Krishna, seeing my friends and relatives present before me in such a fighting spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up. My whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow Gandiva is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning. I am now unable to stand here any longer. I am forgetting myself, and my mind is reeling. I see only causes of misfortune, O Krishna, killer of the Kesi demon. I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Krishna, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom, or happiness. O Govinda, of what avail to us are a kingdom, happiness or even life itself when all those for whom we may desire them are now arrayed on this battlefield? O Madhusudana, when teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives are ready to give up their lives and properties and are standing before me, why should I wish to kill them, even though they might otherwise kill me? O maintainer of all living entities, I am not prepared to fight with them even in exchange for the three worlds, let alone this earth. What pleasure will we derive from killing the sons of Dhrtarastra? Sin will overcome us if we slay such aggressors. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill the sons of Dhrtarastra and our friends. What should we gain, O Krishna, husband of the goddess of fortune, and how could we be happy by killing our own kinsmen? O Janardana, although these men, their hearts overtaken by greed, see no fault in killing one's family or quarreling with friends, why should we, who can see the crime in destroying a family, engage in these acts of sin? With the destruction of dynasty, the eternal family tradition is vanquished, and thus the rest of the family becomes involved in irreligion. When irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krishna, the women of the family become polluted, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vrsni, comes unwanted progeny. An increase of unwanted population certainly causes hellish life both for the family and for those who destroy the family tradition. The ancestors of such corrupt families fall down, because the performances for offering them food and water are entirely stopped. By the evil deeds of those who destroy the family tradition and thus give rise to unwanted children, all kinds of community projects and family welfare activities are devastated. O Krishna, maintainer of the people, I have heard by disciplic succession that those who destroy family traditions dwell

always in hell. Alas, how strange it is that we are preparing to commit greatly sinful acts. Driven by the desire to enjoy royal happiness, we are intent on killing our own kinsmen. Better for me if the sons of Dhrtarastra, weapons in hand, were to kill me unarmed and unresisting on the battlefield. Sanjaya said: Arjuna, having thus spoken on the battlefield, cast aside his bow and arrows and sat down on the chariot, his mind overwhelmed with grief.

## Chapter Two

### Contents of the Gita Summarized

Sanjaya said: Seeing Arjuna full of compassion, his mind depressed, his eyes full of tears, Madhusudana, Krishna, spoke the following words. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life. They lead not to higher planets but to infamy. O son of Prtha, do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not become you. Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise, O chastiser of the enemy. Arjuna said: O killer of enemies, O killer of Madhu, how can I counterattack with arrows in battle men like Bhishma and Drona, who are worthy of my worship? It would be better to live in this world by begging than to live at the cost of the lives of great souls who are my teachers. Even though desiring worldly gain, they are superiors. If they are killed, everything we enjoy will be tainted with blood. Nor do we know which is better—conquering them or being conquered by them. If we killed the sons of Dhrtarastra, we should not care to live. Yet they are now standing before us on the battlefield. Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me. I can find no means to drive away this grief which is drying up my senses. I will not be able to dispel it even if I win a prosperous, unrivaled kingdom on earth with sovereignty like the demigods in heaven. Sanjaya said: Having spoken thus, Arjuna, chastiser of enemies, told Krishna, "Govinda, I shall not fight," and fell silent. O descendant of Bharata, at that time Krishna, smiling, in the midst of both the armies, spoke the following words to the grief-stricken Arjuna. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead. Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change. O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed. O best among men [Arjuna], the person who is not disturbed by

happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation. Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent [the material body] there is no endurance and of the eternal [the soul] there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both. That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul. The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end; therefore, fight, O descendant of Bharata. Neither he who thinks the living entity the slayer nor he who thinks it slain is in knowledge, for the self slays not nor is slain. For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. O Partha, how can a person who knows that the soul is indestructible, eternal, unborn and immutable kill anyone or cause anyone to kill? As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones. The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same. It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body. If, however, you think that the soul [or the symptoms of life] is always born and dies forever, you still have no reason to lament, O mighty-armed. One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament. All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation? Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all. O descendant of Bharata, he who dwells in the body can never be slain. Therefore you need not grieve for any living being. Considering your specific duty as a ksatriya, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting on religious principles; and so there is no need for hesitation. O Partha, happy are the ksatriyas to whom such fighting opportunities come unsought, opening for them the doors of the heavenly planets. If, however, you do not perform your religious duty of fighting, then you will certainly incur sins for neglecting your duties and thus lose your reputation as a fighter. People will always speak of your infamy, and for a respectable person, dishonor is worse than death. The great generals who have highly esteemed your name and fame will think that you have left the battlefield out of fear only, and thus they will consider you insignificant. Your enemies will describe you in many unkind words and scorn your ability. What could be more painful for you? O son of Kunti, either you will be killed on the battlefield and attain the heavenly planets, or you will conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom. Therefore, get up with determination and fight. Do thou fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat-and by so doing you shall never incur sin. Thus far I have described this knowledge to you through analytical study. Now listen as I explain it in terms of working without fruitive results. O son of Prtha, when you act in such knowledge you can free yourself from the bondage of works. In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little

advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear. Those who are on this path are resolute in purpose, and their aim is one. O beloved child of the Kurus, the intelligence of those who are irresolute is many-branched. Men of small knowledge are very much attached to the flowery words of the Vedas, which recommend various fruitive activities for elevation to heavenly planets, resultant good birth, power, and so forth. Being desirous of sense gratification and opulent life, they say that there is nothing more than this. In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place. The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes. Be free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in the self. All purposes served by a small well can at once be served by a great reservoir of water. Similarly, all the purposes of the Vedas can be served to one who knows the purpose behind them. You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty. Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga. O Dhananjaya, keep all abominable activities far distant by devotional service, and in that consciousness surrender unto the Lord. Those who want to enjoy the fruits of their work are misers. A man engaged in devotional service rids himself of both good and bad actions even in this life. Therefore strive for yoga, which is the art of all work. By thus engaging in devotional service to the Lord, great sages or devotees free themselves from the results of work in the material world. In this way they become free from the cycle of birth and death and attain the state beyond all miseries [by going back to Godhead]. When your intelligence has passed out of the dense forest of delusion, you shall become indifferent to all that has been heard and all that is to be heard. When your mind is no longer disturbed by the flowery language of the Vedas, and when it remains fixed in the trance of self-realization, then you will have attained the divine consciousness. Arjuna said: O Krishna, what are the symptoms of one whose consciousness is thus merged in transcendence? How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit, and how does he walk? The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O Partha, when a man gives up all varieties of desire for sense gratification, which arise from mental concoction, and when his mind, thus purified, finds satisfaction in the self alone, then he is said to be in pure transcendental consciousness. One who is not disturbed in mind even amidst the threefold miseries or elated when there is happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady mind. In the material world, one who is unaffected by whatever good or evil he may obtain, neither praising it nor despising it, is firmly fixed in perfect knowledge. One who is able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed in perfect consciousness. The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness. The senses are so strong and impetuous, O Arjuna, that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination who is endeavoring to control them. One who restrains his senses, keeping them under full control, and fixes his consciousness upon Me, is known as a man of steady

intelligence. While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool. But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord. For one thus satisfied [in Krishna consciousness], the threefold miseries of material existence exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one's intelligence is soon well established. One who is not connected with the Supreme [in Krishna consciousness] can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace? As a boat on the water is swept away by a strong wind, even one of the roaming senses on which the mind focuses can carry away a man's intelligence. Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are restrained from their objects is certainly of steady intelligence. What is night for all beings is the time of awakening for the self-controlled; and the time of awakening for all beings is night for the introspective sage. A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires. A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego—he alone can attain real peace. That is the way of the spiritual and godly life, after attaining which a man is not bewildered. If one is thus situated even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God.

## Chapter Three

### Karma Yoga

Arjuna said: O Janardana, O Kesava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work? My intelligence is bewildered by Your equivocal instructions. Therefore, please tell me decisively which will be most beneficial for me. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O sinless Arjuna, I have already explained that there are two classes of men who try to realize the self. Some are inclined to understand it by empirical, philosophical speculation, and others by devotional service. Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain perfection. Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment. One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender. On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins karma-yoga [in Krishna consciousness] without attachment, he is by far

superior. Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work. Work done as a sacrifice for Vishnu has to be performed, otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage. In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Vishnu, and blessed them by saying, "Be thou happy by this yajna [sacrifice] because its performance will bestow upon you everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation." The demigods, being pleased by sacrifices, will also please you, and thus, by cooperation between men and demigods, prosperity will reign for all. In charge of the various necessities of life, the demigods, being satisfied by the performance of yajna [sacrifice], will supply all necessities to you. But he who enjoys such gifts without offering them to the demigods in return is certainly a thief. The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin. All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of yajna [sacrifice], and yajna is born of prescribed duties. Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consequently the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice. My dear Arjuna, one who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas certainly leads a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain. But for one who takes pleasure in the self, whose human life is one of self-realization, and who is satisfied in the self only, fully satiated-for him there is no duty. A self-realized man has no purpose to fulfill in the discharge of his prescribed duties, nor has he any reason not to perform such work. Nor has he any need to depend on any other living being. Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme. Kings such as Janaka attained perfection solely by performance of prescribed duties. Therefore, just for the sake of educating the people in general, you should perform your work. Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues. O son of Prtha, there is no work prescribed for Me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything-and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties. For if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Partha, certainly all men would follow My path. If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings. As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path. So as not to disrupt the minds of ignorant men attached to the fruitive results of prescribed duties, a learned person should not induce them to stop work. Rather, by working in the spirit of devotion, he should engage them in all sorts of activities [for the gradual development of Krishna consciousness]. The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature. One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O mighty-armed, does not engage himself in the

senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results. Bewildered by the modes of material nature, the ignorant fully engage themselves in material activities and become attached. But the wise should not unsettle them, although these duties are inferior due to the performers' lack of knowledge. Therefore, O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight. Those persons who execute their duties according to My injunctions and who follow this teaching faithfully, without envy, become free from the bondage of fruitive actions. But those who, out of envy, disregard these teachings and do not follow them are to be considered bereft of all knowledge, befooled, and ruined in their endeavors for perfection. Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish? There are principles to regulate attachment and aversion pertaining to the senses and their objects. One should not come under the control of such attachment and aversion, because they are stumbling blocks on the path of self-realization. It is far better to discharge one's prescribed duties, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous. Arjuna said: O descendant of Vrsni, by what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force? The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the material mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world. As fire is covered by smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of this lust. Thus the wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire. The senses, the mind and the intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders him. Therefore, O Arjuna, best of the Bharatas, in the very beginning curb this great symbol of sin [lust] by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization. The working senses are superior to dull matter; mind is higher than the senses; intelligence is still higher than the mind; and he [the soul] is even higher than the intelligence. Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Krishna consciousness] and thus-by spiritual strength-conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.

## Chapter Four

### Transcendental Knowledge

The Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna, said: I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Iksvaku. This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost. That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science. Arjuna said: The sun-god Vivasvan is senior by birth to You. How am I to understand that in the beginning You instructed this science to him? The Personality of Godhead said: Many, many births both you and I have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot, O subduer of the enemy! Although I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all living entities, I still appear in every millennium in My original transcendental form. Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself. To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium. One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna. Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me—and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me. As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prtha. Men in this world desire success in fruitive activities, and therefore they worship the demigods. Quickly, of course, men get results from fruitive work in this world. According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable. There is no work that affects Me; nor do I aspire for the fruits of action. One who understands this truth about Me also does not become entangled in the fruitive reactions of work. All the liberated souls in ancient times acted with this understanding of My transcendental nature. Therefore you should perform your duty, following in their footsteps. Even the intelligent are bewildered in determining what is action and what is inaction. Now I shall explain to you what action is, knowing which you shall be liberated from all misfortune. The intricacies of action are very hard to understand. Therefore one should know properly what action is, what forbidden action is, and what inaction is. One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is intelligent among men, and he is in the transcendental position, although engaged in all sorts of activities. One is understood to be in full knowledge whose every endeavor is devoid of desire for sense gratification. He is said by sages to be a worker for whom the reactions of work have been burned up

by the fire of perfect knowledge. Abandoning all attachment to the results of his activities, ever satisfied and independent, he performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of undertakings. Such a man of understanding acts with mind and intelligence perfectly controlled, gives up all sense of proprietorship over his possessions, and acts only for the bare necessities of life. Thus working, he is not affected by sinful reactions. He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions. The work of a man who is unattached to the modes of material nature and who is fully situated in transcendental knowledge merges entirely into transcendence. A person who is fully absorbed in Krishna consciousness is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature. Some yogis perfectly worship the demigods by offering different sacrifices to them, and some of them offer sacrifices in the fire of the Supreme Brahman. Some [the unadulterated brahmacharis] sacrifice the hearing process and the senses in the fire of mental control, and others [the regulated householders] sacrifice the objects of the senses in the fire of the senses. Others, who are interested in achieving self-realization through control of the mind and senses, offer the functions of all the senses, and of the life breath, as oblations into the fire of the controlled mind. Having accepted strict vows, some become enlightened by sacrificing their possessions, and others by performing severe austerities, by practicing the yoga of eightfold mysticism, or by studying the Vedas to advance in transcendental knowledge. Still others, who are inclined to the process of breath restraint to remain in trance, practice by offering the movement of the outgoing breath into the incoming, and the incoming breath into the outgoing, and thus at last remain in trance, stopping all breathing. Others, curtailing the eating process, offer the outgoing breath into itself as a sacrifice. All these performers who know the meaning of sacrifice become cleansed of sinful reactions, and, having tasted the nectar of the results of sacrifices, they advance toward the supreme eternal atmosphere. O best of the Kuru dynasty, without sacrifice one can never live happily on this planet or in this life: what then of the next? All these different types of sacrifice are approved by the Vedas, and all of them are born of different types of work. Knowing them as such, you will become liberated. O chastiser of the enemy, the sacrifice performed in knowledge is better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. After all, O son of Prtha, all sacrifices of work culminate in transcendental knowledge. Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth. Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine. Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries. As a blazing fire turns firewood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all reactions to material activities. In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time. A

faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace. But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next. One who acts in devotional service, renouncing the fruits of his actions, and whose doubts have been destroyed by transcendental knowledge, is situated factually in the self. Thus he is not bound by the reactions of work, O conqueror of riches. Therefore the doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Bharata, stand and fight.

## Chapter Five

### Karma-yoga-Action in Krishna Consciousness

Arjuna said: O Krishna, first of all You ask me to renounce work, and then again You recommend work with devotion. Now will You kindly tell me definitely which of the two is more beneficial? The Personality of Godhead replied: The renunciation of work and work in devotion are both good for liberation. But, of the two, work in devotional service is better than renunciation of work. One who neither hates nor desires the fruits of his activities is known to be always renounced. Such a person, free from all dualities, easily overcomes material bondage and is completely liberated, O mighty-armed Arjuna. Only the ignorant speak of devotional service [karma-yoga] as being different from the analytical study of the material world [Sankhya]. Those who are actually learned say that he who applies himself well to one of these paths achieves the results of both. One who knows that the position reached by means of analytical study can also be attained by devotional service, and who therefore sees analytical study and devotional service to be on the same level, sees things as they are. Merely renouncing all activities yet not engaging in the devotional service of the Lord cannot make one happy. But a thoughtful person engaged in devotional service can achieve the Supreme without delay. One who works in devotion, who is a pure soul, and who controls his mind and senses is dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. Though always working, such a man is never entangled. A person in the divine consciousness, although engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving about, sleeping and breathing, always knows within himself that he actually does nothing at all. Because while speaking, evacuating, receiving, or opening or closing his eyes, he always knows that only the material senses are engaged with their objects and that he is aloof from them. One who performs his duty without attachment, surrendering the results unto the Supreme Lord, is unaffected by sinful action, as the lotus leaf is untouched by water. The yogis, abandoning attachment, act with body, mind, intelligence and even with the senses, only for the purpose of purification. The steadily devoted soul attains unadulterated peace because he offers the result of all activities to Me; whereas a person who is not in union with the Divine, who is greedy for the fruits of his labor,

becomes entangled. When the embodied living being controls his nature and mentally renounces all actions, he resides happily in the city of nine gates [the material body], neither working nor causing work to be done. The embodied spirit, master of the city of his body, does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he create the fruits of action. All this is enacted by the modes of material nature. Nor does the Supreme Lord assume anyone's sinful or pious activities. Embodied beings, however, are bewildered because of the ignorance which covers their real knowledge. When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime. When one's intelligence, mind, faith and refuge are all fixed in the Supreme, then one becomes fully cleansed of misgivings through complete knowledge and thus proceeds straight on the path of liberation. The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]. Those whose minds are established in sameness and equanimity have already conquered the conditions of birth and death. They are flawless like Brahman, and thus they are already situated in Brahman. A person who neither rejoices upon achieving something pleasant nor laments upon obtaining something unpleasant, who is self-intelligent, who is unbewildered, and who knows the science of God, is already situated in transcendence. Such a liberated person is not attracted to material sense pleasure but is always in trance, enjoying the pleasure within. In this way the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness, for he concentrates on the Supreme. An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are due to contact with the material senses. O son of Kunti, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise man does not delight in them. Before giving up this present body, if one is able to tolerate the urges of the material senses and check the force of desire and anger, he is well situated and is happy in this world. One whose happiness is within, who is active and rejoices within, and whose aim is inward is actually the perfect mystic. He is liberated in the Supreme, and ultimately he attains the Supreme. Those who are beyond the dualities that arise from doubts, whose minds are engaged within, who are always busy working for the welfare of all living beings, and who are free from all sins achieve liberation in the Supreme. Those who are free from anger and all material desires, who are self-realized, self-disciplined and constantly endeavoring for perfection, are assured of liberation in the Supreme in the very near future. Shutting out all external sense objects, keeping the eyes and vision concentrated between the two eyebrows, suspending the inward and outward breaths within the nostrils, and thus controlling the mind, senses and intelligence, the transcendentalist aiming at liberation becomes free from desire, fear and anger. One who is always in this state is certainly liberated. A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.

## Chapter Six

### Dhyana Yoga

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is the true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no duty. What is called renunciation you should know to be the same as yoga, or linking oneself with the Supreme, O son of Pandu, for one can never become a yogi unless he renounces the desire for sense gratification. For one who is a neophyte in the eightfold yoga system, work is said to be the means; and for one who is already elevated in yoga, cessation of all material activities is said to be the means. A person is said to be elevated in yoga when, having renounced all material desires, he neither acts for sense gratification nor engages in fruitive activities. One must deliver himself with the help of his mind, and not degrade himself. The mind is the friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well. For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy. For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquillity. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same. A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogi [or mystic] when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything-whether it be pebbles, stones or gold-as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind. A transcendentalist should always engage his body, mind and self in relationship with the Supreme; he should live alone in a secluded place and should always carefully control his mind. He should be free from desires and feelings of possessiveness. To practice yoga, one should go to a secluded place and should lay kusa grass on the ground and then cover it with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low and should be situated in a sacred place. The yogi should then sit on it very firmly and practice yoga to purify the heart by controlling his mind, senses and activities and fixing the mind on one point. One should hold one's body, neck and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life. Thus practicing constant control of the body, mind and activities, the mystic transcendentalist, his mind regulated, attains to the kingdom of God [or the abode of Krishna] by cessation of material existence. There is no possibility of one's becoming a yogi, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or eats too little, sleeps too much or does not sleep enough. He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system. When the yogi, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in transcendence-devoid of all material desires-he is said to be well established in yoga. As a lamp in a windless place does not waver, so the

transcendentalist, whose mind is controlled, remains always steady in his meditation on the transcendent self. In the stage of perfection called trance, or samadhi, one's mind is completely restrained from material mental activities by practice of yoga. This perfection is characterized by one's ability to see the self by the pure mind and to relish and rejoice in the self. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact. One should engage oneself in the practice of yoga with determination and faith and not be deviated from the path. One should abandon, without exception, all material desires born of mental speculation and thus control all the senses on all sides by the mind. Gradually, step by step, one should become situated in trance by means of intelligence sustained by full conviction, and thus the mind should be fixed on the self alone and should think of nothing else. From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self. The yogi whose mind is fixed on Me verily attains the highest perfection of transcendental happiness. He is beyond the mode of passion, he realizes his qualitative identity with the Supreme, and thus he is freed from all reactions to past deeds. Thus the self-controlled yogi, constantly engaged in yoga practice, becomes free from all material contamination and achieves the highest stage of perfect happiness in transcendental loving service to the Lord. A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me. Such a yogi, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances. He is a perfect yogi who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their happiness and their distress, O Arjuna! Arjuna said: O Madhusudana, the system of yoga which You have summarized appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady. For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krishna, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind. Lord Shri Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment. For one whose mind is unbridled, self-realization is difficult work. But he whose mind is controlled and who strives by appropriate means is assured of success. That is My opinion. Arjuna said: O Krishna, what is the destination of the unsuccessful transcendentalist, who in the beginning takes to the process of self-realization with faith but who later desists due to worldly-mindedness and thus does not attain perfection in mysticism? O mighty-armed Krishna, does not such a man, who is bewildered from the path of transcendence, fall away from both spiritual and material success and perish like a riven cloud, with no position in any sphere? This is my doubt, O Krishna, and I ask You to dispel it completely. But for You, no one is to be found who can destroy this doubt. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Son of Prtha, a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, My friend, is never overcome by evil. The unsuccessful yogi, after many, many years of

enjoyment on the planets of the pious living entities, is born into a family of righteous people, or into a family of rich aristocracy. Or [if unsuccessful after long practice of yoga] he takes his birth in a family of transcendentalists who are surely great in wisdom. Certainly, such a birth is rare in this world. On taking such a birth, he revives the divine consciousness of his previous life, and he again tries to make further progress in order to achieve complete success, O son of Kuru. By virtue of the divine consciousness of his previous life, he automatically becomes attracted to the yogic principles-even without seeking them. Such an inquisitive transcendentalist stands always above the ritualistic principles of the scriptures. And when the yogi engages himself with sincere endeavor in making further progress, being washed of all contaminations, then ultimately, achieving perfection after many, many births of practice, he attains the supreme goal. A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances, be a yogi. And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me-he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.

## Chapter Seven

### Knowledge of the Absolute

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Now hear, O son of Prtha, how by practicing yoga in full consciousness of Me, with mind attached to Me, you can know Me in full, free from doubt. I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge, both phenomenal and numinous. This being known, nothing further shall remain for you to know. Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth. Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego-all together these eight constitute My separated material energies. Besides these, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources of this material, inferior nature. All created beings have their source in these two natures. Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both the origin and the dissolution. O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread. O son of Kunti, I am the taste of water, the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable om in the Vedic mantras; I am the sound in ether and ability in man. I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives, and I am the penances of all ascetics. O son of Prtha, know that I am the original seed of all existences, the intelligence of the intelligent, and the prowess of all powerful men. I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire. I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles, O lord of the Bharatas [Arjuna]. Know that all states of being-be they of goodness, passion or ignorance-are manifested by My energy. I am, in one sense, everything, but I am

independent. I am not under the modes of material nature, for they, on the contrary, are within Me. Deluded by the three modes [goodness, passion and ignorance], the whole world does not know Me, who am above the modes and inexhaustible. This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it. Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto Me. O best among the Bharatas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute. Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best. For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me. All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but he who is situated in knowledge of Me I consider to be just like My own self. Being engaged in My transcendental service, he is sure to attain Me, the highest and most perfect goal. After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare. Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures. I am in everyone's heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity. Endowed with such a faith, he endeavors to worship a particular demigod and obtains his desires. But in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone. Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary. Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet. Unintelligent men, who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is imperishable and supreme. I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible. O Arjuna, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come. I also know all living entities; but Me no one knows. O scion of Bharata, O conqueror of the foe, all living entities are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities arisen from desire and hate. Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful actions are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination. Intelligent persons who are endeavoring for liberation from old age and death take refuge in Me in devotional service. They are actually Brahman because they entirely know everything about transcendental activities. Those in full consciousness of Me, who know Me, the Supreme Lord, to be the governing principle of the material manifestation, of the demigods, and of all methods of sacrifice, can understand and know Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, even at the time of death.

## Chapter Eight

### Attaining the Supreme

Arjuna inquired: O my Lord, O Supreme Person, what is Brahman? What is the self? What are fruitive activities? What is this material manifestation? And what are the demigods? Please explain this to me. Who is the Lord of sacrifice, and how does He live in the body, O Madhusudana? And how can those engaged in devotional service know You at the time of death? The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: The indestructible, transcendental living entity is called Brahman, and his eternal nature is called adhyatma, the self. Action pertaining to the development of the material bodies of the living entities is called karma, or fruitive activities. O best of the embodied beings, the physical nature, which is constantly changing, is called adhibhuta [the material manifestation]. The universal form of the Lord, which includes all the demigods, like those of the sun and moon, is called adhidaiva. And I, the Supreme Lord, represented as the Supersoul in the heart of every embodied being, am called adhiyajna [the Lord of sacrifice]. And whoever, at the end of his life, quits his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, O son of Kunti, that state he will attain without fail. Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Krishna and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt. He who meditates on Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Partha, is sure to reach Me. One should meditate upon the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond all material conception, who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun, and He is transcendental, beyond this material nature. One who, at the time of death, fixes his life air between the eyebrows and, by the strength of yoga, with an undeviating mind, engages himself in remembering the Supreme Lord in full devotion, will certainly attain to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Persons who are learned in the Vedas, who utter omkara and who are great sages in the renounced order enter into Brahman. Desiring such perfection, one practices celibacy. I shall now briefly explain to you this process by which one may attain salvation. The yogic situation is that of detachment from all sensual engagements. Closing all the doors of the senses and fixing the mind on the heart and the life air at the top of the head, one establishes himself in yoga. After being situated in this yoga practice and vibrating the sacred syllable om, the supreme combination of letters, if one thinks of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and quits his body, he will certainly reach the spiritual planets. For one who always remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Prtha, because of his constant engagement in devotional service. After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection. From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are

places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again. By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together form the duration of Brahma's one day. And such also is the duration of his night. At the beginning of Brahma's day, all living entities become manifest from the unmanifest state, and thereafter, when the night falls, they are merged into the unmanifest again. Again and again, when Brahma's day arrives, all living entities come into being, and with the arrival of Brahma's night they are helplessly annihilated. Yet there is another unmanifest nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter. It is supreme and is never annihilated. When all in this world is annihilated, that part remains as it is. That which the Vedantists describe as unmanifest and infallible, that which is known as the supreme destination, that place from which, having attained it, one never returns—that is My supreme abode. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is greater than all, is attainable by unalloyed devotion. Although He is present in His abode, He is all-pervading, and everything is situated within Him. O best of the Bharatas, I shall now explain to you the different times at which, passing away from this world, the yogi does or does not come back. Those who know the Supreme Brahman attain that Supreme by passing away from the world during the influence of the fiery god, in the light, at an auspicious moment of the day, during the fortnight of the waxing moon, or during the six months when the sun travels in the north. The mystic who passes away from this world during the smoke, the night, the fortnight of the waning moon, or the six months when the sun passes to the south reaches the moon planet but again comes back. According to Vedic opinion, there are two ways of passing from this world—one in light and one in darkness. When one passes in light, he does not come back; but when one passes in darkness, he returns. Although the devotees know these two paths, O Arjuna, they are never bewildered. Therefore be always fixed in devotion. A person who accepts the path of devotional service is not bereft of the results derived from studying the Vedas, performing austere sacrifices, giving charity or pursuing philosophical and fruitive activities. Simply by performing devotional service, he attains all these, and at the end he reaches the supreme eternal abode.

## Chapter Nine

### The Most Confidential Knowledge

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, because you are never envious of Me, I shall impart to you this most confidential knowledge and realization, knowing which you shall be relieved of the miseries of material existence. This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed. Those who are not faithful in this devotional service cannot attain Me, O conqueror of enemies. Therefore they return to the path of birth and death in this material world. By Me, in

My unmanifested form, this entire universe is pervaded. All beings are in Me, but I am not in them. And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, I am not a part of this cosmic manifestation, for My Self is the very source of creation. Understand that as the mighty wind, blowing everywhere, rests always in the sky, all created beings rest in Me. O son of Kunti, at the end of the millennium all material manifestations enter into My nature, and at the beginning of another millennium, by My potency, I create them again. The whole cosmic order is under Me. Under My will it is automatically manifested again and again, and under My will it is annihilated at the end. O Dhananjaya, all this work cannot bind Me. I am ever detached from all these material activities, seated as though neutral. This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again. Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature as the Supreme Lord of all that be. Those who are thus bewildered are attracted by demonic and atheistic views. In that deluded condition, their hopes for liberation, their fruitive activities, and their culture of knowledge are all defeated. O son of Prtha, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible. Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion. Others, who engage in sacrifice by the cultivation of knowledge, worship the Supreme Lord as the one without a second, as diverse in many, and in the universal form. But it is I who am the ritual, I the sacrifice, the offering to the ancestors, the healing herb, the transcendental chant. I am the butter and the fire and the offering. I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier and the syllable om. I am also the Rg, the Sama and the Yajur Vedas. I am the goal, the sustainer, the master, the witness, the abode, the refuge, and the most dear friend. I am the creation and the annihilation, the basis of everything, the resting place and the eternal seed. O Arjuna, I give heat, and I withhold and send forth the rain. I am immortality, and I am also death personified. Both spirit and matter are in Me. Those who study the Vedas and drink the soma juice, seeking the heavenly planets, worship Me indirectly. Purified of sinful reactions, they take birth on the pious, heavenly planet of Indra, where they enjoy godly delights. When they have thus enjoyed vast heavenly sense pleasure and the results of their pious activities are exhausted, they return to this mortal planet again. Thus those who seek sense enjoyment by adhering to the principles of the three Vedas achieve only repeated birth and death. But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form-to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have. Those who are devotees of other gods and who worship them with faith actually worship only Me, O son of Kunti, but they do so in a wrong way. I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices. Therefore, those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall down. Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship the ancestors go to the ancestors; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; and those who worship Me will live with Me. If one offers Me with love and

devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform-do that, O son of Kunti, as an offering to Me. In this way you will be freed from bondage to work and its auspicious and inauspicious results. With your mind fixed on Me in this principle of renunciation, you will be liberated and come to Me. I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him. Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination. He quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace. O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes. O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth-women, vaisyas [merchants] and sudras [workers]-can attain the supreme destination. How much more this is so of the righteous brahmanas, the devotees and the saintly kings. Therefore, having come to this temporary, miserable world, engage in loving service unto Me. Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.

## Chapter Ten

### Opulence of the Absolute

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Listen again, O mighty-armed Arjuna. Because you are My dear friend, for your benefit I shall speak to you further, giving knowledge that is better than what I have already explained. Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages. He who knows Me as the unborn, as the beginningless, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds-he only, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins. Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from doubt and delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control of the senses, control of the mind, happiness and distress, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, nonviolence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame and infamy-all these various qualities of living beings are created by Me alone. The seven great sages and before them the four other great sages and the Manus [progenitors of mankind] come from Me, born from My mind, and all the living beings populating the various planets descend from them. One who is factually convinced of this opulence and mystic power of Mine engages in unalloyed devotional service; of this there is no doubt. I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts. The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me. To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp

of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance. Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn, the greatest. All the great sages such as Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa confirm this truth about You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me. O Krishna, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me. Neither the demigods nor the demons, O Lord, can understand Your personality. Indeed, You alone know Yourself by Your own internal potency, O Supreme Person, origin of all, Lord of all beings, God of gods, Lord of the universe! Please tell me in detail of Your divine opulences by which You pervade all these worlds. O Krishna, O supreme mystic, how shall I constantly think of You, and how shall I know You? In what various forms are You to be remembered, O Supreme Personality of Godhead? O Janardana, again please describe in detail the mystic power of Your opulences. I am never satiated in hearing about You, for the more I hear the more I want to taste the nectar of Your words. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Yes, I will tell you of My splendid manifestations, but only of those which are prominent, O Arjuna, for My opulence is limitless. I am the Supersoul, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all living entities. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. Of the Adityas I am Vishnu, of lights I am the radiant sun, of the Maruts I am Marici, and among the stars I am the moon. Of the Vedas I am the Sama Veda; of the demigods I am Indra, the king of heaven; of the senses I am the mind; and in living beings I am the living force [consciousness]. Of all the Rudras I am Lord Siva, of the Yaksas and Raksasas I am the Lord of wealth [Kuvera], of the Vasus I am fire [Agni], and of mountains I am Meru. Of priests, O Arjuna, know Me to be the chief, Brhaspati. Of generals I am Kartikeya, and of bodies of water I am the ocean. Of the great sages I am Bhrgu; of vibrations I am the transcendental om. Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names [japa], and of immovable things I am the Himalayas. Of all trees I am the banyan tree, and of the sages among the demigods I am Narada. Of the Gandharvas I am Citraratha, and among perfected beings I am the sage Kapila. Of horses know Me to be Uccaihsrava, produced during the churning of the ocean for nectar. Of lordly elephants I am Airavata, and among men I am the monarch. Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; among cows I am the surabhi. Of causes for procreation I am Kandarpa, the god of love, and of serpents I am Vasuki. Of the many-hooded Nagas I am Ananta, and among the aquatics I am the demigod Varuna. Of departed ancestors I am Aryama, and among the dispensers of law I am Yama, the lord of death. Among the Daitya demons I am the devoted Prahlada, among subduers I am time, among beasts I am the lion, and among birds I am Garuda. Of purifiers I am the wind, of the wielders of weapons I am Rama, of fishes I am the shark, and of flowing rivers I am the Ganges. Of all creations I am the beginning and the end and also the middle, O Arjuna. Of all sciences I am the spiritual science of the self, and among logicians I am the conclusive truth. Of letters I am the letter A, and among compound words I am the dual compound. I am also inexhaustible time, and of creators I am Brahma. I am all-devouring death, and I am the generating principle of all that is yet to be. Among women I am fame, fortune, fine speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness and patience. Of the hymns in the Sama Veda I am the Brhat-sama, and of poetry I am the Gayatri. Of months I am Margasirsa [November-December], and of seasons I am flower-bearing spring. I am also the gambling of cheats, and of the splendid I am the splendor. I am victory, I am adventure, and I

am the strength of the strong. Of the descendants of Vrsni I am Vasudeva, and of the Pandavas I am Arjuna. Of the sages I am Vyasa, and among great thinkers I am Usana. Among all means of suppressing lawlessness I am punishment, and of those who seek victory I am morality. Of secret things I am silence, and of the wise I am the wisdom. Furthermore, O Arjuna, I am the generating seed of all existences. There is no being-moving or nonmoving-that can exist without Me. O mighty conqueror of enemies, there is no end to My divine manifestations. What I have spoken to you is but a mere indication of My infinite opulences. Know that all opulent, beautiful and glorious creations spring from but a spark of My splendor. But what need is there, Arjuna, for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe.

## Chapter Eleven

### The Universal Form

Arjuna said: By my hearing the instructions You have kindly given me about these most confidential spiritual subjects, my illusion has now been dispelled. O lotus-eyed one, I have heard from You in detail about the appearance and disappearance of every living entity and have realized Your inexhaustible glories. O greatest of all personalities, O supreme form, though I see You here before me in Your actual position, as You have described Yourself, I wish to see how You have entered into this cosmic manifestation. I want to see that form of Yours. If You think that I am able to behold Your cosmic form, O my Lord, O master of all mystic power, then kindly show me that unlimited universal Self. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, O son of Prtha, see now My opulences, hundreds of thousands of varied divine and multicolored forms. O best of the Bharatas, see here the different manifestations of Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvini-kumaras and all the other demigods. Behold the many wonderful things which no one has ever seen or heard of before. O Arjuna, whatever you wish to see, behold at once in this body of Mine! This universal form can show you whatever you now desire to see and whatever you may want to see in the future. Everything-moving and nonmoving-is here completely, in one place. But you cannot see Me with your present eyes. Therefore I give you divine eyes. Behold My mystic opulence! Sanjaya said: O King, having spoken thus, the Supreme Lord of all mystic power, the Personality of Godhead, displayed His universal form to Arjuna. Arjuna saw in that universal form unlimited mouths, unlimited eyes, unlimited wonderful visions. The form was decorated with many celestial ornaments and bore many divine upraised weapons. He wore celestial garlands and garments, and many divine scents were smeared over His body. All was wondrous, brilliant, unlimited, all-expanding. If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once into the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form. At that time Arjuna could see in the universal form of the Lord the unlimited expansions of the universe situated in one place although divided into many, many thousands. Then, bewildered and astonished, his

hair standing on end, Arjuna bowed his head to offer obeisances and with folded hands began to pray to the Supreme Lord. Arjuna said: My dear Lord Krishna, I see assembled in Your body all the demigods and various other living entities. I see Brahma sitting on the lotus flower, as well as Lord Siva and all the sages and divine serpents. O Lord of the universe, O universal form, I see in Your body many, many arms, bellies, mouths and eyes, expanded everywhere, without limit. I see in You no end, no middle and no beginning. Your form is difficult to see because of its glaring effulgence, spreading on all sides, like blazing fire or the immeasurable radiance of the sun. Yet I see this glowing form everywhere, adorned with various crowns, clubs and discs. You are the supreme primal objective. You are the ultimate resting place of all this universe. You are inexhaustible, and You are the oldest. You are the maintainer of the eternal religion, the Personality of Godhead. This is my opinion. You are without origin, middle or end. Your glory is unlimited. You have numberless arms, and the sun and moon are Your eyes. I see You with blazing fire coming forth from Your mouth, burning this entire universe by Your own radiance. Although You are one, You spread throughout the sky and the planets and all space between. O great one, seeing this wondrous and terrible form, all the planetary systems are perturbed. All the hosts of demigods are surrendering before You and entering into You. Some of them, very much afraid, are offering prayers with folded hands. Hosts of great sages and perfected beings, crying "All peace!" are praying to You by singing the Vedic hymns. All the various manifestations of Lord Siva, the Adityas, the Vasus, the Sadhyas, the Visvedevas, the two Asvins, the Maruts, the forefathers, the Gandharvas, the Yaksas, the Asuras and the perfected demigods are beholding You in wonder. O mighty-armed one, all the planets with their demigods are disturbed at seeing Your great form, with its many faces, eyes, arms, thighs, legs, and bellies and Your many terrible teeth; and as they are disturbed, so am I. O all-pervading Vishnu, seeing You with Your many radiant colors touching the sky, Your gaping mouths, and Your great glowing eyes, my mind is perturbed by fear. I can no longer maintain my steadiness or equilibrium of mind. O Lord of lords, O refuge of the worlds, please be gracious to me. I cannot keep my balance seeing thus Your blazing deathlike faces and awful teeth. In all directions I am bewildered. All the sons of Dhrtarastra, along with their allied kings, and Bhishma, Drona, Karna-and our chief soldiers also-are rushing into Your fearful mouths. And some I see trapped with heads smashed between Your teeth. As the many waves of the rivers flow into the ocean, so do all these great warriors enter blazing into Your mouths. I see all people rushing full speed into Your mouths, as moths dash to destruction in a blazing fire. O Vishnu, I see You devouring all people from all sides with Your flaming mouths. Covering all the universe with Your effulgence, You are manifest with terrible, scorching rays. O Lord of lords, so fierce of form, please tell me who You are. I offer my obeisances unto You; please be gracious to me. You are the primal Lord. I want to know about You, for I do not know what Your mission is. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds, and I have come here to destroy all people. With the exception of you [the Pandavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain. Therefore get up. Prepare to fight and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a flourishing kingdom. They are already put to death by My arrangement, and you, O Savyasaci, can be but an instrument in the fight. Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and the other great warriors have already been destroyed by Me. Therefore, kill them and do not be disturbed. Simply

fight, and you will vanquish your enemies in battle. Sanjaya said to Dhrtarastra: O King, after hearing these words from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the trembling Arjuna offered obeisances with folded hands again and again. He fearfully spoke to Lord Krishna in a faltering voice, as follows. Arjuna said: O master of the senses, the world becomes joyful upon hearing Your name, and thus everyone becomes attached to You. Although the perfected beings offer You their respectful homage, the demons are afraid, and they flee here and there. All this is rightly done. O great one, greater even than Brahma, You are the original creator. Why then should they not offer their respectful obeisances unto You? O limitless one, God of gods, refuge of the universe! You are the invincible source, the cause of all causes, transcendental to this material manifestation. You are the original Personality of Godhead, the oldest, the ultimate sanctuary of this manifested cosmic world. You are the knower of everything, and You are all that is knowable. You are the supreme refuge, above the material modes. O limitless form! This whole cosmic manifestation is pervaded by You! You are air, and You are the supreme controller! You are fire, You are water, and You are the moon! You are Brahma, the first living creature, and You are the great-grandfather. I therefore offer my respectful obeisances unto You a thousand times, and again and yet again! Obeisances to You from the front, from behind and from all sides! O unbounded power, You are the master of limitless might! You are all-pervading, and thus You are everything! Thinking of You as my friend, I have rashly addressed You "O Krishna," "O Yadava," "O my friend," not knowing Your glories. Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love. I have dishonored You many times, jesting as we relaxed, lay on the same bed, or sat or ate together, sometimes alone and sometimes in front of many friends. O infallible one, please excuse me for all those offenses. You are the father of this complete cosmic manifestation, of the moving and the nonmoving. You are its worshipable chief, the supreme spiritual master. No one is equal to You, nor can anyone be one with You. How then could there be anyone greater than You within the three worlds, O Lord of immeasurable power? You are the Supreme Lord, to be worshiped by every living being. Thus I fall down to offer You my respectful obeisances and ask Your mercy. As a father tolerates the impudence of his son, or a friend tolerates the impertinence of a friend, or a wife tolerates the familiarity of her partner, please tolerate the wrongs I may have done You. After seeing this universal form, which I have never seen before, I am gladdened, but at the same time my mind is disturbed with fear. Therefore please bestow Your grace upon me and reveal again Your form as the Personality of Godhead, O Lord of lords, O abode of the universe. O universal form, O thousand-armed Lord, I wish to see You in Your four-armed form, with helmeted head and with club, wheel, conch and lotus flower in Your hands. I long to see You in that form. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, happily have I shown you, by My internal potency, this supreme universal form within the material world. No one before you has ever seen this primal form, unlimited and full of glaring effulgence. O best of the Kuru warriors, no one before you has ever seen this universal form of Mine, for neither by studying the Vedas, nor by performing sacrifices, nor by charity, nor by pious activities, nor by severe penances can I be seen in this form in the material world. You have been perturbed and bewildered by seeing this horrible feature of Mine. Now let it be finished. My devotee, be free again from all disturbances. With a peaceful mind you can now see the form you desire. Sanjaya said to Dhrtarastra: The Supreme

Personality of Godhead, Krishna, having spoken thus to Arjuna, displayed His real four-armed form and at last showed His two-armed form, thus encouraging the fearful Arjuna. When Arjuna thus saw Krishna in His original form, he said: O Janardana, seeing this humanlike form, so very beautiful, I am now composed in mind, and I am restored to my original nature. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, this form of Mine you are now seeing is very difficult to behold. Even the demigods are ever seeking the opportunity to see this form, which is so dear. The form you are seeing with your transcendental eyes cannot be understood simply by studying the Vedas, nor by undergoing serious penances, nor by charity, nor by worship. It is not by these means that one can see Me as I am. My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding. My dear Arjuna, he who engages in My pure devotional service, free from the contaminations of fruitive activities and mental speculation, he who works for Me, who makes Me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every living being-he certainly comes to Me.

## Chapter Twelve

### Devotional Service

Arjuna inquired: Which are considered to be more perfect, those who are always properly engaged in Your devotional service or those who worship the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested?The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Those who fix their minds on My personal form and are always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith are considered by Me to be most perfect. But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, the all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed and immovable-the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth-by controlling the various senses and being equally disposed to everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me. For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied. But those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Prtha-for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death. Just fix your mind upon Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in Me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt. My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga. In this way develop a desire to attain Me. If you cannot practice the regulations of bhakti-yoga, then just try to work for Me, because by working for Me you will come to the perfect stage. If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness of Me, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be

self-situated. If you cannot take to this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind. One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on Me-such a devotee of Mine is very dear to Me. He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to Me. My devotee who is not dependent on the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to Me. One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things-such a devotee is very dear to Me. One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always free from contaminating association, always silent and satisfied with anything, who doesn't care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service-such a person is very dear to Me. Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Nature, the Enjoyer and Consciousness

Arjuna said: O my dear Krishna, I wish to know about prakrti [nature], purusa [the enjoyer], and the field and the knower of the field, and of knowledge and the object of knowledge. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: This body, O son of Kunti, is called the field, and one who knows this body is called the knower of the field. O scion of Bharata, you should understand that I am also the knower in all bodies, and to understand this body and its knower is called knowledge. That is My opinion. Now please hear My brief description of this field of activity and how it is constituted, what its changes are, whence it is produced, who that knower of the field of activities is, and what his influences are. That knowledge of the field of activities and of the knower of activities is described by various sages in various Vedic writings. It is especially presented in Vedanta-sutra with all reasoning as to cause and effect. The five great elements, false ego, intelligence, the unmanifested, the ten senses and the mind, the five sense objects, desire, hatred, happiness, distress, the aggregate, the life symptoms, and convictions-all these are considered, in summary, to be the field of activities and its interactions. Humility; pridelessness; nonviolence; tolerance; simplicity; approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification; absence of false ego; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease;

detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest; even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth—all these I declare to be knowledge, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance. I shall now explain the knowable, knowing which you will taste the eternal. Brahman, the spirit, beginningless and subordinate to Me, lies beyond the cause and effect of this material world. Everywhere are His hands and legs, His eyes, heads and faces, and He has ears everywhere. In this way the Supersoul exists, pervading everything. The Supersoul is the original source of all senses, yet He is without senses. He is unattached, although He is the maintainer of all living beings. He transcends the modes of nature, and at the same time He is the master of all the modes of material nature. The Supreme Truth exists outside and inside of all living beings, the moving and the nonmoving. Because He is subtle, He is beyond the power of the material senses to see or to know. Although far, far away, He is also near to all. Although the Supersoul appears to be divided among all beings, He is never divided. He is situated as one. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops all. He is the source of light in all luminous objects. He is beyond the darkness of matter and is unmanifested. He is knowledge, He is the object of knowledge, and He is the goal of knowledge. He is situated in everyone's heart. Thus the field of activities [the body], knowledge and the knowable have been summarily described by Me. Only My devotees can understand this thoroughly and thus attain to My nature. Material nature and the living entities should be understood to be beginningless. Their transformations and the modes of matter are products of material nature. Nature is said to be the cause of all material causes and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world. The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species. Yet in this body there is another, a transcendental enjoyer, who is the Lord, the supreme proprietor, who exists as the overseer and permitter, and who is known as the Supersoul. One who understands this philosophy concerning material nature, the living entity and the interaction of the modes of nature is sure to attain liberation. He will not take birth here again, regardless of his present position. Some perceive the Supersoul within themselves through meditation, others through the cultivation of knowledge, and still others through working without fruitive desires. Again there are those who, although not conversant in spiritual knowledge, begin to worship the Supreme Person upon hearing about Him from others. Because of their tendency to hear from authorities, they also transcend the path of birth and death. O chief of the Bharatas, know that whatever you see in existence, both the moving and the nonmoving, is only a combination of the field of activities and the knower of the field. One who sees the Supersoul accompanying the individual soul in all bodies, and who understands that neither the soul nor the Supersoul within the destructible body is ever destroyed, actually sees. One who sees the Supersoul equally present everywhere, in every living being, does not degrade himself by his mind. Thus he approaches the transcendental destination. One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self does nothing, actually sees. When

a sensible man ceases to see different identities due to different material bodies and he sees how beings are expanded everywhere, he attains to the Brahman conception. Those with the vision of eternity can see that the imperishable soul is transcendental, eternal, and beyond the modes of nature. Despite contact with the material body, O Arjuna, the soul neither does anything nor is entangled. The sky, due to its subtle nature, does not mix with anything, although it is all-pervading. Similarly, the soul situated in Brahman vision does not mix with the body, though situated in that body. O son of Bharata, as the sun alone illuminates all this universe, so does the living entity, one within the body, illuminate the entire body by consciousness. Those who see with eyes of knowledge the difference between the body and the knower of the body, and can also understand the process of liberation from bondage in material nature, attain to the supreme goal.

## Chapter Fourteen

### The Three Modes of Material Nature

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Again I shall declare to you this supreme wisdom, the best of all knowledge, knowing which all the sages have attained the supreme perfection. By becoming fixed in this knowledge, one can attain to the transcendental nature like My own. Thus established, one is not born at the time of creation or disturbed at the time of dissolution. The total material substance, called Brahman, is the source of birth, and it is that Brahman that I impregnate, making possible the births of all living beings, O son of Bharata. It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kunti, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father. Material nature consists of three modes—goodness, passion and ignorance. When the eternal living entity comes in contact with nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, he becomes conditioned by these modes. O sinless one, the mode of goodness, being purer than the others, is illuminating, and it frees one from all sinful reactions. Those situated in that mode become conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge. The mode of passion is born of unlimited desires and longings, O son of Kunti, and because of this the embodied living entity is bound to material fruitive actions. O son of Bharata, know that the mode of darkness, born of ignorance, is the delusion of all embodied living entities. The results of this mode are madness, indolence and sleep, which bind the conditioned soul. O son of Bharata, the mode of goodness conditions one to happiness; passion conditions one to fruitive action; and ignorance, covering one's knowledge, binds one to madness. Sometimes the mode of goodness becomes prominent, defeating the modes of passion and ignorance, O son of Bharata. Sometimes the mode of passion defeats goodness and ignorance, and at other times ignorance defeats goodness and passion. In this way there is always competition for supremacy. The manifestations of the mode of goodness can be experienced when all the gates of the body are illuminated by knowledge. O chief of the Bharatas, when there is an increase in the mode of passion the symptoms of great

attachment, fruitive activity, intense endeavor, and uncontrollable desire and hankering develop. When there is an increase in the mode of ignorance, O son of Kuru, darkness, inertia, madness and illusion are manifested. When one dies in the mode of goodness, he attains to the pure higher planets of the great sages. When one dies in the mode of passion, he takes birth among those engaged in fruitive activities; and when one dies in the mode of ignorance, he takes birth in the animal kingdom. The result of pious action is pure and is said to be in the mode of goodness. But action done in the mode of passion results in misery, and action performed in the mode of ignorance results in foolishness. From the mode of goodness, real knowledge develops; from the mode of passion, greed develops; and from the mode of ignorance develop foolishness, madness and illusion. Those situated in the mode of goodness gradually go upward to the higher planets; those in the mode of passion live on the earthly planets; and those in the abominable mode of ignorance go down to the hellish worlds. When one properly sees that in all activities no other performer is at work than these modes of nature and he knows the Supreme Lord, who is transcendental to all these modes, he attains My spiritual nature. When the embodied being is able to transcend these three modes associated with the material body, he can become free from birth, death, old age and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life. Arjuna inquired: O my dear Lord, by which symptoms is one known who is transcendental to these three modes? What is his behavior? And how does he transcend the modes of nature? The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O son of Pandu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities—such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature. One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman. And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is immortal, imperishable and eternal and is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness.

## Chapter Fifteen

### The Yoga of the Supreme Person

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: It is said that there is an imperishable banyan tree that has its roots upward and its branches down and whose leaves are the Vedic hymns. One who knows this tree is the knower of the Vedas. The branches of this tree extend downward and upward, nourished by the three modes

of material nature. The twigs are the objects of the senses. This tree also has roots going down, and these are bound to the fruitive actions of human society. The real form of this tree cannot be perceived in this world. No one can understand where it ends, where it begins, or where its foundation is. But with determination one must cut down this strongly rooted tree with the weapon of detachment. Thereafter, one must seek that place from which, having gone, one never returns, and there surrender to that Supreme Personality of Godhead from whom everything began and from whom everything has extended since time immemorial. Those who are free from false prestige, illusion and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are freed from the dualities of happiness and distress, and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attain to that eternal kingdom. That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world. The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind. The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another as the air carries aromas. Thus he takes one kind of body and again quits it to take another. The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of ear, eye, tongue, nose and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects. The foolish cannot understand how a living entity can quit his body, nor can they understand what sort of body he enjoys under the spell of the modes of nature. But one whose eyes are trained in knowledge can see all this. The endeavoring transcendentalists, who are situated in self-realization, can see all this clearly. But those whose minds are not developed and who are not situated in self-realization cannot see what is taking place, though they may try to. The splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness of this whole world, comes from Me. And the splendor of the moon and the splendor of fire are also from Me. I enter into each planet, and by My energy they stay in orbit. I become the moon and thereby supply the juice of life to all vegetables. I am the fire of digestion in the bodies of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, outgoing and incoming, to digest the four kinds of foodstuff. I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas. There are two classes of beings, the fallible and the infallible. In the material world every living entity is fallible, and in the spiritual world every living entity is called infallible. Besides these two, there is the greatest living personality, the Supreme Soul, the imperishable Lord Himself, who has entered the three worlds and is maintaining them. Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the Vedas as that Supreme Person. Whoever knows Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without doubting, is the knower of everything. He therefore engages himself in full devotional service to Me, O son of Bharata. This is the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures, O sinless one, and it is disclosed now by Me. Whoever understands this will become wise, and his endeavors will know perfection.

## Chapter Sixteen

### The Divine and Demoniatic Natures

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Fearlessness; purification of one's existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of the Vedas; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquillity; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness; fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy and from the passion for honor-these transcendental qualities, O son of Bharata, belong to godly men endowed with divine nature. Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance-these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature, O son of Prtha. The transcendental qualities are conducive to liberation, whereas the demoniac qualities make for bondage. Do not worry, O son of Pandu, for you are born with the divine qualities. O son of Prtha, in this world there are two kinds of created beings. One is called the divine and the other demoniac. I have already explained to you at length the divine qualities. Now hear from Me of the demoniac. Those who are demoniac do not know what is to be done and what is not to be done. Neither cleanliness nor proper behavior nor truth is found in them. They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust. Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world. Taking shelter of insatiable lust and absorbed in the conceit of pride and false prestige, the demoniac, thus illusioned, are always sworn to unclean work, attracted by the impermanent. They believe that to gratify the senses is the prime necessity of human civilization. Thus until the end of life their anxiety is immeasurable. Bound by a network of hundreds of thousands of desires and absorbed in lust and anger, they secure money by illegal means for sense gratification. The demoniac person thinks: "So much wealth do I have today, and I will gain more according to my schemes. So much is mine now, and it will increase in the future, more and more. He is my enemy, and I have killed him, and my other enemies will also be killed. I am the lord of everything. I am the enjoyer. I am perfect, powerful and happy. I am the richest man, surrounded by aristocratic relatives. There is none so powerful and happy as I am. I shall perform sacrifices, I shall give some charity, and thus I shall rejoice." In this way, such persons are deluded by ignorance. Thus perplexed by various anxieties and bound by a network of illusions, they become too strongly attached to sense enjoyment and fall down into hell. Self-complacent and always impudent, deluded by wealth and false prestige, they sometimes proudly perform sacrifices in name only, without following any rules or regulations. Bewildered by false ego, strength, pride, lust and anger, the demons become envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is situated in their own bodies and in the bodies of others, and blaspheme against the real religion. Those who are envious and mischievous, who are the lowest among men, I perpetually cast into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life. Attaining repeated birth amongst the species of demoniac life, O son

of Kunti, such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence. There are three gates leading to this hell-lust, anger and greed. Every sane man should give these up, for they lead to the degradation of the soul. The man who has escaped these three gates of hell, O son of Kunti, performs acts conducive to self-realization and thus gradually attains the supreme destination. He who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination. One should therefore understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated.

## Chapter Seventeen

### Divisions of Faith

Arjuna inquired: O Krishna, what is the situation of those who do not follow the principles of scripture but worship according to their own imagination? Are they in goodness, in passion or in ignorance? The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: According to the modes of nature acquired by the embodied soul, one's faith can be of three kinds—in goodness, in passion or in ignorance. Now hear about this. O son of Bharata, according to one's existence under the various modes of nature, one evolves a particular kind of faith. The living being is said to be of a particular faith according to the modes he has acquired. Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits. Those who undergo severe austerities and penances not recommended in the scriptures, performing them out of pride and egoism, who are impelled by lust and attachment, who are foolish and who torture the material elements of the body as well as the Supersoul dwelling within, are to be known as demons. Even the food each person prefers is of three kinds, according to the three modes of material nature. The same is true of sacrifices, austerities and charity. Now hear of the distinctions between them. Foods dear to those in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart. Foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning are dear to those in the mode of passion. Such foods cause distress, misery and disease. Food prepared more than three hours before being eaten, food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear to those in the mode of darkness. Of sacrifices, the sacrifice performed according to the directions of scripture, as a matter of duty, by those who desire no reward, is of the nature of goodness. But the sacrifice performed for some material benefit, or for the sake of pride, O chief of the Bharatas, you should know to be in the mode of passion. Any sacrifice performed without regard for the directions of scripture, without distribution of prasadam [spiritual food], without chanting of Vedic hymns and remunerations to the priests,

and without faith is considered to be in the mode of ignorance. Austerity of the body consists in worship of the Supreme Lord, the brahmanas, the spiritual master, and superiors like the father and mother, and in cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy and nonviolence. Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature. And satisfaction, simplicity, gravity, self-control and purification of one's existence are the austerities of the mind. This threefold austerity, performed with transcendental faith by men not expecting material benefits but engaged only for the sake of the Supreme, is called austerity in goodness. Penance performed out of pride and for the sake of gaining respect, honor and worship is said to be in the mode of passion. It is neither stable nor permanent. Penance performed out of foolishness, with self-torture or to destroy or injure others, is said to be in the mode of ignorance. Charity given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person is considered to be in the mode of goodness. But charity performed with the expectation of some return, or with a desire for fruitive results, or in a grudging mood, is said to be charity in the mode of passion. And charity performed at an impure place, at an improper time, to unworthy persons, or without proper attention and respect is said to be in the mode of ignorance. From the beginning of creation, the three words om tat sat were used to indicate the Supreme Absolute Truth. These three symbolic representations were used by brahmanas while chanting the hymns of the Vedas and during sacrifices for the satisfaction of the Supreme. Therefore, transcendentalists undertaking performances of sacrifice, charity and penance in accordance with scriptural regulations begin always with om, to attain the Supreme. Without desiring fruitive results, one should perform various kinds of sacrifice, penance and charity with the word tat. The purpose of such transcendental activities is to get free from material entanglement. The Absolute Truth is the objective of devotional sacrifice, and it is indicated by the word sat. The performer of such sacrifice is also called sat, as are all works of sacrifice, penance and charity which, true to the absolute nature, are performed to please the Supreme Person, O son of Prtha. Anything done as sacrifice, charity or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Prtha, is impermanent. It is called asat and is useless both in this life and the next.

## Chapter Eighteen

### The Perfection of Renunciation

Arjuna said: O mighty-armed one, I wish to understand the purpose of renunciation [tyaga] and of the renounced order of life [sannyasa], O killer of the Kesi demon, master of the senses. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: The giving up of activities that are based on material desire is what great learned men call the renounced order of life [sannyasa]. And giving up the results of all activities is what the wise call renunciation [tyaga]. Some learned men declare that all kinds of fruitive activities should be given up as faulty, yet other sages maintain that acts of sacrifice,

charity and penance should never be abandoned. O best of the Bharatas, now hear My judgment about renunciation. O tiger among men, renunciation is declared in the scriptures to be of three kinds. Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be given up; they must be performed. Indeed, sacrifice, charity and penance purify even the great souls. All these activities should be performed without attachment or any expectation of result. They should be performed as a matter of duty, O son of Prtha. That is My final opinion. Prescribed duties should never be renounced. If one gives up his prescribed duties because of illusion, such renunciation is said to be in the mode of ignorance. Anyone who gives up prescribed duties as troublesome or out of fear of bodily discomfort is said to have renounced in the mode of passion. Such action never leads to the elevation of renunciation. O Arjuna, when one performs his prescribed duty only because it ought to be done, and renounces all material association and all attachment to the fruit, his renunciation is said to be in the mode of goodness. The intelligent renouncer situated in the mode of goodness, neither hateful of inauspicious work nor attached to auspicious work, has no doubts about work. It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to give up all activities. But he who renounces the fruits of action is called one who has truly renounced. For one who is not renounced, the threefold fruits of action-desirable, undesirable and mixed-accrue after death. But those who are in the renounced order of life have no such result to suffer or enjoy. O mighty-armed Arjuna, according to the Vedanta there are five causes for the accomplishment of all action. Now learn of these from Me. The place of action [the body], the performer, the various senses, the many different kinds of endeavor, and ultimately the Supersoul-these are the five factors of action. Whatever right or wrong action a man performs by body, mind or speech is caused by these five factors. Therefore one who thinks himself the only doer, not considering the five factors, is certainly not very intelligent and cannot see things as they are. One who is not motivated by false ego, whose intelligence is not entangled, though he kills men in this world, does not kill. Nor is he bound by his actions. Knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the knower are the three factors that motivate action; the senses, the work and the doer are the three constituents of action. According to the three different modes of material nature, there are three kinds of knowledge, action and performer of action. Now hear of them from Me. That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness. That knowledge by which one sees that in every different body there is a different type of living entity you should understand to be in the mode of passion. And that knowledge by which one is attached to one kind of work as the all in all, without knowledge of the truth, and which is very meager, is said to be in the mode of darkness. That action which is regulated and which is performed without attachment, without love or hatred, and without desire for fruitive results is said to be in the mode of goodness. But action performed with great effort by one seeking to gratify his desires, and enacted from a sense of false ego, is called action in the mode of passion. That action performed in illusion, in disregard of scriptural injunctions, and without concern for future bondage or for violence or distress caused to others is said to be in the mode of ignorance. One who performs his duty without association with the modes of material nature, without false ego, with great determination and enthusiasm, and without wavering in success or failure is said to be a worker in the mode of goodness. The worker who is attached to work and the

fruits of work, desiring to enjoy those fruits, and who is greedy, always envious, impure, and moved by joy and sorrow, is said to be in the mode of passion. The worker who is always engaged in work against the injunctions of the scripture, who is materialistic, obstinate, cheating and expert in insulting others, and who is lazy, always morose and procrastinating is said to be a worker in the mode of ignorance. O winner of wealth, now please listen as I tell you in detail of the different kinds of understanding and determination, according to the three modes of material nature. O son of Prtha, that understanding by which one knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating, is in the mode of goodness. O son of Prtha, that understanding which cannot distinguish between religion and irreligion, between action that should be done and action that should not be done, is in the mode of passion. That understanding which considers irreligion to be religion and religion to be irreligion, under the spell of illusion and darkness, and strives always in the wrong direction, O Partha, is in the mode of ignorance. O son of Prtha, that determination which is unbreakable, which is sustained with steadfastness by yoga practice, and which thus controls the activities of the mind, life and senses is determination in the mode of goodness. But that determination by which one holds fast to fruitive results in religion, economic development and sense gratification is of the nature of passion, O Arjuna. And that determination which cannot go beyond dreaming, fearfulness, lamentation, moroseness and illusion-such unintelligent determination, O son of Prtha, is in the mode of darkness. O best of the Bharatas, now please hear from Me about the three kinds of happiness by which the conditioned soul enjoys, and by which he sometimes comes to the end of all distress. That which in the beginning may be just like poison but at the end is just like nectar and which awakens one to self-realization is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness. That happiness which is derived from contact of the senses with their objects and which appears like nectar at first but poison at the end is said to be of the nature of passion. And that happiness which is blind to self-realization, which is delusion from beginning to end and which arises from sleep, laziness and illusion is said to be of the nature of ignorance. There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature. Brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas and sudras are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes, O chastiser of the enemy. Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness-these are the natural qualities by which the brahmanas work. Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the ksatriyas. Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the vaisyas, and for the sudras there is labor and service to others. By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. Now please hear from Me how this can be done. By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection through performing his own work. It is better to engage in one's own occupation, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Duties prescribed according to one's nature are never affected by sinful reactions. Every endeavor is covered by some fault, just as fire is covered by smoke. Therefore one should not give up the work born of his nature, O son of Kunti, even if such

work is full of fault. One who is self-controlled and unattached and who disregards all material enjoyments can obtain, by practice of renunciation, the highest perfect stage of freedom from reaction. O son of Kunti, learn from Me how one who has achieved this perfection can attain to the supreme perfectional stage, Brahman, the stage of highest knowledge, by acting in the way I shall now summarize. Being purified by his intelligence and controlling the mind with determination, giving up the objects of sense gratification, being freed from attachment and hatred, one who lives in a secluded place, who eats little, who controls his body, mind and power of speech, who is always in trance and who is detached, free from false ego, false strength, false pride, lust, anger, and acceptance of material things, free from false proprietorship, and peaceful—such a person is certainly elevated to the position of self-realization. One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me. One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God. Though engaged in all kinds of activities, My pure devotee, under My protection, reaches the eternal and imperishable abode by My grace. In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me. If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditioned life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, not hearing Me, you will be lost. If you do not act according to My direction and do not fight, then you will be falsely directed. By your nature, you will have to be engaged in warfare. Under illusion you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own nature, you will act all the same, O son of Kunti. The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy. O scion of Bharata, surrender unto Him utterly. By His grace you will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode. Thus I have explained to you knowledge still more confidential. Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do. Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you My supreme instruction, the most confidential knowledge of all. Hear this from Me, for it is for your benefit. Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear. This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me. For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear. And I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence. And one who listens with faith and without envy becomes free from sinful reactions and attains to the auspicious planets where the pious dwell. O son of Prtha, O conqueror of wealth, have you heard this with an attentive mind? And are your ignorance and illusions now dispelled? Arjuna said: My dear Krishna, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory

by Your mercy. I am now firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions. Sanjaya said: Thus have I heard the conversation of two great souls, Krishna and Arjuna. And so wonderful is that message that my hair is standing on end. By the mercy of Vyasa, I have heard these most confidential talks directly from the master of all mysticism, Krishna, who was speaking personally to Arjuna. O King, as I repeatedly recall this wondrous and holy dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, I take pleasure, being thrilled at every moment. O King, as I remember the wonderful form of Lord Krishna, I am struck with wonder more and more, and I rejoice again and again. Wherever there is Krishna, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion.

## Chapter Two

### The First Day of Combat: Duryodhana Gains the Upper Hand

Sanjaya said: O King, beholding the two armies appearing like two mighty oceans, the heroic King Yudhisthira took off his coat of armor, and leaving aside his weapons, proceeded toward the Kaurava's front line. Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva as well as Lord Krishna followed the great King in wonder of his actions. Yudhisthira entered the Kaurava ranks on foot followed by his brothers and His ever well wisher, Lord Krishna. Coming near the grandsire Bhishma, Yudhisthira offered his obeisances and touching the feet of his beloved grandfather he humbly submitted, "I offer my obeisances unto you, O invincible one. Grant us permission to engage in combat with you. Also give us your blessings to obtain victory."

The great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty replied, "If you had not obtained my permission in this matter, O King of the earth, then I would have cursed you to have been defeated. My grandson, I am pleased with you. O son of Pandu, commence the battle and obtain victory. You may also ask me for a benediction that will assist you in this battle. A man is a slave of wealth, but wealth is no one's slave. I have been bound to the Kauravas by their wealth and thus like a eunuch, I have taken a false master. O son of the Kuru race, what assistance can I be to you, even though I am fighting for your enemy?"

"O sire," Yudhisthira requested, "it is difficult for me to ask this of you. However, for the cause of virtue, I must ask it. Because you are invincible, how will it be possible for us to conquer you in battle? Please tell me if there is any righteousness in this request?"

"I do not see, O son of Kunti," Bhishma replied, "the person who can subjugate me in battle. However, I will indicate to you when the time for my death has come."

Bowing down to his beloved grandfather, Yudhisthira left him and proceeded to the chariot of Drona. He offered his obeisances to the preceptor and inquired from him, "I ask you, O invincible one, how may I fight without incurring sin? How also will I be able to subdue the enemy?"

"If you had not solicited my permission in humility," Drona replied, "then I would have cursed you to have been defeated in battle. However, since you have come to me in this way, I am pleased with you. You may fight and win victory. I am bound by the Kaurava's wealth, but I pray for your success"

"O great brahmana," Yudhisthira said, "pray for my victory, and give me good counsel."

"Victory, O king," Drona replied, "is certain for you, because you have Lord Hari for your advisor. I also grant you that you will vanquish your enemy in battle. Where there is righteousness, there is Lord Krishna, and where there is Lord Krishna, there is victory. Fight, O son of Kunti. What else is there to ask from me?"

"O foremost of the brahmanas," Yudhisthira inquired, "listen to my request. Since you are invincible, how will it be possible for me to subdue you in battle?"

"As long as I live," Drona replied, "you will not have victory. There is none amongst the enemy that can stop my progress. However, if I give up my weapons and sit on my chariot in meditation, then it will be possible to kill me. When I hear an untruth from a person who is always truthful, my death will take place."

Offering obeisances to the preceptor Drona, King Yudhisthira went to the son of Saradwat. Offering obeisances to Kripa, the King requested, "After obtaining your permission, I will fight with the Kaurava army, and by your blessings, I will defeat the enemy."

Kripacharya replied, "If, having made up your mind to fight, you had not come to me, I would have cursed you to be defeated in battle. I am pleased with your humility. I, also, am bound by wealth to fight for the Kauravas. However, you may take a benediction from me."

Yudhisthira spoke falteringly, "O preceptor, I ask you for the following boon." Yudhisthira could not speak another word, and his voice became choked up.

Kripa, understanding what he wanted said, "I cannot be slain in battle, O King. Fight and obtain victory. I will rise every morning and pray for your success."

Offering obeisances to the preceptor Kripa, King Yudhisthira went to Salya and offered his obeisances. With folded hands he spoke to his uncle, "I request permission to fight in battle without incurring sin, and request your blessings for victory."

"If you had not come to me in this way, O King," Salya said, "I would have cursed you to be defeated in battle. Because of your humility, I am pleased with you. Let it be as you wish. You may fight and obtain victory. I am bound to the Kauravas by a promise, and I am speaking to you like a eunuch. Still you may ask me for anything."

"If you remember the benediction you offered me at Upaplavya," Yudhisthira replied, "during the preparations for the fight, I would ask you to honor that boon in regards to the Suta's son [Karna]. Please weaken his determination for battle."

"If this be your desire," Salya said, "then I shall accomplish it. Fight according to your pleasure. I will obtain victory for you."

Having obtained blessings from his maternal uncle, Yudhisthira came out of the vast Kaurava army along with his brothers. They returned to their positions and again put on their armor. At this time Lord Krishna went to Karna and requested him, "I have heard, O Karna, that you will not fight as long as Bhishma is alive. Come to our camp, O son of Radha, and fight along with us until Bhishma is slain. Afterwards, you may again take up your position by Duryodhana's side."

"O Keshava," Karna replied, "I will not execute any action that is not agreeable to Duryodhana. For him I will give up my life." Upon hearing these words, Lord Krishna returned to Arjuna's chariot.

At this time in the midst of all the warriors, Yudhisthira loudly exclaimed, "Anyone amongst the army of Duryodhana who will fight for us, we will accept as an ally!" There was a moment of silence, and then Yuyutsu, one of Dhritarastra's sons by a vaishya wife, said, "I will choose your side if you will accept me, O sinless one."

"Come," Yudhisthira said, "come to our side and together we will fight with your foolish brothers. Both Lord Krishna and myself accept you. On you rests the continuation of Dhritarastra's line, and it will be you who will offer oblations to the forefathers." Yuyutsu then came to the Pandavas ranks to the blare of conchshells and the beating of drums. The mighty armed sons of Pandu then ascended their chariots and again properly arrayed their forces in battle formation.

Dhritarastra inquired from Sanjaya: When the phalanxes of both sides were thus arrayed, who struck first, the Pandavas or the Kurus?

Sanjaya replied: O King, under Duryodhana's command, Duhshasana advanced with his troops, bearing the grandsire Bhishma at their head. The Pandavas also advanced with cheerful hearts, desiring battle with their grandfather. With Bhima leading them, the army of the Pandavas, accompanied by the tumultuous blowing of conchshells, bugles and trumpets as well as the beating of drums, encountered the troops of Duhshasana. The uproar of the soldiers was deafening, and Bhimasena roared like a bull. The thunderous war cries of Bhima's voice rose above the sounds of the instruments and the clashing armies. His voice sounded like Indra's thunderbolt. Indeed, the war cries of Bhima were so loud that the horses and

elephants on both sides passed stool and urine. Bhima assumed an awful form and, fell upon Dhritarastra's sons headed by Duryodhana. Duryodhana, Durmukha, Dussaha, Duhshasana, Vivingsati and Chitrasena, pulling back their bowstrings, released snake-like arrows desiring to end Bhima's life. Joining Bhimasena in the encounter were the five sons of Draupadi, Abhimanyu, Nakula and Sahadeva. The commander in chief, Dhristadyumna also joined happily in that combat. He rushed against Dhritarastra's sons penetrating them with his pointed shafts. When those two armies met, a dust cloud rose up into the sky covering the battlefield with a darkness.

Under the order of King Duryodhana, all his generals rushed toward the Pandava army for battle. And under the command of King Yudhisthira, the Kings in his army rushed forward to halt their advancement. No one retreated from the field of battle. The sound of the troops, the twang of bowstrings, the tread of the infantry, the furious sounds of the horses, the falling of weapons and hooks, the clash of weapons, the sounds of elephants rushing against one another, and the clatter of the chariots mingled together and produced a loud uproar, causing one's hair to stand on end.

Ganga's son, Bhishma, rushed at Arjuna, taking up a bow that resembled the rod of death. And Arjuna, taking up his Gandiva bow, rushed at Bhishma with great fury. Bhishma, although piercing Arjuna's body with many arrows, could not make him waver, and the son of Kunti, Arjuna, also could not make the son of Shantanu falter. Satyaki rushed against Kritavarman and pierced him with many arrows. Kritavarman counter attacked and covered Satyaki with arrows, making him resemble a pin cushion. The mighty bowman Abhimanyu battled with the Koshala ruler, Brihadvala. Soon the King of Koshala cut off the standard and overthrew the charioteer of Subhadra's son. Abhimanyu was outraged and pierced Brihadvala with nine arrows. With another arrow Abhimanyu cut off the standard from his chariot and killed his charioteer. Bhimasena struggled in battle with Duryodhana, who was puffed up with false pride. Both of those mighty warriors covered each other with hundreds of arrows, and upon seeing that encounter, all were amazed. And Duhshasana, rushing against the mighty warrior Nakula, pierced him with many sharp arrows. Laughing at Duhshasana's prowess, Nakula cut off his standard and bow and struck him with twenty arrows. Duhshasana, however, countered and killed Nakula's horses and cut his standard from his chariot. Durmukha rushed against Sahadeva and pierced his body in many places. Sahadeva countered and killed Durmukha's chario Bhishma Parva

## Chapter Three

### The Second Day at Kurukshetra; Bhima and Arjuna Devastate the Kaurava Army

Dhritarastra inquired: When the valorous Sweta was slain by the grandsire Bhishma, what did the Pandavas and the Panchalas do? O Sanjaya, hearing of our victory, my heart feels extreme delight. I do not feel any shame because of our previous transgressions. After the defeat of the great Sweta, Arjuna must have become furious. What action did he take?

Sanjaya replied: O King, your happiness is only temporary. The Pandavas are like ferocious serpents ready to release their venom. For your fault, O Monarch, you will see all your kinsmen slain on the battlefield. Listen as I narrate the events on the second day of the great war.

Sanjaya continued: King Yudhisthira greatly lamented the loss of so many troops on the first day of battle. Seeing Bhishma devour his army, he went to Lord Vasudeva and poured out his heart, "Behold, O Krishna, the invincible prowess of the mighty bowman Bhishma. He is consuming my army like fire consumes grass. No one can stand before him when he releases his celestial weapons upon my troops. Yamaraja, Varuna, Kuvera or even Indra can be defeated, but the mighty chariot fighter, Bhishma, cannot be stopped. Such being the case, I am drowning in the great ocean of Ganga's son without a boat to rescue me. I am unable to watch as my best warriors are slain. I shall, therefore, retire to the forest to perform severe austerities, and save these great warriors from the fire of the colossal Bhishma. Tell me, O Madhava, what I can do prevent this slaughter? Although Arjuna is our only hope, I see that he is indifferent, for although we are being slaughtered by Bhishma and Drona, he does not take action. Endowed with supernatural powers, Bhima alone is extinguishing the enemy troops. But at this rate it will take a hundred years to defeat the enemy. O Govinda, please find the person who can stop Ganga's son and the great Drona, so that after the enemy demise our kinsmen will live happily in this world."

Seeing Kunti's first son conquered by despair, the lotus eyed Lord smilingly instructed him, "Do not grieve, O chief of the Bharatas, especially when your brothers are great bowmen. I am planning for your victory, and so are Drupada, Virata and Satyaki. The mighty chariot fighter, Dhristadyumna, is arranging the troops to subjugate our enemy. He will certainly cause Drona's death, and Shikhandi will bring about the death of Bhishma. This has been ordained by providence."

Enlivening the heart of Yudhisthira as well as the other great generals, the lotus eyed Lord smiled compassionately upon all present. All were gazing upon His beautiful features and were not satiated upon hearing His nectarean words. In the presence of all, Dhristadyumna promised, "O son of Pritha, as ordained by Lord Shiva himself, I will be the cause of Drona's death. Tomorrow, I shall fight with

Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Salya, and all the proud monarchs on the Kaurava's side, bringing joy to your heart."

Yudhisthira then requested Dhristadyumna, "O great hero, in a previous age there was a formation spoken of by Brihaspati, the priest of the demigods. It is known by the name of Krauncharuma, and it will help us to rout our enemy. Tomorrow before the sun rises, arrange our troops in this formation so our enemy will be defeated."

When humbly requested by King Yudhisthira, Dhristadyumna, the esteemed chariot fighter, arranged the phalanxes in the proper formation before the sun appeared on the horizon. He placed Arjuna, the carrier of the Gandiva bow, in the forefront of the whole army. King Drupada, surrounded by many phalanxes became the head of that formation. The two kings Kuntibhoja and Saivya became the two eyes, and Nakula and Sahadeva were placed on the right and left wing of the formation. On the joints of the wings were placed ten thousand chariots, and at the head of the formation was placed a hundred thousand. A hundred million chariots were placed in the body of the formation, and in the neck was placed a hundred and seventy thousands chariot fighters. On the joints of the wing as well as the far edges were placed hundreds of thousands of elephants. The rear of the formation was protected by Virata, the ruler of Kashi and the King of the Chedis, Dhristaketu. Having placed all the troops in their proper places, the Pandavas waited for sunrise. The white umbrellas mounted over the Pandava's chariots and elephants looked magnificent, like many rising suns on the horizon. Thus the army waited silently for the dawn of the second day.

With the first light of day, the Kauravas saw the commanding formation created by the Pandavas. In the presence of all his important generals, Duryodhana spoke encouraging words, "Each of the principal warriors here is capable of killing the Pandavas in battle. How more effective will you be if united against this vast army protected by Bhima. Let us now make arrangements to counter the vast array of the Pandavas."

Upon hearing the desires of Dhritarastra's son, Bhishma and Drona formed an array to counter that of the Pandavas. Hundreds of millions of men were lined up for combat, and they filled the earth from one horizon to the other. The leaders of the mammoth divisions were Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Salya, Duryodhana, Somadatta, Susharman, Bhurishrava, Sala, Shakuni, the ruler of the Kambhojas, Vinda and Anuvinda, Kritavarman and many others. The soldiers appeared noble with multicolored armor and vast numbers of weapons. All were cheerful, and all were ready for battle.

Then the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty blew his conchshell followed by the other great warriors. Conches, drums and kettledrums sounded in thousands, and the tumult was uproarious. In response to the Kaurava's battle cry, Krishna and Arjuna sounded their transcendental conchshells, the Panchajanya and the Devadatta, striking fear into the hearts of the enemy. The mighty Bhima blew his conch called Paundram. The son of Kunti, Yudhisthira sounded his conch called the Anantavijaya, while Nakula and Sahadeva blew the Sughosha and the Manipushpaka. The din of

these conches was tumultuous and weakened the hearts of Duryodhana's soldiers. All the warriors in the Pandava army sent up war cries that caused the very earth to tremble. Both armies were joyous at the thought of battle, and as they advanced toward one another with upraised weapons, they uttered thunderous shouts that shook the very earth.

The two armies met with a forceful impact, causing a great dust cloud to rise into the sky. Arrows like lightening bolts were scorching through the sky severing the heads, arm, and legs of the oncoming enemy. Bhishma, exhibiting gruesome prowess, approached the Pandava army and began to rain arrows in thousands upon the great warriors. He first of all met with the son of Subhadra, Abhimanyu, who was supported by Arjuna, Virata and Dhristadyumna. The Pandava warriors wavered upon seeing the fierce Bhishma releasing arrows like thunderbolts from the sky. Horsemen, chariot fighters and elephants fell fast before the onslaught of the invincible grandsire. When the soldiers in the Pandava army began to retreat, Arjuna requested the Lotus eyed Krishna, "O Hrishikesha, guide my chariot to the presence of the grandsire. O descendant of Vrishni, it is evident that Bhishma will annihilate our army if not opposed. He is protected by Drona, Kripa, Salya and Vikarna. O Janardana, I shall therefore slay Bhishma for the benefit of my troops."

Having said this, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, maneuvered that beautiful chariot in line for challenging Bhishma. Arjuna's chariot was drawn by spotlessly white horses of celestial origin. As the chariot moved, Hanuman roared from the banner striking terror into the hearts of the Kaurava army. Seeing Arjuna coming, the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, released seventy arrows. Drona assailed him with twenty five and Kripa with fifty. Salya released nine arrows, and Drona's son released sixty. Arjuna neutralized those arrows and pierced each of the great warriors with many shafts. All the arrows released by Bhishma were repelled by Arjuna, and all the arrows released by Arjuna were torn to pieces by the grandsire. Neither could gain an advantage over the other, and all, including the heavenly lords, wondered at the display of powers. Bhishma could not be defeated by Arjuna, and Arjuna could not be subdued by the grandsire, Bhishma. While these two combatants were skirmishing with their celestial weapons and countering each other, other warriors on both sides began to kill one another with sharp edge scimitars, polished battle axes, iron maces, javelins and innumerable arrows.

There was fierce fighting between Drona and the son of Drupada, Dhristadyumna. Both were greatly provoked, and both released divine weapons, hoping to slay each other. In the end Drona killed the Panchala prince's horses and the charioteer. Dhristadyumna descended from his chariot mace in hand, indicating he was ready to fight on foot. But before he take a step forward, Drona shattered the weapon to pieces with his deadly arrows. Drupada's son then took up a large scimitar and a beautiful shield marked with a hundred moons. He assaulted Drona, and with each step caused the earth to tremble. Drona, however, checked Dhristadyumna with arrows used for short range conflict. The son of Drupada deflected those arrows with his shield, using his dextrous arms. Coming to Dhristadyumna's aid, Bhima struck Drona with nine arrows, and quickly took Drupada's son onto his chariot, saving him from certain death.

Under Duryodhana's orders, the King of the Kalingas, Shrutayus, intercepted Bhima, intending to protect Drona. He was accompanied by a large division of troops that were well armed. He was supported by King Ketumat of the Nishadas. Bhima was supported by the Chedis, the Matsyas and the Karushas. When the two armies met, there was a enormous clash of weapons. The battle cries of the warriors filled the skies, and the troops were so thick that no one could distinguish who was friend and who was foe. Friend slaughtered friend, and foe slaughtered the foe. Heads were seen rolling on the ground and flying in the air. Gradually the Kalingas began to gain the upper hand, and the army of the Chedis broke leaving Bhima alone to fight with thousands of warriors.

From this point on, the battle is indescribable. Bhima became superhuman and created a scene of terror that caused the enemy's hair to stand on end. From the terrace of his char he rained a shower of arrows upon all warriors in the Kalinga army. The King of the Kalingas, Shrutayus, and his son Sakradeva attacked Bhima and pierced him with their shafts. They managed to kill Bhima's horses, and becoming confident of victory, Sakradeva assaulted Bhima, intending to send him to region of Yamaraja. Bhima countered those weapons with his own, and taking up a huge mace, he released it with tremendous force. That mace scorched through the air, and simultaneously killed the charioteer and Sakradeva. The mace was thrown with such power that no one could distinguish the body of that prince any longer.

Enraged on the battlefield and fighting alone, Bhima took up an immense scimitar and shield, and ran into an army of thousands of men shouting fierce war cries that terrorized the hearts of the enemy. The ruler of the Kalingas Shrutayus, was furious, and rubbing his bowstring, released a deadly arrow hoping to kill Bhima. While that arrow was scorching through the air like a meteor, the powerful Bhima cut it in two with his huge sword. When that weapon was baffled, Bhima sent up a loud roar that deafened the enemy's ears. The ruler of the Kalingas was further enraged and released fourteen barbed darts toward the son of Pandu. Bhima, fearlessly smiling, cut them into fragments with three swings of his might scimitar.

While these two heroes were skirmishing, Bhanumat, a Kalinga general, assaulted Bhima while riding on the back of his elephant. Bhanumat covered Bhima with steel arrows and sent up a tumultuous shout encouraging the Kalinga army. Not tolerating such impudence, Bhima sent up his own war cry, and ran toward Bhanumat, who was seated on his elephant. The Kalinga army, seeing Bhima single handedly fighting with tens of thousands of men, thought that he was not a human being but a celestial warrior. Rushing at Bhanumat's elephant, Bhima jumped onto his tusk and then onto his back, and with one swing of his sword, he divided Bhanumat in the middle. One half fell off one side of the elephant, and one half fell off the other side. With a thunderous roar, Bhima raised his mighty sword and severed the head of that prince of the elephants, causing it to fall to the ground.

While still on foot and wielding that terrible sword, he began to wander the battlefield slaughtering elephants and making a wide path of flesh and blood wherever he went. Wielding that great scimitar, he cut chariots in two, horses in the middle, and heads, arms and thighs were seen flying in all directions. His scimitar

appeared like a discus destroying the whole Kalinga army. Anyone, who was foolish to approach him shouting battle cries, was sent to the other world. He whirled about, and jumped high, rushed forward and rushed backward, constantly keeping his sword in a circle. That grinder of the foes slaughtered elephants by cutting off their legs, trunks and heads and sometimes severing them down the middle. Such was the strength of the invincible Bhima. He moved on the battlefield, sometimes dragging chariot fighters from their chariots, and sometimes trampling infantry under his feet. Sometimes he would be so provoked that he would crush foot soldiers into balls of flesh. No one could stand before the son of the wind god as he danced on the field of battle.

Shrutayush rallied his troops, and together they rushed at Bhima hoping to trample him or kill him with their weapons. The ruler of the Kalingas pierced Bhima in the chest with nine arrows, but this only annoyed Bhima. Suddenly Bhima's charioteer, Ashoka, arrived with a chariot, and he requested Bhima to ascend that beautiful car. Bhima then attacked the King of the Kalingas challenging him to battle. Seeing Bhima coming, Shrutayush, Ketumat, Satya and Satyadeva all rushed at him releasing their arrows. With seven iron arrows Bhima killed Shrutayush, the King of the Kalingas. Falling from his chariot, he was deprived of his life. Bhima then killed those other great warriors with his lethal weapons. The army of the Kalingas, headed by other powerful warriors, could not tolerate Bhima's victory, and they rushed at him in thousands. They were armed with maces, darts, javelins, swords, and bows and arrows. They surrounded him and hoped by sheer numbers they could kill him. Bhima, smiling all the while, took up a powerful mace and quickly descended from his chariot. Wheeling his mace around and around, he sent seven hundred warriors to the abode of death, and within a mere twinkling of an eye, he killed another two thousand warriors. The elephants that assaulted Bhima had their riders killed, and being thrown into confusion, they began to bolt over the battlefield crushing thousands of Kalinga soldiers. Overcome with fear at seeing Bhima's prowess, the remnants of the Kalinga army fled in all directions.

Coming up to support Bhima was Dhristadyumna and Satyaki. There was no one more dearer to Dhristadyumna than Bhima, and when the Panchala Prince saw the slaughter that Bhima had created, he sent up a war cry. Bhima saw Dhristadyumna's chariot and heard his voice. He smiled at Dhristadyumna and encouraged him to fight. By this time the Kalingas had rallied and attacked the two heroes as they stood in their chariots. Bow in hand, Bhima began to slay the enemy, causing a river of blood to flow from the warriors born in Kalinga. The Kalingas thought that Bhima was Yamaraja himself, and they sent up cries for help. Coming to their aid, Bhishma, the great grandsire of the Kurus, attacked Bhima releasing his steel shafted arrows. Bhima countered those arrows and released an iron dart with all his strength. Seeing that dart coming toward him, Bhishma tore it to pieces. Bhishma quickly killed Bhima's horses, and the son of Pandu, taking up a mace ran on foot towards the great grandsire. However, Dhristadyumna quickly took the mighty Bhima onto his chariot and took him away to safety. To stop Bhishma's advance, Satyaki killed his charioteer, and the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty was borne away by his horses with the speed of the wind. Bhimasena then finished the massacre of the Kalinga army like fire consuming a dry forest. After his victory, he was embraced by

Dhristadyumna and Satyaki who exclaimed, "By good luck the king of the Kalingas and his soldiers have been slain today. By the strength and prowess of your arms, you alone have crushed this large division of troops." Having heard this and still not satiated with battle, Bhima again ascended his chariot and began to destroy the ranks of the enemy.

The son of Dhritarashtra, Lakshmana, challenged the son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu, by releasing lightning fast arrows. Abhimanyu, invoking a celestial weapon, quickly released five hundred arrows at his cousin. Lakshmana, in turn, cut the bow of his cousin in two at the middle. Taking up another bow, Abhimanyu attacked Lakshmana with greater fury. Coming to Lakshman's assistance, his father, Duryodhana, accompanied by many great generals, began to afflict the son of Subhadra. Arjuna, seeing his son engaged in battle, came forward to assist him. The Kuru generals, Bhishma and Drona, accompanied by hundreds and thousands of soldiers, then attacked Dhananjaya. When those soldiers came within the scope of Arjuna's arrows, they were all sent to the other world. He filled the sky with arrows causing a dense darkness to set in on the battlefield. The battlefield soon became littered with dead elephants, horses and broken chariots. Men, pierced with as many as five hundred arrows, were lying on the ground deprived of their life. Warriors with upraised weapons, rushed against Arjuna's chariot. However, before they could come close, they had their arms severed with the weapon in hand. None could face the third son of Kunti in battle. There was literally a mountain of dead bodies surrounding Arjuna's chariot, so great was the massacre. Bhishma and Drona had their charioteers killed and were taken from the battlefield. When all the forces of the enemy had fled, Arjuna and Lord Krishna blew on their divine conchshells enlivening their army.

When the entire Kaurava army was routed, Bhishma said to Drona, "The heroic son of Pandu, guided by Krishna, is annihilating our army as he alone is able to do. Today, he cannot be subdued by any means. He appears to be the lord of death in human form. Our warriors are running from the battlefield and cannot be rallied. The sun is now setting on the horizon, and I think now is the time to withdraw our troops. They are panic stricken and will not fight again today." Having made his decision, the mighty chariot fighter, Bhishma, ordered the withdrawal of the troops thus ending the second day of the terrible war. The Pandava army also withdrew with joyous hearts, remembering the feats of Bhima and Arjuna.

Thus Ends the Third Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Second Day of Battle; Bhima and Arjuna devastate the Kaurava Army

## Chapter Commentary

In the beginning of this chapter, King Yudhisthira approached Lord Krishna and revealed his despairing heart. Lord Krishna encouraged him with assuring words, and thus King Yudhisthira was enlivened to continue the battle. All of us are in the battle of material existence, and sometimes material nature is so overwhelming, we need to turn to Lord Krishna for help. Some may say that we don't have Lord Krishna present to pour out our hearts to, but that is not the case. Lord Krishna is present in our hearts, and He knows our determination and our sorrows. If we turn to Him and reveal our hearts, He will help as he did King Yudhisthira. We can feel the presence of the Lord by chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna assured Arjuna, *cetasa sarva karmani, mayi sannnyasya mat-parah, buddhi-yogam upashritya, mach chittah sattam bhava*, "In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me." (B.g. 18.57) In the next verse Lord Krishna continues, *mac chittah sarva-durgani, mat-prasadat tarisyasi, atha cet tvam ahankaran, na shrosyasi vinanksyasi*, "If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all obstacles of conditional life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, no hearing Me, you will be lost." (B.g. 18.58)

## Chapter Four

The Third Day of Rivalry at Kurukshetra; Bhishma and Arjuna Reek Havoc

Dhritarastra inquired: When the sun appeared on the horizon, indicating the third day of battle, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do, both desiring victory.

Sanjaya said: O King, listen as I relate the events that happened on the third day of the great war. When the night had passed away and the dawn appeared, the great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, Bhishma, gave orders that the army be arrayed in the Garuda formation. The beak of the bird was the grandsire himself, and Drona and Kritavarman were the two eyes. Ashvatthama and Kripa were the head, and they were supported by the Trigartas. Bhurishravas, Jayadratha, Sala, Salya, and Bhagadatta were the neck of that great bird. Duryodhana and his followers constituted the back of the bird, and Vinda and Anuvinda, the Kings of Avantipura, were the tail of the bird. The two wings of that formation were the numerous divisions of troops under the different generals. Thus they waited anxiously for the third day of the battle.

Upon seeing the array formed by the Kauravas, Arjuna, in consultation with the mighty Dhristadyumna, arranged their troops in a counter formation that resembled a half moon. On the right side of the moon was the mighty Bhimasena supported by Drupada and Virata. Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi took up their positions in the middle of that formation surrounded by the Chedis, the Karushas and the Kashis. Next to these great warriors was the pious King Yudhisthira as well as the five sons of Draupadi and the son of Arjuna, Iravan. On the far left side of that moon was Arjuna, with the Supreme Lord, Shree Krishna as his chariot driver. In this way the Pandava army was arrayed and readied for battle.

Then commenced the rivalry between the two great forces. Each rushed at the other eager for battle. The two armies clashed, and the deafening sound of steel and weapons was heard in all directions. Large numbers of elephants and chariots on both sides rushed at one another with the intention of slaughter. As on the previous days, the sounds of the drums, kettledrums, conches, rattling chariots, clashing weapons, and the war cries of the foot soldiers combined together to produce a thunderous sound that weakened the hearts of many. Arjuna, the son of Kunti, began killing soldiers in hundreds and thousands causing a great carnage on the field of battle. Unable to tolerate the prowess of Phalguna, the unlimited Kaurava army attacked Arjuna. Simultaneously, they released thousands upon thousands of arrows, javelins, darts, swords, scimitars, maces and battle axes. Seeing that curtain of weapons coming toward him like a hurricane, he checked it with his celestial weapons. He then released countless arrows that created a massacre among the Kaurava ranks. Unable to confront the third son of Pandu, Duryodhana's immense army broke its formation and began to flee. Bhishma and Drona came forward to rally the troops, and also Duryodhana encouraged the soldiers to return to their positions.

After bolstering the soldiers and enlivening them, Duryodhana spoke tersely to Bhishma, "O grandsire, listen to what I have to say. As long as you, Drona and Kripa are alive, why should my army have to retreat. I do not regard the Pandavas as your equal match. If you had told me before the battle that you were not going to fight with the Pandavas, then I would have made arrangements with Karna on what course to pursue. I do not deserve to be abandoned. Please fight according to your prowess."

Laughing at Duryodhana's words, Bhishma replied, "Many a time I have told you that the Pandavas cannot be slain. I am doing the best this aged self can do. You can witness my prowess today as I check the progress of the sons of Pandu." Filled with delight, Duryodhana ordered the drums and conches to sound, encouraging the wavering army.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after Bhishma vowed a determined effort to stop the Pandavas, what did the great grandsire do to combat the Gandiva bow of Arjuna?

Sanjaya replied: O Monarch, after the son of Ganga had been provoked by your son, that great warrior, protected by a large division of troops, rushed at the Pandava

army longing for battle. The afternoon had already set in, and the Pandava army had gained a decisive victory. However, the grandsire caused a carnage of dead bodies to float in the ocean of Kurukshetra. Releasing his lethal weapons, he severed the arms, legs and heads of the oncoming enemy. So quick did he sever their heads that the trunks remained on the chariots still grasping weapons or armed with bow and arrow. His bow was drawn in a full circle, and he was releasing continuous lines of arrows in all directions. He caused thousands of chariot fighters to fall from their chariots, naming each before hand. The Pandava army could not tell where Bhishma was for he appeared to be in all directions multiplied by a thousand. At one moment he was on the west, and the next moment he was on the east. Not one of the Pandavas was able to get close to him, such was the prowess he exhibited. They could not tell where he was, but they could only see that the whole sky was filled with his arrows. Not one arrow released from the grandsire's bow missed its target. With a single arrow, he was killing the gigantic elephants that opposed him. Two or three soldiers, riding on the same elephant and encased in mail, were pierced at the same time with one arrow. In the presence of Arjuna and Lord Krishna, the Pandava army began to tremble. That army was so completely routed that no two persons were seen close to each other; all had fled the battlefield. The only thing left was a vast ocean of severed bodies, broken weapons, shattered chariots, dead horses and prostrated elephants, lying like huge hills. The Pandava's soldiers were throwing away their weapons and running from the battlefield, saving themselves from the hurricane of grandfather Bhishma.

Seeing the devastation of the army, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, spoke to Partha, "The hour has come, O son of Kunti, to fulfill your vow to destroy the grandsire. Behold Yudhisthira's troops running in all directions like forest animals chased by a lion."

Thus provoked by Lord Krishna, Dhananjaya said, "Take this chariot to the presence of Bhishma. I will force the grandsire from his chariot and take his life." Then Madhava, Lord Krishna, directed the chariot toward the spot where the son of Ganga was releasing his arrows. Sighting Arjuna coming forward to challenge Bhishma, Yudhisthira's army rallied and supported him from behind. Then that foremost of all warriors, Bhishma, seeing Arjuna coming to oppose him, released thousands of arrows by invoking his celestial weapons. At one point the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna could not be seen, so heavy was the downpour of weapons. However, Vasudeva guided those horses out of that deadly curtain, and Arjuna cut the grandsire's bow in two with a single arrow. Picking up another bow and stringing it quickly, Bhishma roared and stretched that bow to its full limits. Arjuna, not affected by his grandfather's exhibition of prowess, cut that bow in two. The son of Shantanu applauded his grandson exclaiming, "O Partha, such a mighty feat is indeed worthy of you. I am pleased with your fighting. Continue to attack to the best of your ability."

Saying this much, Bhishma picked up yet another bow and released deadly arrows resembling fiery serpents. Lord Krishna quickly guided Arjuna's effulgent white horses out of the line of fire so that those arrows proved ineffectual. Then Bhishma, exhibiting his expertise, pierced both Vasudeva and Arjuna with many arrows.

Invoking his celestial weapons by means of mantra, Bhishma covered the two Krishnas on all sides with hundreds and thousands of arrows, causing Arjuna to tremble on his chariot. Seeing Bhishma's mastery of weapons and the lackluster fighting of Arjuna, Lord Krishna decided to act in the interests of the Pandava army. He thought to Himself, "In a single day, Bhishma can destroy this whole army. Yudhisthira's divisions are retreating out of fear, and the Kaurava army is coming forward to take advantage of this slaughter. I shall, today, kill Bhishma for the Pandava's sake. Arjuna refuses to fight with his grandfather, and because of respect, he doesn't know what to do."

While Lord Krishna was thinking in this way, Bhishma was releasing arrows in all directions. At this time Drona, Vikarna, Jayadratha, Bhurishrava, Kritavarman and Kripa all came to assist Bhishma in his fight with Arjuna. Satyaki saw that Arjuna was covered on all sides by the foremost warriors of the Kaurava army. Satyaki quickly came to that spot like Vishnu coming to the aid of Indra. He quickly rallied Yudhisthira's troops, encouraging them to fight and gain victory. Lord Krishna then commanded the brave Satyaki, "Do not attempt to rally the troops, O son of Sini. Those who are fighting should also leave the battlefield. I, personally, will throw Bhishma down from his chariot, and then slay Drona and the sons of Dhritarastra. I will gladden the hearts of Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. I will joyfully give to Yudhisthira his kingdom this very day."

Saying this, Lord Krishna gave up the reins and jumped down from His chariot, taking up His Sudarshana chakra. That chakra was as effulgent as the sun and as sharp as a razor. Making the earth tremble with His steps, the Supreme Lord rushed at Bhishma weapon in hand. The yellow garments of Lord Krishna were waving in the breeze and looked like a cloud charged with lightning. His beautiful black hair was flowing in the wind, and His angered face appeared like a blue lotus tinged with a red hue. In a divine fury He rushed toward Bhishma, and all living entities thought that the end of the Kuru army was near. Seeing Lord Krishna coming toward him, Bhishma fearlessly supplicated His blessed Lord, "Come, come, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, O Lord of the heavenly gods, O You who have the universe for Your abode. I offer my respectful obeisances unto you who carry, the disc, the club, the sword and the Sarnga bow. O Lord, forcibly throw me down from this chariot and exhibit Your prowess for You are the refuge of the three worlds. If You kill me in the presence of all, then great fortune will be mine both in this life and the next. By the respect You are paying me, O Lord of the Vrishnis and Andhakas, I become celebrated throughout the three worlds."

Hearing the chivalrous prayers of Bhishma, Lord Krishna, rushing with great speed, exclaimed, "You are the root of this great slaughter on earth! If you were righteous, you should have stopped the vile Duryodhana long ago. I cannot tolerate this injustice against the Pandavas."

As Lord Krishna was rushing towards Bhishma, Arjuna jumped down from his chariot. Running on foot after the Lord of the Universe, he caught up to Him and seized Him with two hands. However, Lord Krishna dragged Arjuna a great distance unable to stop Him. With great difficulty, Arjuna managed to stop Lord Krishna's

forward progress pleading, "Please subdue your anger! You are the refuge of the Pandavas, O Keshava. I swear that I will fulfill the oath I made in the assembly of Kings. O Vasudeva, at Your command, I will certainly annihilate the host of Kuru warriors."

Hearing Arjuna's promise, Lord Krishna was pacified and again mounted the chariot and took up the reins. Lord Krishna was engaged as the servant of His devotee, and it is this mood that has endeared Him to hearts of all living creatures. With dust on His lotus like face, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, took up His Panchajanya conchshell and blew it filling the sky in all directions with its sound. To the sounds of drums, kettledrums and conches, Lord Krishna caused the chariot of Arjuna to enter the ranks of the enemy. The twang of the Gandiva bow resembled a roll of thunder and struck fear into the sons of Dhritarastra. All the great warriors attacked Arjuna, like the ocean coming to the beach. Bhurishrava hurled seven javelins furnished with plumes of gold. Duryodhana also picked up a lance and threw it with all his strength. A blazing dart was thrown by Bhishma, and a mace was hurled by Salya, the ruler of Madras. With little effort, Arjuna shattered those weapons, and taking from his quiver a celestial weapon called Mahendra, he caused it to appear in the sky overhead. That mighty weapon, given to him by Indra, began to shower hundreds of thousands of blazing arrows upon the oncoming Kaurava army. The whole sky was filled with those arrows, and within a matter of moments, the din of the drums, conchshells, chariots, elephants, horsemen, and the battle cries of the foot soldiers were heard no more, for they were silenced by Arjuna's arrows.

Coming to support Arjuna was the Pandava army headed by Virata and Drupada. They quickly engaged the remnants of the Kaurava army, and the slaughter was frightening. Each warrior was struck with hundreds of arrows that tore apart their bodies; flesh and blood muddied the ground. As the Mahendra weapon began to expand in the sky, it increased the slaughter of the troops rushing into battle. Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and the other great generals were lacerated by the celestial weapon, and seeing the situation, they caused the withdrawal of the troops for the day. The sun was setting on the horizon, and there was a great uproar amongst the Kaurava warriors. All agreed with each other, "In today's battle, Arjuna has slain ten thousand chariot fighters, seven hundred elephants, and tens of thousands of foot soldiers. This achievement is wondrous. No one else can equal his prowess. All the great warriors, Bhishma, Drona, Ashvatthama, Bhurishrava, Salya, Jayadratha and the King, have been subjugated in battle by the angry son of Pritha." Speaking thus, Duryodhana's soldiers entered their camps for nightly rest.

Thus Ends the Fourth Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Third Day of Rivalry at Kurukshetra; Bhishma and Arjuna Create Havoc.

## Chapter Commentary

During this day's confrontation, Bhishma is again killing the Pandava troops in large numbers, and seeing Arjuna unwilling to fight with his grandfather, Lord Krishna takes up a weapon to fight with Bhishma. Lord Krishna promised not to fight before the battle. One would expect the Supreme Lord to follow His vow. If the Lord cannot keep His vow then how can He expect us to? The Lord is not breaking His promise for His own gratification, but to protect His unalloyed devotees. The Pandavas were in a desperate situation, and Lord Krishna took up His Sudarshana Chakra to protect the Pandava Army. The Lord is setting an example here that one can break his promise if it is for the satisfaction of Guru and Krishna. If one breaks his promise or vow and Lord Krishna is satisfied, then that is true morality. One should see how far Lord Krishna is satisfied.

Gadadhar Pandit, a follower and disciple of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, took a vow of Kshetra sannyasa, a vow of not leaving a holy place. When Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu wanted leave for Vrindavana from Jagannatha Puri, Gadadhar Pandit wanted to go with Him, but the Lord forbade him to come. Gadadhar Pandit actually accompanied Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu a short distance from Jagannatha Puri, and the Lord was not pleased, and ultimately sent him back. On the other hand, Ramanujacharya received a mantra from his guru and took a vow not to tell anyone. However, Ramanuja went to the rooftops and yelled the mantra for everyone to hear. Ultimately, the townspeople became Krishna conscious by the mantra, and Ramanujacharya's guru was pleased. One cannot be attached to mundane morality, but to the satisfaction of guru and Krishna.

## Chapter Five

### The Fourth Day of the Great Rivalry; Bhima Kills Eight of Dhritarastra's Sons

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, I regard providence as the decisive factor in as much as my son's vast army is being slaughtered by an army of less experienced soldiers. You are always speaking, O Suta, of the defeat of my army and the victory of the Pandavas. Indeed, O Sanjaya, you are describing my army as cowardly, as being slaughtered, as running from the battlefield. You continually proclaim of the glories of the Pandava army and the weaknesses of my army. Then again, you are constantly pointing out the faults of my son Duryodhana. Tell me, O Sanjaya, the means by which my sons may subjugate their enemy.

Sanjaya replied: This ill fortune has you for its root, O King. As you have said, providence is supreme. Those who are wicked by nature can never be victorious over those who are pious, no matter how many soldiers they may have.

Listen now, O monarch, as I narrate the great slaughter of divisions in both armies. When the dawn of the fourth day arrived, Bhishma, surrounded by fearless chariot warriors and supported by millions of troops, attacked the Pandava army with heroic valor. Arjuna, the carrier of the Gandiva bow, came up to challenge Bhishma, and a fierce duel began between those foremost warriors. Meanwhile Ashvatthama, Bhurishrava, Chitrasena, and the son of Sala all attacked Abhimanyu, the son of Subhadra. Abhimanyu appeared like a young lion fighting with five elephants. Abhimanyu pierced the son of Drona with one shaft and Salya with five. He cut the standard from the chariot of the son of Sala, and with another arrow, he cut to pieces a mighty dart thrown by Bhurishrava. He then killed the four horses drawing the chariot of Salya. With his powerful arrows, Abhimanyu checked the progress of those great generals. Bhurishravas, Salya, Ashvatthama and Samyamani not being able to challenge Arjuna's son, fled the battlefield.

Duryodhana then commanded the Trigartas and their army numbering twenty-five thousand to challenge Abhimanyu. Coming up to assist Abhimanyu was Dhristadyumna, supported by the Madras and the Kekayas. Dhristadyumna immediately pierced Kripa with three arrows, and with another twenty, he killed the protectors of Kritavarman's chariot. The son of Sala then pierced Dhristadyumna with ten arrows that bolted through the air light lightning. However, Dhristadyumna countered and killed the horses of Sala's son. Taking up a fearsome scimitar and stepping off his chariot, the son of Sala ran at Dhristadyumna intending to chop him to pieces. The Panchala Prince quickly took up a gigantic mace and shattered the head of that heroic warrior. Falling to the ground, Sala's son loosened his grasp on his weapon and gave up his life. Angered and furious at seeing his son slain, Sala, ran towards the prince of the Panchalas who was invincible in combat. A fierce duel then commenced in which neither could overcome the other.

Coming up to support Dhristadyumna was Bhimasena. He saw Duryodhana, and desiring to fight with, he him took up his mace. Seeing the second son of Pandu coming forward, the sons of Dhritarastra ran from the battlefield. Out of all your sons, O King, only Duryodhana stood to fight with him. Duryodhana immediately ordered the elephant division of the Magadha King to challenge Bhima. Seeing that elephant army coming forward, causing the earth to tremble, Bhima took up his mace and got down from his chariot. He uttered loud war cries like a lion and rushed at those elephants swinging his deadly weapon. Protecting Bhima from the rear was the son of Subhadra, Nakula, Sahadeva and Dhristadyumna. They countered the arrows released from the elephant warriors. The ruler of Magadha was riding on an elephant that resembled the celestial Airavata. However, Abhimanyu killed that mighty beast with one shaft. When the King of Magadha was deprived of his elephant, Abhimanyu struck off his head with a broad headed shaft decorated with silver plumes.

Bhimasena was causing a great massacre of elephants. He was roaming the battlefield killing those immense beasts with one swing of his club. Some had their bodies mangled, and some had their heads smashed, while others had fled out of fear of the son of the wind god. Huge mountain-like elephants were lying on the ground vomiting blood, and some, who had their sides torn open, were pouring out a river of blood and flesh. Within a short time that whole army of ten thousand elephants was exterminated by the second son of Kunti, Bhimasena.

When this superhuman feat had taken place on the battlefield, Duryodhana ordered his whole army to confront Bhimasena. Bhima looked like the invincible lord of death, Yamaraja, himself. Bhima's club was covered with gore, and so was his body making him look like the destroyer of the universe. Outraged, he expanded his body and rushed toward the enemy reckless of life. He jumped into the air swinging that gruesome mace and causing a great carnage in the Kaurava ranks. He was smashing chariots with one blow, killing charioteer, horses and fighter. With the power of his legs, he was trampling foot soldiers and making a wide path of destruction wherever he went. No one could stand before him, and the enemy divisions melted under the power of his mace.

Not tolerating Bhima's achievement, Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, came forward with a division of troops to halt his progress. However, Satyaki challenged Bhishma and began to wipe out the troops that were supporting the grandsire. Coming to assist Bhishma were Bhurishrava, and the one hundred sons of Dhritarastra headed by Duryodhana. Thousands of fierce chariot fighters were supporting them. Nandaka, one of Duryodhana's brothers, pierced Bhimasena in the chest with an arrow that resembled lightning. Duryodhana then also pierced Bhima in the chest with nine arrows. Ascending his chariot, Bhima spoke to his chariot driver, Vishoka, "These foolish sons of Dhritarastra want to kill me, but I shall slay them all. O charioteer, guide my chariot close to where these sinful persons are positioned." Vishoka then drove the chariot closer to the sons of Dhritarastra. Duryodhana, seeing Bhima approaching, released nine arrows that shattered Bhima's bow. Stringing another bow, Bhima cut the bow of his cousin in two. Duryodhana, however, picked up another bow, and drawing the string back to his ear released an arrow with all his might. That arrow pierced Bhima's chest causing him to fall in a deadly swoon on the terrace of his chariot. Abhimanyu and the Pandava army came forward to safeguard Bhima. He covered the sons of Dhritarastra with a shower of weapons.

Bhima, regaining his consciousness, pierced Duryodhana in the chest and then pierced Salya with twenty five arrows, causing the ruler of Madras to retreat from the battlefield. Fourteen sons of Dhritarastra then assaulted Bhima in combat. They were Senapati, Sushena, Jalasandha, Sulochana, Ugra, Bhimaratha, Bhima, Viravahu, Aolupa, Durmuka, Dushpradarsha, Vivitsu, Vikata and Sama. United together they rushed at Bhima to kill him. The heroic and tenacious Bhimasena, seeing them coming, licked his mouth like a wolf seeking prey. He responded to their attack seeking to fulfill his vow made at the gambling match. The son of Pandu then cut off Senapati's head with a horseshoe headed arrow. Laughing all the while, Bhima then pierced Jalasandha with three arrows that sent him to another world. He

then severed the head of Sushena and sent to death's abode another son of Dhritarastra named Ugra. With seventy shafts, Bhima sent to the other world Viravahu, whose head was graced with a beautiful turban. He then killed Bhima and Bhimaratha with one arrow each, and with a crescent shaped arrow severed the head of Sulochana. The rest of Dhritarastra's sons fled the battlefield out of fear for their lives. Killing eight of Duryodhana's brothers, Bhima smiled with satisfaction.

Beholding the slaughter of eight of Dhritarastra's sons, grandfather Bhishma ordered the Kaurava army to attack Vrikodara in full force. With King Bhagadatta at the forefront of the divisions, they rushed at Bhima releasing their powerful weapons. King Bhagadatta was seated on his grand white elephant named Supritika. Provoking the elephant with his goad, he rushed at Bhima. The Pandava army came up to assist Bhima and pierced that enormous elephant with hundreds of arrows causing blood to stream from his body. Furious that so many men had attacked him, Bhagadatta caused that elephant to run at double speed, shaking the earth with his every step. The King of Pragjyotishapura then struck Bhima in the chest with two arrows causing the great son of Pandu to fall to the tier of his chariot senseless. Seeing the gravity of the situation, Bhima's charioteer took him from the battlefield.

Ghatotkacha, beholding his father's defeat, wanted revenge and thus vanished from view. He reappeared again in a gigantic fierce form riding on an elephant that was a second Airavata. He was followed by three other celestial elephants ridden by gargantuan Rakshasas. The elephants attacked Bhagadatta's elephant from all sides and began to strike it with their tusks.

Sensing the danger, Bhishma advised Drona, Duryodhana and all the Kings, "The King of Pragjyotishapura is battling with Bhima's fierce son and may certainly be defeated. Hot-tempered as they are, they will certainly prove to be each other's death. The gigantic elephant Supritika is wailing and terrified of Ghatotkacha. Let us withdraw our troops while the sun is setting. The Rakshasas become invincible at this time, and we cannot afford to lose another general. The Pandavas have gained a decisive victory today, and our soldiers have lost their morale. Tomorrow we will again fight with the enemy." Saying this, the grandsire retired the great divisions for the night and cheerlessly entered his tent. Duryodhana was also despondent for eight of his dear brothers had been slain by Bhima. He passed some time in thoughtfulness, overcome with grief and tears.

Listening to the slaughter of his troops, Dhritarastra said to Sanjaya: Hearing of the Pandava's wondrous achievements and the death of my sons, I am filled with fear. Everything that is happening seems to be under the control of destiny. What ascetic penances have been performed by the sons of Pandu? What benedictions have they obtained that they are so victorious in battle? Without a doubt, Bhima will slay all my sons. Please tell me, O Sanjaya, what is the true cause of all this?

Sanjaya replied: Listen, O King, with attention, and let these words fill your heart. None of the capabilities of your brother's sons have been created by mystic illusions, mantras or ascetic performances. The Pandavas are devoted to Lord Krishna, and, therefore, victory will be theirs. Your sons are wicked, opposed to God's will and

devoted to cruel deeds. They are now reaping the reaction of the unneeded hatred against your brother's sons. Since you could not be awakened to the situation, even by the counsel of Vidura, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa or myself, you are like a sick man that has rejected medicine. Instead, you have taken the poison of your son's advice. Regarding the cause of the Pandava's success, Duryodhana also inquired of the very same thing from Bhishma that very night after the battle. Listen as I narrate their discussions.

Duryodhana entered the assembly of the grandsire and the other leaders of the army and questioned them, "All the great commanders in my army are a match for heavenly gods. Why, then, are the Pandavas defeating us in battle? This doubt in my heart, O grandsire, should be dispelled."

Maharaja Bhishma replied, "Listen, O King, to the advice which I have uttered many times before. I have repeatedly requested that you make peace with the Pandavas. This counsel was meant for your benefit, and the benefit of your whole family. I have cried myself hoarse on this point, but you would not listen due to your envy of the Pandavas. The reaction to your offensives against the Pandavas is now fructifying. There is not, and there will not be the person who can slay the sons of Pandu, because they have Lord Krishna at their protector. Lord Krishna is the eternal Lord Vishnu who holds the discus for the protection of the heavenly lords. In a previous age the four headed Brahma was being waited upon by all the devas in the heavenly Gandhamadana mountains. Assembled were all the chief demigods, rishis and celestials. At that time the Lord of the Universe, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared there on the back of Garuda. Lord Brahma offered prayers to the Supreme Lord, and the other devas also offered their obeisances. Lord Brahma prayed, 'You are the Supreme Master of the Universe and the protector of the surrendered soul. From Your navel, I, Lord Brahma have taken birth, and it is through Your potency that I create this material world. I constantly meditate upon You who are the goal of all performances of Yoga. All victory unto You, O Lord of unfailing prowess. I know that You are destined to take birth in the Yadu dynasty to relieve the great strain of the Earth's Asuras. For the sake of establishing religious principles, You will advent Yourself as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. Along with Nara, You will kill all the demons that oppose the religious principles.'

Bhishma continued, "Having been duly worshiped, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, left that assembly of demigods and returned to His own abode in the Vaikuntha planetary system. I have heard this story many times from renowned rishis such as Parashurama, Narada, Vyasa and Markandeya. Having learned of the eternal Lord Krishna's divinity, I have many times forbidden you to fight with the Pandavas. However, you have not heeded my advice. For this reason, I consider you to be a wicked Rakshasa. You are enveloped in darkness. Arjuna and Krishna are Nara and Narayana themselves. How then will we defeat them in battle? It is Krishna who upholds the three worlds and is the Lord of all the moveable and unmovable creatures. He is victory personified and, He is the greatest warrior. It is by the unseen energies of this Supreme Lord that the sons of Pandu will gain victory."

"In all the worlds," Duryodhana replied, "Vasudeva is spoken of as the Supreme Being. I desire to hear, O Grandsire, of His origin and glories."

Bhishma said, "Vasudeva is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Lord of all lords. None is superior to Him who has eyes like those of a lotus petal. That Divine Master and Lord of the universe had created this earth planet for establishing the principles of religion. From His mouth He created fire, and from His breath, the wind. He created from His speech, the four Vedas which all men follow. It is He who lies down on the bed of Ananta Shesha in the bottom of this universe and maintains all creatures. He is the boar incarnation, and He is also Lord Nrisimhadeva. He is the same Vamana, who in three steps took all the possessions from Bali. From His mouth, He created the brahmanas, and from His two arms, He created the kshatriyas, from His belly, He created the vaishyas and from His Legs, He created the shudras. He is the Lord of the senses Hrishiksha, and the object of all worship by the great sages. Those that seek His protection are never vanquished in their struggle for material existence. Knowing all of Lord Keshava's glories, Yudhishthira has taken whole hearted shelter of His lotus feet.

"You have now heard, O King, about the glory of the Supreme Godhead, Lord Krishna, as well as Nara who is none other than Arjuna. You have also heard from me the reason for their descent to this earth. I have also told you why the Pandavas are invincible in battle and can never be slain. It is for this reason, O King, that I have repeatedly asked you to make peace with the Pandavas. By disregarding the divine Nara and Narayana, you will be annihilated with all your brothers and Kinsmen." Having spoken words of wisdom, the Grandsire entered his tent and laid down for nightly rest.

Thus Ends the Fifth Chapter of Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Fourth Day of the Great Rivalry; Bhima kills Eight of Dhritarastra's Sons.

### Chapter Commentary

Day after day Duryodhana's forces are being annihilated in large numbers as was prophesied by many great sages. Duryodhana could not understand the mass slaughter of so many of his troops. Bhishma informed him of the cause of the such devastation. He even went so far as to call Duryodhana a Rakshasa. Duryodhana had heard it before, and as before, he did not listen to his grandfather, but decided to continue on his course of destruction. He somehow or other hoped for his victory.

## Chapter Six

### The Fifth and Sixth Days of the Great Battle

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, our army consists of men of high stature and opulence. Our divisions are superior in numbers, and are arrayed according to the rules of military science. They are strong and well equipped with different kinds of weapons. They are experienced soldiers and are protected by the foremost generals of the earth. That so large an army is being slaughtered is, indeed, unnatural. It must, therefore, be the pre-arranged plan of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I can see no other cause for the defeat of this grand army.

Sanjaya said: The defeat of your army, O Monarch, is due to your own foolishness. Many times you were instructed by Vidura to curb your son and protect the Pandavas. It was through your fault that the gambling match was allowed to take its course. It is also your fault that these hostilities have come about. Having allowed your son to perform evil deeds, do you not expect to reap the reactions to those sins? The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, has taken the side of the Pandavas. How can you expect victory for your sons? Even though He is not fighting personally, He will cause the annihilation of your sons and relatives. Listen, O King, as I describe the slaughter of your troops on the fifth day of the great battle.

After the night had ended, the dawn of the fifth day appeared. The Grand sire Bhishma arrayed his troops in the formation known as Makara which resembled an alligator. The Pandavas arrayed their vast divisions in the formation known as Syena, which looked something like a hawk. When the two armies met, there was a great carnage on both sides. Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, fought fiercely trying to protect Dhritarastra's sons from the weapons of Bhima. All day long the elephants' shrieks, the horses' neighing and the blare of conchshells could be heard in all directions. Fighting for victory's sake, mighty combatants roared at one another like bulls in a cow pen. Heads were seen falling from the bodies of fierce warriors, severed by crescent shaped arrows. An infinite number of heads were lying on the Kurukshetra plain decorated with turbans and earrings. The earth was covered with arms and legs decorated with gold ornaments, silken cloth and blood. The dust raised by the soldiers looked like a cloud in the sky, and the lightning in that cloud was the weapons streaking through the air. The cloud's rain was the blood flowing from the slain warriors that decorated the battlefield. Countless warriors, who were unretreating in battle, lay on the ground blocking the way of the onrushing enemy. So thick was the mass of dead elephants, horses and men, that the battlefield became like a maze. Half dead warriors lay on the ground shrieking in agony, calling out for their kinsmen. Some warriors had only half their head severed and others only had one arm, while others only had one leg. Some soldiers had their stomachs torn out with swords, and some had their chests ripped open with battle axes, while

others had their heads smashed into their chests with huge maces. The whole scene became ghastly to behold, but still the combatants fought on.

During the battle, King Duryodhana was assisted by a large division of Kalingas with the grandsire Bhishma at their head. They rushed toward the Pandavas eager for combat. The Pandavas countered, supported by Vrikodara, and met the Kaurava army head on with an anger like universal destruction. Seeing his brothers challenging Bhishma, Arjuna rushed against the son of Ganga. Hearing the sound of the Panchajanya, the twang of the Gandiva, and the roar of Hanuman from the banner, the divisions of troops under Duryodhana were struck with fear. Arjuna began striking down the principle warriors in the Kaurava army, making his way toward his grandfather. Finding no relief from Arjuna's arrows, the Kaurava army sought Bhishma's protection.

While Bhishma and Arjuna were engaged in a duel, the Kings of Avantipura were challenging the ruler of Kashi, and the ruler of the Sindhus was fighting with Bhimasena. King Yudhisthira was combating with the King of Madras, Salya. Vikarna was engaged with Sahadeva, and Chitrasena with Shikhandi. Drupada, Chekitana, and Satyaki were engaged in battle with Drona and his son. Kripa and Kritavarman both rushed against Dhristadyumna. And thus all over the battlefield great warriors fought against each other wanting victory or the heavenly realm. Huge elephants were ripping through the army ranks and trampling soldiers and horses into shapeless masses. With their trunks huge elephants would pull chariot fighters from their chariots and smash them to the ground. Those huge animals pierced with thousands of arrows roamed the battlefield causing great havoc among the enemy troops.

Drona's son, Ashvatthama, released six arrows that pierced Arjuna's armor. Arjuna countered and cut Ashvatthama's bow in two and then wounded him with five shafts. Taking up another bow, Ashvatthama invoked a celestial weapon and pierced Arjuna with seventy-five arrows and Krishna with seventy. Not tolerating that action, Vibatsu released deadly arrows that pierced Ashvatthama's armor and drank his blood. However, Drona's son did not waver. Releasing countless arrows, the two combatants fought on. Nevertheless, since Ashvatthama was a brahmana, Arjuna had great regard for him and did not want to put him under the sway of death. Arjuna then turned his attention on Kaurava divisions and began a great slaughter of tens of thousands of men.

The son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu, was also creating great havoc on the field of battle. He was consuming the Kaurava army like a blazing fire. Coming up to challenge him was Lakshmana, Duryodhana's son. Greatly angered, Abhimanyu lacerated him and his charioteer with six arrows each. Lakshmana in turn pierced the son of Subhadra with many sharp arrows which was wonderful to all on the battlefield. Furious, Abhimanyu killed Lakshmana's four horses and the charioteer. Lakshmana, while standing on his chariot, released a forceful dart at the chest of Abhimanyu. The son of Arjuna easily cut the weapon to pieces with his arrows. Kripacharya, desiring to save Duryodhana's son, had him ascend his chariot and took him away from the battlefield.

The two armies continued to grind each other, and the mighty Bhishma, releasing his celestial weapons, caused thousands of men to fall from their positions. On the side of the Pandavas, Satyaki was causing a great carnage amongst the Kaurava troops. So quickly did he draw his bow, and release the arrows, that he appeared like a cloud releasing thick pillars of rain. Unable to witness the slaughter of his troops, Duryodhana dispatched ten thousand troops to fight with him. But the great bowman Satyaki, who was incapable of being defeated, killed, with his celestial weapons, all those mighty warriors. Incensed at the massacre of so many men, the powerful Bhurishrava attacked Satyaki as he stood on his chariot, releasing his powerful weapons. Coming up to assist Satyaki were his ten sons, who were all glorious heroes. They immediately covered the renowned Kuru warrior with a hail of arrows, and sent up loud roars of victory. However, Bhurishrava countered those arrows and released ten arrows that cut their bows from their hands. The ten sons of Satyaki then surrounded the great warrior intending to finish his life. But the son of Somadatta, Bhurishrava, severed their heads with his sharpened arrows.

Beholding his sons slain in battle, the angered Satyaki attacked Bhurishrava using every power he had to defeat him. They pressed their chariots close to each other and killed each others horses. When both were deprived of their chariots, they descended to the ground and took up large scimitars, racing toward each other with blood red eyes. However, Bhima appeared on the scene and took Satyaki onto his chariot. He then took him away from the sight of all bowmen.

The great duel between Bhishma and Arjuna left ten thousand Pandava warriors dead and twenty-five thousand Kaurava warriors slaughtered. At the end of the day the sun disappeared on the horizon, and with it the withdrawal of the troops. There was a great fear that entered the minds of the warriors of both parties. It appeared that there would be a total annihilation of all the troops on both sides. Thinking like this, they all took rest for the night.

Sanjaya continued: O King, on the sixth day of the great battle, Dhristadyumna arranged the troops in the formation called Makara. In forming that array, Drupada and Dhananjaya were the head, Sahadeva and Nakula, the eyes, and the mighty Bhimasena was the beak. On the neck of that formation was Abhimanyu, the sons of Draupadi, Ghatotkacha, Satyaki and King Yudhisthira. King Virata, the ruler of the Matsyas, was the back of that great bird, and he was supported by Dhristadyumna. Dhristaketu and Chekitana were the right and left wing of that formation. The feet of the formation were the blessed warriors Kuntibhoja and Satanika. The mighty bowmen Shikhandi and Iravan were the tail of the great bird.

Bhishma arranged the Kaurava divisions in the formation of a huge crane. Its beak was the powerful Drona, and Ashvatthama and Kripa were the two eyes. Kritavarman and Bahlika, along with their troops, were the head of that formation, and Duryodhana was the neck. The ruler of Pragjyotisapura, Bhagadatta, seated on his powerful elephant, Supratika, was the body of the huge bird and King Susharman was the tail.

In the early morning twilight, both those armies could be seen in all their splendor. The soldiers were covered in golden mail, and all held different weapons. The multicolored flags of the chariots were seen from east to west. The huge elephants, covered in armor, were lined up in front of the battle formation. They looked magnificent, like big mountains, and their turrets were like clouds covering that mountain. The chariots were also splendid with carvings and enlays of gold and silver, and they were furnished with every kind of weapon. All the warriors were unrelenting, and so eager were they for battle, that they filled the sky with fierce war cries. When the sun had made its appearance on the horizon, the battle commenced. Elephants proceeded against elephants, horsemen rushed against horsemen, and chariot fighters rushed against chariot fighters. Excited with wrath, they attacked each other in battle. Drona rushed against Bhima and pierced him with nine shafts. In return, Bhima killed the charioteer of Drona, throwing the horses into confusion. Drona, himself, took up the reins and began to consume the Pandava army.

The herculean Bhimasena, while fighting with all his prowess, came upon the younger brothers of Duryodhana. They were Duhshasana, Durvisaha, Dussaha, Durmada, Jaya, Jayatsena, Vikarna, Chitrasena, Sudarshana, Charuchitra, Suvarman, Dushkarna and Karna. Seeing Bhima coming toward them, they decided to kill him on the battlefield. Followed by thousands of chariot fighters, they swarmed around him and began to shower their weapons. Nevertheless, fear did not enter Bhima's heart, and with a smile on his face, he got down from his chariot mace in hand. With a loud roar, he entered the sea of the Kaurava army leaving a path of total destruction wherever he went.

When Dhristadyumna came upon Bhima's chariot, he inquired from Vishoka where the second son of Pandu had gone. Vishoka informed him that Bhima had entered the enemy ranks alone, armed only with a mace. Deciding to help his friend, he entered the Kaurava army following Bhima's path of destruction. Dhristadyumna saw huge elephants mangled by Bhima's mace, and dead bodies laying in thousands all over the battlefield. When he finally came upon Bhima, he saw him killing the enemy troops like a hurricane knocking down a forest of trees. The Kaurava warriors had surrounded Bhima and were trying desperately to kill him, but it was of no use. He was slaughtering hundreds of men within a few minutes time. Bhima was covered in blood and had many arrows covering his body. Dhristadyumna quickly came to his aid and took him up onto his chariot. He plucked out the arrows from his body and embraced him.

Desirous of killing both Bhima and Dhristadyumna, Duryodhana's brothers rushed at them as they stood in their chariot. They exclaimed, "This wicked son of Drupada is now united with Bhima. Let us kill them both and bring great happiness to King Duryodhana." Urged on by Duryodhana, thousands of warriors attacked Bhima and Dhristadyumna, releasing their shower of weapons.

Seeing Dhritarastra's sons coming toward his chariot, the Panchala prince summoned his celestial weapon called pramohana and released it above the Kaurava army. That divine weapon deprived the soldiers of their senses, and they fell to the

ground helpless. Drona, seeing the situation, rushed to the aid of the sons of Dhritarastra and released a weapon called prajna, that countered the pramohana weapon. When their senses again returned, the warriors challenged Bhima and Dhristadyumna, covering them with arrows. Sensing the danger, Yudhisthira ordered twelve great warriors to go and assist Bhima. They were Abhimanyu, the sons of Draupadi, Dhristaketu and the Kekaya brothers. They were supported by a large divisions of troops. They arrayed themselves in the formation called suchimukha, which resembled a needle point. Entering the Kaurava ranks and breaking their front lines, they proceeded to the point where Bhima and Dhristadyumna were fighting. Overjoyed to see that army coming forward, they cheered and roared. Bhima then ascended the chariot of the King of the Kaikeyas, and Dhristadyumna rushed at the preceptor Drona who was coming upon him with great speed. Drona immediately cut of the bow of the son of Drupada. Dhristadyumna, taking up another bow, then pierced Drona with Seventy arrows. Enraged, Drona cut that bow from his hand and killed his four horses. Dhristadyumna quickly ascended Abhimanyu's chariot and left the battlefield. Drona then began to slaughter the Pandava army within Bhima's sight.

Duryodhana, accompanied by his brothers, once again attacked Bhima, taking every opportunity kill him. Bhima ascended his chariot and taking up a huge bow, strung it for the destruction of his cousins. Duryodhana released a powerful golden arrow that pierced Bhima in the chest. Not minding that arrow, Bhima struck Duryodhana at the joints of his arms with nine arrows. Watching the two heroes engaged in a vicious battle, the brothers of Duryodhana joined the fight against Bhima, releasing thousands of arrows to encompass his death. Bhima, smiling all the while, fell upon them like an elephant in a sugar cane field. He first pierced Chitrasena with a long shafted arrow and pierced the other brothers with three shafts each. At this time Yudhisthira sent Abhimanyu, supported by other great warriors, to assist Bhima in his fight. Seeing them coming, Dhritarastra's sons, abandoned their encounter with Bhima and left the battlefield.

Not tolerating such action, Bhimasena and Abhimanyu ran after them and challenged them. Abhimanyu killed Vikarna's four horses and struck him with twenty five arrows. When his horses were killed, Vikarna ascended the chariot of his brother Chitrasena. Abhimanyu then began to afflict them with a hail of arrows. To counter Abhimanyu, Durjaya and Vikarna released nine iron arrows hoping to kill him. Hit by those arrows, Bhima did not move like a mountain hit by a thunderbolt.

Then the twang of the Gandiva bow was heard on the right side of the army. In that part of the battlefield, headless trunks stood up in thousands. Arjuna was mowing down the enemy faster than the speed of the mind. His bow was in a constant circle, and his arm movements could not be seen. The only thing that could be seen were thousands of arrows filling all directions, and thousands of dead elephants, horses, and men piled up on the field of battle.

Toward the end of the day, King Duryodhana spotted Bhima and confronted him with virulent arrows of death. Seeing him coming assisted by his brothers, Bhima exclaimed, "The hour has now come which I have desired for so many years. I will

kill you, today, if you do not run away like a coward. Filled with pride, you have formerly humiliated us. For all the offenses you have committed, I will kill you in the sight of your kinsmen." Saying these words and stretching his bow to full limit, he released thirty six arrows with the force of a thunderbolt. With another four arrows, he killed Duryodhana's four horses and with another two, he cut the royal umbrella and royal standard from his chariot, causing great alarm among the Kaurava troops. Bhima then pierced Duryodhana with ten shafts. Seeing the King in great trouble, Jayadratha had him ascend his chariot. Bhima then pierced Duryodhana in the chest, and he fell down to the floor of the chariot in a deadly swoon. Greatly angered at Bhima's action, Jayadratha surrounded Bhima with thousands of chariots. Coming to protect Bhima were the son of Subhadra, the sons of Draupadi and Dhristaketu. Abhimanyu pierced Vikarna with broad headed shafts that were like snakes of virulent poison. He then killed his charioteer. Attacking with a tiger's speed, Abhimanyu released fourteen arrows that pierced his body and entered the earth. Vikarna began to vomit blood. Desiring to save their brother, the other sons of Dhritarastra surrounded Abhimanyu and began to inundate him with weapons.

The five sons of Draupadi were Prativindya, Sutasoma, Srutakarman, Srutakirti and Satanika. All five of them were maharathis, and all were capable of destroying the enemy ranks. Seeing them coming, Durmuka pierced Srutakarman with five shafts and cut off his standard with another. Advancing closer, he killed the four horses of Srutakarman. While standing on his chariot, Srutakarman released a blazing dart that passed through the armor of Durmuka and entered into the earth. Sutasoma, the son of Bhima, took Srutakarman onto his chariot, and together they attacked the enemy forces. Srutakirti, the son of Arjuna, attacked Jayatsena with the intention of killing him. Smiling all the while, Jayatsena cut his bow with a horseshoe headed arrow. Satanika, not tolerating such impudence, pierced Jayatsena with ten shafts and uttered a loud shout. Pierced by those arrows, Jayatsena fell to the floor of his chariot in a deadly swoon.

Coming to assist Jayatsena, Dushkarna challenged Satanika yelling, "Wait, Wait!" Satanika calmly cut off Dushkarna's bow with one arrow and killed his charioteer. Satanika then pierced Dushkarna with seven arrows, and with another four killed his four horses. Stretching his bow to his ear, Satanika released a broadheaded arrow that penetrated Dushkarna's chest, causing him to fall from his chariot like a tree hit with lightning.

On another part of the battlefield, the Grandsire Bhishma was causing a great massacre of the Pandava forces. The battlefield was literally strewn with masses of dead bodies, and no one came forward to oppose him. Having completely smashed the battle lines of the Pandavas, and seeing the sun set on the horizon, he withdrew his troops and retired. King Yudhishthira was joyous over the day's victory. Bhima had caused a complete rout of the Kaurava army. He embraced Bhima and smelt his head out of affection. Then all the troops retired to their tents for their much needed rest.

Thus Ends the Sixth Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Fifth and Sixth Days of the Great Battle.

## Chapter Seven

### The Seventh Day of Combat

Sanjaya said: O King, When the night had ended, the great Kaurava heroes were again seen in armor. Duryodhana was overwhelmed with anxiety, and with blood still flowing from his wounds, he went to his grandfather and spoke to him as follows, "In our army there are many great heroes who are invincible in battle. All these mighty warriors are protected and arrayed properly. This being the case, why is it that the Pandavas are penetrating our ranks and destroying my army, yet they escape unhurt? Yesterday, they have earned fame by routing my troops. Bhima has penetrated our army and caused great havoc. I was deprived of my senses and pierced with many sharp arrows. I cannot achieve peace of mind until I see the sons of Pandu slain and our soldiers victorious."

Responding to Duryodhana's anguish, the Grandsire Bhishma said, "O prince, I shall surely break the Pandava ranks and destroy their forces. Exerting myself with great prowess, I will bring you victory and joy. There are many great heroes on the Pandava's side who vomit forth their wrath and know no fatigue. I will fight with those warriors and subjugate them, O King. It is within my power to destroy the three worlds if necessary. I will fight with the Pandavas and fulfill your desires for conquest. There is myself, Drona, Salya, Kritavarman, Ashvatthaman, Vikarna, Bhagadatta, Shakuni, Vinda and Anuvinda, Bahlika, Susharman, Bhrihadvala, Chitrasena and Vivingsati, who are able to defeat the demigods in battle. However, the Pandavas cannot be defeated in battle. They have Lord Krishna as their ally and are more powerful than the heavenly gods combined. Therefore, I shall either conquer the Pandavas in battle, or they will conquer me." After making this vow, the Grandsire gave a medicinal herb to Duryodhana. Applying those herbs to his wounds, he was cured, and he again prepared for battle.

When the dawn came, Bhishma arrayed his troops in the formation called Mandala, which was bristling with weapons. The Pandavas formed their army in an array known as Vajra. When the sun appeared on the horizon, both armies rushed at each other to the sounds of drums, kettledrums, conches, trumpets and war cries. The banners of the chariots waved in the wind as the beautiful chariots drawn by fleet horses galloped toward the enemy lines. The sun was reflecting off the combatant's beautiful golden armor, and as they rushed toward each other, dust rose up into the sky. Drona spotted Virata coming toward him and showered him with hundreds of arrows. Ashvatthama rushed against Shikhandi, Duryodhana against Dhristadyumna. Nakula and Sahadeva rushed against the ruler of Madras, Salya, and Vinda and Anuvinda fought with the son of Arjuna named Iravan. Many kings together rushed

against Dhananjaya hopeless of their lives. Bhimasena fought with Bhurishrava, and Abhimanyu fought with the sons of Dhritarastra headed by Vikarna, Chitrasena, and Durmarshana. Bhima's son Ghatotkacha fought against the ruler of Pragjyotishapura, Bhagadatta. The powerful Rakshasa Alambusha fought the invincible Satyaki, and King Yudhisthira fought against Kripa.

Rushing into battle, thousands of Kings riding on beautiful chariots surrounded Arjuna and showered their weapons upon him. Calmly, in the presence of those oncoming warriors, Arjuna addressed the lotus eyed Krishna, "Behold, O Madhava, all these brave warriors desiring battle with me. They have been sent here by the grandsire to finish my life. There in the distance is the King of the Trigartas and his brothers. This very day I shall send them to the abode of death." Saying this much and rubbing his bowstring, he answered their onrush with his multitude of arrows. Those kings also released their arrows in thousands, like clouds releasing unlimited raindrops. Seeing Arjuna covered with those arrows, the demigods and rishis, who were witnessing the battle from the heavens, were struck with wonder. Then, Arjuna, excited with wrath, invoked the aindra weapon. Countering the arrows released by the kings, that weapon pierced those warriors, either wounding or killing all of them. The soldiers who were left in that army felt greatly harassed by Arjuna's arrows and sought Bhishma for protection. Bhishma then became the protector of those soldiers sinking in the ocean of the mighty Arjuna.

Meanwhile, the preceptor Drona rushed against the King of the Matsyas, Virata, and cut off his banner with one shaft, and his bow with another. Virata quickly picked up another bow that was more stout and pierced Drona with three arrows, his horses with four and his charioteer with two. Harassed by those arrows, Drona became enraged and killed the four horses of Virata's chariot and also his charioteer. Virata got upon the chariot of his son, Sankha, and together began to fight with the aggressive Drona. Resisting the arrows released by those warriors, Drona discharged a single arrow that was like virulent poison. That arrow pierced Sankha's armor and deprived him of his life. He fell from his chariot, and his bow and arrows slipped from his grasp. Seeing his son slain in front of his eyes, Virata fled the battlefield out of fear.

Shikhandi attacked Drona's son, Ashvatthama, and pierced him in the forehead with three arrows. Furious, Ashvatthama killed Shikhandi's horses and charioteer. Jumping down from his chariot which was now useless, Shikhandi picked up a scimitar and shield and rushed against Ashvatthama like a hawk looking for its prey. Drona's son failed to find an opportunity to strike him and therefore, released thousands of arrows hoping to stop his forward march. However, Shikhandi cut all those arrows to pieces with his scimitar before they could reach him. Seeing that his trick had failed, Ashvatthama released more arrows that shattered the Shikhandi's sword and shield. Holding only the handle of his broken sword, Shikhandi threw it with all his strength at Drona's son. Ashvatthama quickly cut the weapon to pieces and tried desperately to kill Shikhandi as he moved on foot. At that time Satyaki appeared on the scene and took Shikhandi on his chariot, saving the life of that great fighter.

When Shikhandi was brought another chariot, Satyaki returned to the thick of the fighting and attacked the prince of the Rakshasas, Alambusha. That cruel Rakshasa shattered Satyaki's bow and pierced him with many arrows. Creating mystic illusions, he showered Satyaki's chariot with thousands of weapons. The fearless Satyaki quickly called for the aindra weapon that he had received from Arjuna and dispelled the Rakshasa illusion. That weapon covered Alambusha's chariot with many arrows, and out of great fear, he fled to another part of the battlefield. Then without any powerful hero to oppose him, Satyaki, a descendent of Madhu, began to destroy the Kaurava divisions.

Dhristadyumna encountered the royal son of Dhritarastra and began to play with him as a lion plays with a mouse. Duryodhana, not tolerating the impudence of his enemy, released sixty arrows and then another thirty at the son of Drupada. Dhristadyumna quickly killed the four horses of Duryodhana and also his charioteer. Jumping down from his chariot, Duryodhana took up his sword and shield, and ran toward the son of Drupada. However, Shakuni quickly appeared on the scene and took the King to another part of the battlefield. After this Dhristadyumna began to destroy enemy troops in thousands.

Bhima, the son of Kunti, was then attacked by Kritavarman and covered with arrows. Laughing all the while, Bhima struck that fierce adiratha with many sharp weapons. He killed his horses and charioteer and forced him from his chariot. Kritavarman had arrows sticking out from every part of his body, and feeling greatly afflicted ascended the chariot of Vrishaka. Bhimasena, excited with rage, began to destroy the enemy ranks with his powerful club.

At this time the two kings of Avantipura, Vinda and Anuvinda, attacked the son of Arjuna, Iravan. They countered each other with many weapons, desiring to take each other's lives. So fierce was the encounter that those who witnessed it were struck with wonder. Then Iravan killed the four horses of Anuvinda and shattered his bow. Anuvinda was taken onto the chariot of his brother, and together they began to fight the son of Arjuna. Iravan proved too powerful an opponent, for he killed their chariot driver, and the horses reeling out of control, took them from the battlefield. Having no one to oppose him, Iravan began to slaughter the ranks of the Kauravas.

The prince of the Rakshasas, Ghatotkacha challenged the ruler of Pragjyotishapura, Bhagadatta, as he rode on his beautiful white elephant Supritika. The Pandava divisions were terrified of this huge elephant that seemed invincible. Wherever it went, it caused great havoc among the Yudhisthira's troops. Seeing the King of Pragjyotishapura releasing weapons from the top of his great white elephant, the Pandava soldiers fled in fear, leaving Ghatotkacha to fight with him. Rallying his troops, the son of Bhima, attacked Bhagadatta showering him with all kinds of weapons. Bhagadatta returned his attack with many arrows and pierced the son of Bhima causing him severe pain. The ruler of Pragjyotishapura then forcefully released seven javelins. They coursed through the sky like meteors, but Ghatotkacha cut them to pieces with his arrows. The son of Bhima then pierced Bhagadatta with seventy arrows, each resembling bolts of lightning. Laughing as if invincible, the

Pragjyotish King released four arrows that killed the horses of Ghatotkacha. Countering, the son of Bhima released a powerful dart that scorched through the sky. However, before it could reach him, King Bhagadatta cut it into three pieces, and with this action the son of Bhima fled the battlefield. Finding no opposition, King Bhagadatta began to crush the Pandava troops with his huge elephant.

The ruler of Madras, Salya, confronted the sons of his sister, Nakula and Sahadeva. He deprived Nakula of his chariot, upon which Nakula ascended the chariot of Sahadeva. Sahadeva, greatly angered by his defeat, placed on his bow a broad headed arrow, and released it with full force at his uncle. Piercing through his body, that forceful arrow entered into the earth. Salya fell to the terrace of his chariot in a deadly swoon, and he was quickly taken from the battlefield. Sahadeva and Nakula then began to grind the Kaurava soldiers in hundreds and thousands.

King Yudhisthira encountered the very powerful Shrutayush and struck him with many arrows. Shrutayush then released seven arrows piercing Yudhisthira's armor and drinking his blood. Greatly enraged Yudhisthira killed his chariot horses and also his charioteer. He then released a long shafted arrow that hit Srutayush in the chest depriving him of his senses but not his life. Having achieved this feat, Yudhisthira began to slay the innumerable troops that had been supporting Shrutayush.

Chekitana, of the Vrishni race, covered the preceptor Kripa with many long shafted arrows. Kripa in turn cut the bow of Chekitana into pieces. The son of Saradwat then killed Chekitana's horses and also his charioteer. Taking up his hero slaying mace, that descendent of the Vrishni race, killed the horses of Kripa's chariot and also his charioteer. Coming down from his chariot, Kripa shot sixteen arrows at Chekitana. Those powerful arrows pierced the armor of the Vrishni hero and entered the earth. Not wavering when pierced in that way, Chekitana hurled his mace with all his strength at the son of Saradwat. Kripa very easily tore the weapon to pieces, and having no other weapon, Chekitana rushed at Kripacharya with his drawn sabre. Those two warriors began to fight with each other using their highly polished swords. Cutting each other and fighting vigorously, they both fell down upon the ground exhausted. Bleeding profusely, they were picked up by other chariot warriors and taken from the battlefield.

During the great battle, Abhimanyu fell upon three of Duryodhana's brothers, Chitrasena, Vikarna and Durmarshana, who were encased in golden mail and releasing their powerful weapons. Abhimanyu quickly deprived them of their chariots, but did not kill them remembering the oath his uncle Bhima had taken in the Kaurava court.

During the course of this phenomenal battle, Arjuna, the son of Kunti, came upon the Grandsire Bhishma. He ordered Lord Krishna, "Drive the horses, O Hrishikesha, to the spot where Bhishma is releasing his arrows. He has many supporting warriors and appears invincible in battle." When Arjuna proceeded toward the enemy ranks, the Kaurava army wavered in fear. Coming up to protect the Grandsire was King Susharman. He was supported by many chariot fighters. They fell upon Arjuna with the force of a tempest. The mighty Dhananjaya quickly shattered the bows in their

hands, and then severed their arms, legs and heads as they stood in their chariots. Seeing his supporting chariot fighters slaughtered, Susharman, the King of the Trigartas, called for thirty two of his best car warriors and together they attacked Arjuna. They released a cloudburst of weapons, but the son of Kunti dispatched all of them to the abode of death with sixty arrows.

Having conquered King Susharman and his division, Arjuna proceeded toward Grandfather Bhishma. Duryodhana and Jayadratha came forward to help the Grandsire, but Arjuna avoided them and quickly proceeded toward the son of Ganga. Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva also joined Arjuna in attacking their grandfather. Bhishma did not waver although attacked with such force. Jayadratha and Duryodhana came forward to assist Bhishma, and the son of Dhritarastra released flaming arrows piercing each of the five Pandavas. Jayadratha also cut to pieces Shikhandi's mighty bow. Shikhandi started to retreat from the battlefield out of fear, but Yudhisthira called to him, "Do you remember the vow you took in the presence of all heroes to slay Bhishma. You have yet to fulfill that vow in as much as he still lives. Take care and do not run from the battlefield for the Grandsire is devouring my troops with his mighty arrows. Return and exhibit your prowess."

Hearing the encouraging words of Yudhisthira, Shikhandi returned and challenged the Grandsire. However, Salya came in between the two heroes and released many weapons that were difficult to defeat. As they came blazing toward him, Shikhandi invoked the varuna weapon, thus baffling those fiery weapons. Bhishma cut Yudhisthira's bow into pieces and also cut his chariot's banner. In order to protect his older brother, Bhima got down from his chariot, mace in hand. As he rushed toward Bhishma, Jayadratha pierced him with five hundred arrows from all sides. Disregarding those arrows, Bhima killed the horses of Jayadratha. Rushing to encounter Bhima was the son of Dhritarastra, Chitrasena. Bhima turned on him, and raising his mace, struck fear into the supporting soldiers that followed him. Bhima then released that mace with all his strength. Quickly descending from his chariot with sword and shield, Chitrasena watched as that mace destroyed chariot, driver and horses. Vikarna came up with his chariot, and Chitrasena quickly ascended it and was taken to safety.

Grandfather Bhishma attacked Yudhisthira, and all thought that the first son of Kunti had entered the jaws of death. Bhishma covered Yudhisthira with a curtain of arrows and made him invisible. Yudhisthira countered with a long shafted arrow that resembled blazing fire. Bhishma cut that arrow in two before it reached him. The Grandsire then killed Yudhisthira's horses, causing him to ascend the chariot of Nakula. Then Yudhisthira, Nakula and Sahadeva rushed at Bhishma with their supporting troops. Covering the onrushing warriors with thousands of arrows, Bhishma began a great slaughter. He appeared like a young lion amidst a herd of deer. The heads of many heroic chariot fighters fell to the earth, and this threw the entire army of the Pandavas into confusion. Then Shikhandi, who was born to kill Bhishma, rushed at the grandsire saying, "Wait, Wait!" Disregarding him on account of his once being a woman, Bhishma proceeded against the Shrinjayas. All the great heroes fought fiercely until the sun began to set on the horizon.

As darkness began to cover the battlefield, all the warriors returned to their camps. Bandaging their wounds and plucking out their arrows, they rested for the night. The slaughter took a great toll on both sides, and blood flowed like water. As the warriors left the battlefield, jackals and Rakshasas came to devour the dead bodies of the slain.

Thus Ends the Seventh Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Seventh Day of the Great Battle.

## Chapter Eight

The Eighth Day at Kurukshetra;

Iravan is Slain

Sanjaya said: O King, When the dawn of the eighth day arrived, the Pandavas and the Kauravas once more proceeded to battle. King Duryodhana, Chitrasena Vivinsati, Bhishma and Drona arrayed the Kaurava troops in a formation that resembled an ocean. In the front line of the vast divisions was the Grandsire Bhishma supported by Duryodhana and his brothers. Next to Bhishma was Kripa and next to Kripa was Drona, supported by hundreds and thousands of troops. On the other side of Bhishma was the son of Drona, Ashvatthama, as well as Salya and Kritavarman.

Upon seeing the forceful array of the Kaurava army, Dhristadyumna arranged his troops in a counter formation called shringataka which was capable of subduing hostile armies. The horns of that formation were Bhima and the descendant of Vrishni, Satyaki. Next to Satyaki was Arjuna, who had the Supreme Personality of Godhead as his charioteer. In the center of the formation was King Yudhishthira and the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva. Behind these great warriors were Abhimanyu, Virata and Ghatotkacha. Behind them were millions upon millions of warriors.

Thus the battle began, and the two armies met, causing a great dust cloud to rise into the sky. The heroic Bhishma began mowing down the troops with arrows from his mighty bow. The Somakas and the Shrinjayas rushed at Bhishma knowing well their death was at hand. There is nothing more rewarding for a kshatriya than to die facing the enemy, what to speak of being killed by a great warrior like Bhishma. As in the previous days, the Grandsire began to slaughter the opposing forces using his celestial weapons. No one could stand before him. The only one who dared to resist him in battle was Bhima. Protecting Bhishma were Dhritarastra's sons, and they assaulted Bhima with a great fury. Bhima first killed Bhishma's charioteer, and when Bhishma's horses lost control, they took his chariot away from the battlefield.

The sons of Dhritarastra, greatly infuriated, challenged Bhima, releasing their mighty arrows. Bhima countered their attack, and with an arrow shaped like a horseshoe, he severed the head of Sunabha, whose beautifully adorned head fell to the earth and rolled on the ground. The other brothers of Duryodhana, Adityaketu, Vahvasin, Kundadahara, Mahodara, Aparajita, Panditaka and Visalakha, were outraged and rushed at Bhima, driving hard their beautiful chariots. Mahodara pierced Bhima with nine arrows, each resembling a thunderbolt. Adityaketu struck him with seventy shafts, Kundadahara with ninety and Visalakha with seven. The other brothers also released their arrows determined to end Bhimasena's life. Bhima, not tolerating his cousin's insolence, released an arrow that cut off Aparajita's head. With a broad headed arrow, Vrikodara dispatched Kundadahara to Yamaraja's abode. Remembering the offenses these cousins committed many times in the past, Bhima released with all his strength a golden arrow that pierced through the chest of Panditaka and entered into the ground. Panditaka then fell off his chariot deprived of his life. Then with three arrows, the second son of Kunti, severed the head of Visalakha. Mahodara was slain with a long shafted arrow released with lightning force. Adityaketu was then killed with a broad headed arrow. With another arrow Bhima then killed Vahvasin. Seeing so many of their brothers slain, the remaining sons of Dhritarastra fled the battlefield. They remembered the oath Bhima had taken in midst of the Kaurava assembly and fear overcame their hearts.

When Duryodhana saw eight of his brothers massacred, he was griefstricken. He recalled Vidura's wisdom as well as the words of the other Kuru elders. From the way in which Bhima killed his brothers, he could understand that this second son of Kunti had taken birth for his downfall. He then ordered his troops saying, "There is Bhima, kill him!" After ordering his troops to fight, he went to Bhishma and pour out his grief. He began to lament saying, "Eight of my brothers have been slain by Bhima even in your presence. Our troops are fighting bravely yet still they are being slaughtered. You seem to have become an indifferent spectator in this battle. Alas, destiny is certainly cruel to me."

Hearing the mournful words of Duryodhana, the Grand sire's eyes filled with tears, and he spoke falteringly to his grandson, "Previously, we had warned you about this, but you could not understand. Myself, Drona, Vidura, and your mother Gandhari have instructed you to make peace with the Pandavas, but you paid no attention. It has been ordained that neither myself nor Drona will escape with our lives from this battle. I speak the truth when I tell you that whoever Bhima casts his eyes upon, that person will not escape with his life. Therefore, O King, be patient and fight on, making the heavenly planets your goal. As regards to the Pandavas, they are incapable of being slain by all the demigods combined."

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, beholding so many of my sons killed by a single person, I have become weak and my body trembles. Day after day, O suta, my sons are being slain. I think they have been overtaken by the force of time. Even though they are being protected by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Bhurishrava and Ashvatthama, still they are being killed. My wicked son did not listen to the common sense of the Kuru elders and is now reaping the fruit of his sinful deeds.

Sanjaya replied: O Monarch, You were also instructed many times by the pious Vidura. He pleaded with you to restrain your diabolic sons from the game of dice, but you did not listen. The outcome of this present battle is the reaction to not listening to the intelligent Vidura. Listen now, O King, to the events of the battle exactly as they happened.

After speaking to his grandson, Bhishma again challenged the Pandava army. Opposing Bhishma were Yudhisthira, Dhristadyumna, Shikhandi, Satyaki, Virata, Drupada, Dhristaketu and Kuntibhoja. They were supported by the Somakas, the Shrinjayas and the Matsyas. Arjuna, the sons of Draupadi and Chekitana all engaged the Kaurava army headed by Duryodhana. Bhima, Abhimanyu and Ghatotkacha engaged the rest of the Kaurava army. The esteemed chariot fighter, Drona, excited with wrath, began slaughtering the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. The warriors who were struck down by Drona were seen lying on the battlefield, their head, arms and legs severed. The moans and shrieks of the wounded was a deafening sound.

Bhima fell upon the elephant divisions of the Kauravas, and with his arrows he began to cut off their trunks and mangle their bodies. Those huge beasts began to fall to the earth in large numbers. Some of the elephants were paralyzed, and some were only half killed, laying on the ground suffering unbearable pain.

Nakula and Sahadeva came upon the calvary division and began killing thousands of horsemen with their deadly shafts. Both horse and rider were killed, and those sons of Madri left a path of destruction wherever they went.

The son of Arjuna, Iravan, was a mighty warrior coming from the Naga race. His mother was Ulupi, and he was begotten by Arjuna when Arjuna was on pilgrimage many years before. He grew up with his mother in the region of the Nagas, and when he heard that Arjuna had gone to the heavenly planets, he went there to see him. Approaching his father, he spoke to him, "I am Iravan, your son by Ulupi." Arjuna then embraced Iravan, and they spent much time together. When Iravan left the heavenly planets, Arjuna requested him, "When the great battle takes place, I will be in need of your assistance." Replying to his father, Iravan promised, "When I receive your word, I will come to help you." Now that the battle had begun, Iravan was rendering valuable assistance. He had come to Kurukshetra accompanied by many celestial horses. These horses had the power to travel above ground and to trample oncoming soldiers and horsemen. During the general engagement of the day, Iravan was destroying the enemy lines and thinning them out. Coming up to challenge him were the younger brothers of Shakuni whose names were Gaya, Gavaksha, Vrishava, Charmavat, Arjava, and Suka. They came upon him supported by their divisions of troops. The Gandhara soldiers, who were anxious for battle, began to destroy the defense lines of the Pandavas. Iravan ordered his men to challenge them, and thus a great battle began. Gradually Iravan's divisions gained the upper hand, and Shakuni's younger brothers were incensed. They assaulted him on the front lines. Confident of conquering Arjuna's son, they released many lances and arrows finding their mark. Iravan was hit in many places with those weapons. Removing the lances, he returned them forcefully at Shakuni's brothers. He then got down from his chariot holding a sword and shield. Shakuni's brothers surrounded

him trying to take him captive. When they came close, he cut off their right and left arms and mangled their bodies. Thus deprived of their lives, they fell from their chariots. Only Vrishava, lacerated by many weapons, survived and escaped with his life.

Seeing the slaughter of Shakuni's brothers, Duryodhana ordered the Rakshasa prince, Alambhusha, to kill Iravan, "Behold, O hero, Arjuna's son destroying my forces with his mystic powers of illusion. You are also well versed in mystic powers, so without delay, do what is needed to protect our soldiers." Following Duryodhana's order, Alambhusha, the dreadful Rakshasa, began displaying his mystic illusions. He created many powerful horses ridden by fierce Rakshasas carrying spears and battle axes. They numbered two thousand, and came upon Iravan swiftly. However, they were soon vanquished by Arjuna's son. Alambhusha then opposed Iravan releasing his blood sucking arrows. When he got close enough, Iravan cut his arrows and his bow to pieces. Seeing his bow cut, he rose up into the air and began to display his mystic illusions. Iravan also rose up into the sky and began to fight with the mystic Rakshasa. He severed his arms and hacked at his body. However, the Rakshasa produced more arms by the dint of his mystic power. Iravan repeatedly cut him with his battle axe and caused him to bleed profusely. Alambhusha then expanded his form and tried to capture Iravan, but Iravan also produced mystic illusions that baffled Alambhusha. A celestial serpent from his mother's side came to Iravan's aid. It assumed a huge form like Lord Ananta Himself. Producing many Nagas, they assaulted the huge Rakshasa. While being attacked, Alambhusha momentarily reflected and then immediately assumed a form like Garuda and devoured those mystic Nagas. Seeing the celestial serpent baffled, Iravan was bewildered. While in that state, Alambusha cut off Iravan's head with his mighty sword. When Arjuna's son was slain, the Kaurava army appeared overjoyed, and encouraged in this way, they began to overthrow the battle lines of their enemy.

Beholding Arjuna's son slain in battle, Ghatotkacha challenged Duryodhana releasing hundreds of arrows. Duryodhana took up the challenge of Bhima's son. He was assisted by an elephant division lead by the King of the Vangas. Ghatotkacha roared loudly striking terror into the Duryodhana's troops. The Rakshasa division then attacked the elephant army causing a carnage of those mighty beasts. With arrows, swords, darts, maces and battle axes, the Rakshasas began kill large elephants as if they were trees caught in a tornado. Not tolerating this, Duryodhana killed four of the principle Rakshasas, whose names were Vegavat, Maharudra, Viduyjihva and Pramathin. Bhima's son was furious and, took up a huge dart to kill him. The king of the Vangas, riding on his elephant, stepped in front of Duryodhana's chariot and protected the Kuru king. Ghatotkacha then released his dart which went straight into the elephant's heart, causing it to lie on the ground deprived of life. The King of the Vangas jumped off the elephant, and ascended another mighty elephant. With eyes red in rage, Ghatotkacha assumed a terrible form and began roaring, shaking the very earth.

Hearing these sounds, Bhishma ordered Drona, Kripa, Salya, Somadatta, Balhika, Jayadratha and Bhurishrava to protect the King. Also following behind were Vinda and Anuvinda, Ashvatthama, Vikarna, Chitrasena and Vivinsati. Beholding all these

warriors coming forward, Ghatotkacha remained calm and greeted them with a hail of arrows. He cut Drona's bow to pieces and felled the standard on Somadatta's chariot. He pierced Balhika with many arrows and Kripa with one. He struck Vikarna in the shoulder joint which caused blood and flesh to flow from his wound. He was forced to sit on the floor of his chariot. Ghatotkacha released ten arrows that pierced Bhurishrava's body and entered the earth. He then cut Jayadratha's bow and killed the horses of the Avantipura kings. After defeating those warriors, he rushed at Duryodhana to kill him. Many heroes who were defending Duryodhana came forward to protect him. They surrounded Ghatotkacha releasing their weapons. Ghatotkacha then rose up into the sky and roared loudly causing the hearts of the Kuru warriors to tremble.

Hearing those roars, Yudhisthira anxiously spoke to his younger brother Bhima, "Those roars from your mighty son indicate that he is battling with the principal Kuru soldiers. I think it is more of a burden than he can bear. Quickly save him from this immediate danger." Following his brother's order, Bhima rushed to battle followed by many chariot fighters. Bhima sent forth earth trembling screams that afflicted the hearts of the Kaurava heroes. He met them head on and broke the back of that fierce army. Followed by thousands of soldiers, he pierced the enemy lines killing hundreds of men with his sharpened arrows.

Seeing his troops fleeing for their lives, Duryodhana assaulted Bhimasena to stop his progress. He covered Pandu's son with a shower of arrows and cut his bow to pieces. The crooked son of Dhritarastra then released an arrow that pierced Bhima's chest, causing him to clutch the pole of his chariot. Enraged at this action, Ghatotkacha and Abhimanyu challenged Duryodhana. Seeing them advancing, Drona ordered Somadatta, Kripa, Bhurishravas, Ashvatthama, Jayadratha and Brihadvala to save the King. To protect Duryodhana, Drona pierced Bhima with twenty-six arrows. However, Bhima pierced Drona in return with ten shafts that caused the preceptor to fall to the floor of his chariot. Jumping down from his chariot, Bhima took up his mace and ran at Drona to slay him. The mighty Kauravas, desiring to kill Bhima, surrounded him and began to rain their weapons upon him.

A King named Nila challenged Ashvatthama, who was trying to kill Bhima. He pierced the son of Drona with many winged arrows and caused blood to flow from his body. Highly enraged, Ashvatthama killed Nila's horses and his charioteer. He then released a single arrow that pierced Nila's chest causing him to slump in his chariot. Ghatotkacha came up to protect Nila, and Ashvatthama challenged him to battle. The son of Drona killed many Rakshasas that were supporting Ghatotkacha, inciting the Ghatotkacha's wrath. He produced many ghastly illusions that bewildered Drona's son. The illusions spread over the battlefield, causing a curtain of terror. The Kaurava army could not counter the illusions and ran away in fear. Confused by the mystic powers of Ghatotkacha, thousands of warriors fell down with their heads, legs and arms severed from their bodies. Even Drona, Duryodhana, Salya and Ashvatthama left the field of battle. Bhishma tried to rally the troops, yelling, "Do not run away! It is simply Rakshasa illusions!" Not hearing his words, however, they did not come back to fight, and the Pandavas considered victory to be theirs. It was

near the hour of sunset that the mystic Ghatotkacha routed the Kaurava army and sent them running from the battlefield.

Witnessing his army's defeat, Duryodhana approached Grandfather Bhishma and spoke harshly, "Relying on your prowess in battle, I have started this animosity with the Pandavas. I have eleven akshauhini divisions at your command, yet I am defeated by the Pandava warriors headed by Bhima and Ghatotkacha. This is causing me great anxiety and burning my body. I, therefore, want you to kill Ghatotkacha and my desires will be fulfilled."

Replying to the chiding words of Duryodhana, Bhishma said, "Listen, O King, to my advice. In all circumstances you should be protected in battle. Kings should fight with Kings, and therefore you should fight with Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna and the twins. Myself, Drona, Kripa, Ashvatthama and Kritavarman will fight with the wicked Rakshasa. However, if you are in great anxiety, then request Bhagadatta to challenge the Rakshasa, for he is invincible as he rides on his great white elephant."

Following the advice of his grandfather, King Duryodhana went to Bhagadatta and requested him, "Proceed quickly against the son of Hidimvi, and destroy him along with his forces. You also have mystic powers and are invincible in battle." Following the orders of King Duryodhana, King Bhagadatta rushed to the forefront of the battle to fight with Ghatotkacha. Seeing him coming, Bhima, Abhimanyu, Ghatotkacha, the sons of Draupadi, Satyadriti, Kshatradeva and Vasudhama prepared themselves for battle. Bhagadatta was riding on his elephant named Supratika and was supported by many other gigantic tuskers. He came charging at Bhimasena and afflicted him with many arrows. Bhima countered killing one hundred warriors that supported Bhagadatta. Bhima, the Kekaya brothers, Abhimanyu, and the ruler of Dasharanas surrounded that elephant and began to pierce it with many weapons. Blood and flesh were flowing from its sides, but still it would not waver. The ruler of the Dasharanas, riding on his elephant, challenged the powerful Supratika, but could not make it move from its position. Then the ruler of Pragjyotishapura released fourteen lances in succession that pierced the elephant and sent him reeling from the battlefield. Turning on the Pandava's troops, that elephant began to crush the horses and chariots that supported him. The mighty warriors of the Pandava army, placing Bhima at their head, rushed at the colossal elephant, Supratika, with the intention of slaying it. The great bowman Bhagadatta fearlessly began to assault the Pandava army causing great havoc. That huge elephant crushed hundreds and thousands of soldiers and chariots.

Beholding the Pandava army broken, Ghatotkacha, his eyes blazing, rushed at Bhagadatta. He released a mighty dart that scorched through the sky like a meteor. Bhagadatta quickly released a golden arrow that shattered the dart to pieces. When that dart fell to the ground, King Bhagadatta became encouraged. He picked up a huge lance and released it at Ghatotkacha. The son of Bhima rose up into the air and seized it, uttering a loud roar. He then broke it on his knees. With this action all warriors exclaimed, "Well done! Well done!" Not tolerating that action the King of Pragjyotishapura pierced all the warriors that surrounded Ghatotkacha with many arrows. He killed the horses of Bhima and deeply hurt Bhima's charioteer, Vishoka.

Vishoka fell to the floor of the chariot. Then taking up his mace Bhima descended from his chariot and began to slaughter the enemy ranks all the while being pierced by the tenacious Bhagadatta.

Just at this time Lord Krishna and Arjuna appeared on the scene. Bhima informed Arjuna of the death of his son Iravan by Alambhusha. Hearing of his son's death, Arjuna said to Krishna, "I know without doubt that Vidura saw, with his great wisdom, the destruction of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Many great heroes have fallen in battle for the sake of wealth. To hell with this profession of a kshatriya. For the fault of Duryodhana the entire kshatriya race will be destroyed. I will kill all these kinsmen who are Rakshasas in human dress. There is no time to lose, O Madhava."

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead then speedily drove the chariot to the front line of the battle. He engaged in combat with Bhishma, Kripa, Bhagadatta, and Susharman. Meanwhile, Bhima came upon Drona and some of the Brothers of Duryodhana. In the presence of Drona he killed them like a lion kills sheep. Their names were Virudroksha, Kundalin, Anadriti, Kundavegan, Virata, Dhirgalochan, Dhirgavavahu, Suvahu and Kankyadhaga. These nine brothers fell from their chariots deprived of life. The other brothers of Duryodhana ran away fearful of their lives. The preceptor Drona looked on completely helpless to do anything.

Then a fierce engagement took place that increased the population of Yamaraja's abode. The two armies clashed causing a great carnage on both sides. Seizing one another by the hair they fought using nails, teeth, fists and knees. Father killed son and son killed father. Swords with pearl handles lay broken all over the battlefield. Costly ornaments, bows, and broken arrows were strewn on the Kurukshetra plain like rain. Barbed darts, axes, maces and spiked clubs lay next to the bodies of decapitated soldiers. Men lay on the battlefield with limbs shattered and heads smashed. The earth was covered with slain men, elephants and horses. Fragmented chariots were piled up on top of one another with the chariot fighter lying in it deprived of life. Their bloodied armor was scattered here and there no longer reflecting the sun. Decorated heads of great warriors lay everywhere, some with crowns and some with turbans. After the two armies had crushed each other, the Kurus and the Pandavas withdrew their great divisions at the approach of darkness. They retired to their tents for nightly rest.

Lamenting the loss of so many of his brothers and the loss of his troops, Duryodhana, accompanied by Duhshasana and Karna, went to see grandfather Bhishma. Duryodhana then spoke to him, "Accepting you as our protector we would venture to challenge the heavenly gods combined what to speak of the insignificant Pandavas. I desire, O son of Ganga, that you show mercy to me. Why do you not kill the Pandavas? O King, if out of hatred for myself or love of the enemy, you do not kill the Pandavas then permit Karna to fight. He will be able to vanquish the Pandavas in battle without doubt."

Replying to the wicked Duryodhana, Bhishma said, "O Duryodhana, why do you pierce my ears with these arrows? I am prepared to give up my life for you in this battle. The Pandavas cannot be defeated by anyone. Do you not remember when

Arjuna defeated Indra in the battle for the Khandava forest? Do you not remember when Arjuna saved you from the Gandharvas when Karna had fled the battlefield? In Virata's kingdom the mighty armed son of Kunti defeated all of us and took away our scarves. Is this not sufficient proof to you? Do you not remember when Arjuna went to heaven and defeated the Nivatakavachas? Who is there, indeed, who can defeat Partha in battle? The eternal Lord Krishna, the carrier of the discus, has given him protection. Vasudeva possesses infinite power and can destroy this universe. All beings are his children, and He is situated in everyone's heart. This has been confirmed by Narada, Asita, Vyasa and others. Due to ignorance you do not see this like man, who is about to die, sees all trees to be made of gold. Having caused this great war why don't you fight with Bhima and Arjuna? I have vowed to slay the Somakas and the Panchalas except for Shikhandi. I will slay them or be slain by them. O son of Gandhari, tomorrow I will fight a fierce battle that men will talk about as long as the world lasts. Even though the Pandavas cannot be slain, I will satisfy your desire. I have in my possession five arrows that have the power to slay the Pandavas. If Keshava does not intervene to protect them, they will die in tomorrow's great battle. Go now, and pass the night happily in sleep."

Joyful to hear the grandsire's vow, Duryodhana requested, "Please let me keep these five arrows for safekeeping till the battle tomorrow begins." Grandfather Bhishma then handed the five arrows to Duryodhana, and thus the King and his soldiers went to their respective tents.

Lord Krishna, being the Paramatma (supersoul) in everyone's heart understood what Bhishma intended to do. He immediately went to Arjuna's tent and requested him, "The grandsire has taken a vow to kill you and your brothers in tomorrow's great battle. For this end he has set aside five arrows. For safekeeping, Duryodhana is keeping these five arrows in his possession. Go now and request these arrows from Duryodhana."

Following the order of his dear friend and Lord, Arjuna went to the camp of Duryodhana, requesting to see his cousin. In the Vedic culture, combatants fought during the day, but could dine together at night if they so desired. Such was their control of anger. Duryodhana greeted Arjuna and inquired, "O Partha, why have you come to my camp? If you desire victory without fighting, then I am prepared to give it to you."

"I have not come to ask for victory," Arjuna replied, "but it is known to me that you are keeping five arrows for slaying myself and my brothers. These have been given to you by our grandsire. I am requesting these five arrows." Duryodhana could not deny the request of his cousin and handed to Arjuna the five arrows Bhishma would use to kill the Pandavas. Arjuna then returned to his camp.

Not able to sleep, Duryodhana immediately went to inform his grandfather of what had taken place. When Bhishma heard that Arjuna had come for the five arrows, his determination only increased, "Krishna has sent Arjuna for the five arrows, but still I vow that unless Krishna intervenes in tomorrow's battle, I will kill the Pandavas. To protect His dear devotees, I will force Him to break his promise not to fight." After

hearing grandfather Bhishma's determined vow, Duryodhana removed all lamentation from his heart. He considered the Pandavas as already slain in battle. He thus retired for nightly rest with a joyful heart.

Thus ends the Eighth Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, entitled, The Eighth Day at Kurukshetra; Iravan is Slain.

## Chapter Nine

The Ninth Day of the Great Battle;

The Invincible Bhishma

Dhritarastra inquired: Hearing of my sons' slaughter, O Sanjaya, a great fear has entered my mind. I think that none of my kinsmen will escape from this battle with their life. You have told me of Bhishma's determination. There has never been a warrior so great as he. Tell me, O Suta, what events took place on the ninth day of the great battle.

Sanjaya said: Listen, O King, with rapt attention to this narration. Today's rivalries will be spoken about for an eternity. On the ninth day of the great massacre, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, arranged his phalanxes in the formation called sarvatobhadra. Kripa, Kritavarman, Saivya, Shakuni Jayadratha, Sudakshina, the ruler of the Kambhojas and the Grandsire Bhishma all took up their positions together in the forefront of the great divisions. Drona, Bhurishrava, Salya, and Bhagadatta took up their positions in the right wing of that array. Ashvatthama, Somadatta, the Kings of Avantipura and Bahlika took up their positions in the left wing. In the middle of the formation was Duryodhana, Susharman and the Trigartas. The powerful Rakshasa, Alambhusha and Shrutayush took up their positions in the rear of the army.

King Yudhisthira and Bhimasena as well as the twin sons of Madri stood in the forefront of their great divisions ready for combat. The commander in chief, Dhristadyumna along with Virata, Satyaki, Shikhandi, Arjuna, Ghatotkacha and Chekitana stood surrounded by their phalanxes of soldiers. Supporting these great warriors were Abhimanyu, Drupada, the five Kaikeya brothers and Kuntibhoja. All stood ready for combat.

Then the Kauravas, placing the Grandsire at their head, rushed against the Pandavas eager for victory. The Pandavas, also eager for combat, rushed against Bhishma desiring to halt his forward march. Abhimanyu assaulted the Kaurava forces, releasing his arrows to all parts of the battlefield. He cleared enemy lines of infantry,

calvary and chariot fighters. With his celestial weapons, he was tossing warriors around the battlefield like cotton in the wind. With no one to protect them, Duryodhana's divisions were consumed like a blazing fire consumes dry grass. Abhimanyu defeated Kripa, Drona, Ashvatthama and Jayadratha, and sent them reeling from the front lines. His bow was constantly drawn in a circle and resembled a circular halo around the sun. All the warriors on both sides applauded his prowess as he crossed the battlefield. Gladdening Yudhisthira's heart, he routed the Kaurava army from one end of the battlefield to the other. There was a great wail of lamentation from Duryodhana's troops as this second Arjuna approached them releasing his death dealing arrows.

Seeing his troops routed, Duryodhana commanded Alambusha, "This son of Arjuna appears like his father in prowess. I do not see anyone else who can defeat him in battle except one who possesses mystic powers. Kill this son of Subhadra and gain victory for my troops." Bowing to Duryodhana's order, the valiant and mighty Rakshasa quickly went to the front lines to challenge Abhimanyu. Coming upon Abhimanyu's division, Alambusha began killing his soldiers in hundreds and thousands. He fought furiously and appeared to dance on the terrace of his chariot. The mighty Rakshasa came upon the five sons of Draupadi and began to grind them with his arrows. The son of Yudhisthira, Prativindya, pierced the Rakshasa through his armor causing him to roar with pain. Not tolerating that action, Alambusha killed Prativindya's horses and also killed the horses of his four brothers. He then began to pierce them with hundreds and hundreds of arrows. Having deprived them of their chariots, he rushed to kill them.

Abhimanyu, seeing his half brothers in difficulty, came up quickly to intercept the mighty Rakshasa. Alambusha challenged the son of Arjuna saying, "Wait, Wait!" The Rakshasa was endowed with mystic illusions and the son of Subhadra was endowed with all the celestial weapons. The combat was wonderful, and all who saw it were struck with wonder. Abhimanyu pierced Alambusha with five shafts, and the Rakshasa countered with nine arrows that pierced the son of Arjuna's chest. Alambusha then released blood sucking arrows that went right through Abhimanyu's body and entered into the earth. Outraged, Arjuna's son released a hundred arrows that caused the Rakshasa to turn his back on the field of battle. Alambusha then resorted to his mystic power and covered all directions with a dense darkness. No one could be seen, and Abhimanyu's supporting troops were struck with fear. To counter this illusion, Subhadra's son released a solar weapon that lit up the battlefield. When light again returned dispelling the darkness, Abhimanyu pierced Alambusha with many broad head arrows. The mystic Rakshasa tried many other mystic illusions, but they were all destroyed by Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu then pierced the Rakshasa's body, and he appeared like a forested mountain. With blood pouring from his wounds and having no other mystic weapons, he abandoned his chariot and fled the battlefield.

Beholding his troops routed, Bhishma attacked Abhimanyu. The mighty chariot fighters of the Kaurava army encircled Arjuna's son and began to rain their arrows upon him. Unwavered, Abhimanyu fought with them valiantly. Coming up to assist Abhimanyu was his father, Arjuna. He quickly arrived at the spot where Abhimanyu

was slaughtering the troops. Seeing him coming, Sardwat's son, Kripa, pierced Arjuna with twenty five arrows. Not tolerating that action, Satyaki attack Kripa with an arrow capable of taking his life. However, the son of Drona, Ashvatthama, cut that arrow in mid air and then pierced Satyaki in the chest with many broad headed shafts. Satyaki countered and struck Ashvatthama with six arrows that caused him to faint away on his chariot.

With this action, Drona rushed against Satyaki. Arjuna came up to assist Satyaki and pierced Drona with three iron headed arrows. Drona countered those arrows and covered the third son of Pandu with a shower of arrows. Watching with concern, the battle between these two bullish warriors, Duryodhana ordered Susharman to attack Arjuna. Supported by his military divisions, Susharman came upon Arjuna eager for combat. The Trigarta King's arrows pierced Arjuna's body like birds enter a tree. Incensed, Arjuna invoked the Vayavya weapon which caused a hurricane to appear on the battlefield. Picking up men, horses, elephants and chariots, this weapon scattered them in all directions. Countering that weapon, Drona released the Mahadeva weapon which caused the wind to abate. However, the soldiers of the Trigarta army, fearful of their life, ran from the battlefield.

Duryodhana ordered the celebrated chariot fighters, Kripa, Ashvatthama, Salya, Sudakshina, Bahlika, and the Avanti brothers to attack Bhimasena. They came upon him with their elephant divisions and began to harass him. Vrikodara, licking his lips, took up his death dealing mace, and descending from his chariot, he began to slaughter those huge beasts along with their riders. Bhima's body was practically impenetrable and arrows could hardly pierce his skin. Fearlessly, he began to dance on the battlefield scattering the huge elephant divisions with his powerful mace. While being slaughtered by Bhima, those elephants sent up wails of anguish and fell to the ground. Some had their heads smashed and others had their backs broken by Bhima's powerful mace. Covered with the blood of the elephants and soldiers and pierced all over with arrows, he appeared like Yamaraja himself come to take the life of all beings. What ever elephants were left, fled away out of fear, and thus once again Duryodhana's troops were defeated in battle.

At midday a fierce rivalry took place between the Grandsire Bhishma and the Somakas. That renowned Kaurava warrior consumed the enemy ranks in thousands. Coming to challenge Bhishma were Drupada, Virata, Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi. They showered arrows on Bhishma, and there was not a two finger breadth of space where he wasn't pierced. However, the grandsire was not affected. He returned those arrows and struck Drupada, Virata and Dhristadyumna in the same way that they had pierced him. However, he would not release a single weapon against Shikhandi on account of his having been a female in his youth. Bhishma blazed with anger and began to destroy the Pandava ranks. He killed elephants, chariot fighters and horsemen with his deadly shafts. On hearing the twang of his bow, the Pandava troops were struck with fear. Not only did his arrows pierce the combatant's armor, but passed right through them into the ground. In front of him, the grandsire created a cemetery of dead bodies, broken chariots, fallen horses and deceased elephants. With broad headed shafts, he smashed chariots to pieces including the axle and wheels. Severed heads and numerous weapons lay in front of the

Grandsire. His arrows were like meteors scorching the Kurukshetra plain. The Pandavas, with the greatest effort, could not rally their army, so frightened by Bhishma's prowess. The grandfather was endowed with a young man's power, and when he came upon Arjuna, he began to afflict him with blazing arrows.

Witnessing the rout of the Pandava army by Bhishma, Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna, "The hour has come which you have longed for. You must kill Bhishma now, or he will kill you. In the assembly of Kings at Virata's court, you promised that slay this great warrior. Now is the time to make those words come true."

Arjuna replied, "Which would be better: another twelve years in the forest or sovereignty with hell at the end? Which of these should I achieve? Urge the horses on, O Hrishikesh, I will fulfill your desire. I will overthrow the powerful Grandsire, that invincible warrior."

Thus Lord Krishna drove the chariot to the place where Bhishma was fighting. The Pandava army rallied behind Arjuna and opposed the Grandsire eager for battle. Seeing Partha coming, Bhishma roared like a lion and covered Dhananjaya's car with a curtain of arrows. Then Partha shattered Bhishma's bow, cutting it into fragments. While Bhishma was stringing another bow, Arjuna cut that one to pieces, and Shantanu's son exclaimed, "Well done! Well done!" Then Bhishma, taking up another bow, began to lacerate Arjuna's body. Arjuna, too, released many arrows piercing his grandfather and drawing his blood. Bhishma then fought with greater prowess and began to vanquish thousands of Arjuna's supporting troops right before his very eyes. The Grandsire then covered Arjuna's chariot with hundreds of arrows so that Arjuna and Krishna could not be seen.

It was obvious that Arjuna was not fighting to full capacity, and that Bhishma was going to emerge victorious. Arrows were filling the sky, and Arjuna was falling into danger. Seeing the situation, Lord Krishna could no longer tolerate the possible defeat of Arjuna. Breaking his own promise not to fight, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, descended from the chariot, and picking up the wheel of a broken chariot, He rushed at Bhishma while his hair and yellow garments flowed in the breeze. Bhishma had promised that he would kill Arjuna, and to save His devotee, Lord Krishna would have to fight. This was the vow of Bhishma. Roaring like a lion, the Lord of the universe, the mighty Lord Krishna assaulted Bhishma. Lord Krishna resembled a rain cloud passing through the sky decorated with flashes of lightning. Beholding the lotus eyed Lord rushing towards him, Bhishma began to release arrows that pierced Lord Krishna's body. The Supreme Godhead whose body is completely transcendental received those arrows like a lover receives the affectionate bites of his beloved girl friend. Bhishma said to the Supreme Lord, "Come, come, O lotus-eyed one. I offer you my respectful obeisances, O God of gods. O my Lord, destroy me in this battle so that I may win great fame. O Govinda, You may strike me as you please for I am Your eternal servant life after life."

Descending from his chariot, Arjuna ran after Lord Krishna and seized him. Stopping Him with great effort, Arjuna pleaded, "O mighty armed Keshava, You should not break the promise you made in the King's assembly. You said at that time, 'I will not

fight.' Alas this great burden rests on me. I swear I will slay the grandsire. I swear by my weapons, by truth and by my good deeds. You will behold this mighty warrior thrown down by me with the greatest ease." Lord Krishna did not reply to the statement of Arjuna, but in great anger, He mounted the chariot and again guided the horses of His devotee. Bhishma once more showered arrows upon Arjuna's chariot. Once again the Grandsire began to slay hundreds and thousands of troops by using his celestial arrows. No one could even look at him as he released his death dealing weapons. One could only see thousands of slain horses, elephants, and men, as well as the sky filled with his arrows. The Pandavas gazed on Bhishma in wonder and could do nothing to stop him. Thus without a protector, the Pandava Army broke and fled the battlefield. At this time the sun set its course on the horizon and with its disappearance, the great divisions of both sides withdrew to their camps.

Witnessing the slaughter of his men, Yudhisthira could not find peace. The Kauravas, extremely delighted at the turn of events, followed Bhishma to his tent glorifying his prowess. Meanwhile the Pandavas along with their generals held consultation to discuss the days events. Reflecting on what had taken place, King Yudhisthira said to Lord Krishna, "Behold the prowess of the Grandsire, Bhishma, O Vasudeva. He has crushed my troops like an elephant in a sugar cane field. I think it is possible to defeat Yamaraja or Indra in battle, but this Bhishma cannot be slain. When this is the case, I have fallen into an ocean of grief. O Invincible one, I will now retire to the forest for I have no purpose to fulfill. Witnessing the slaughter of my troops, I do not desire sovereignty of the universe. O slayer of Madhu, my brothers are greatly afflicted by our grandfather, and I am afraid that they might be slain. Please show us Your favor, O Krishna, and tell me what will benefit us at this time."

Smiling with compassion, Lord Krishna, the protector of His devotees, advised Yudhisthira, "O son of Dharma, You are follower of the religious principles, and therefore, there is no need to lament. When you have these invincible heroes for your protectors, why fall into an ocean of sorrow? Arjuna and Bhima alone are capable of routing the enemy. Both Nakula and Sahadeva are as capable and qualified as the King of heaven himself. Even I, O son of Pandu, will fight with this Bhishma and slay him. If Arjuna, out of weakness, will not kill him, then I will kill him in the very sight of Dhritarastra's sons. He, who is the enemy of the Pandavas, is also my enemy. Your brother, Arjuna, is my friend, relative and disciple. I will, O King, cut off My flesh and give it away for Arjuna's sake. Therefore, order Me, O King, to fight with Bhishma. Formerly at Upaplavya, Arjuna spoke up in the King's assembly, promising, 'I will slay Ganga's son.' If provoked in battle, Arjuna can fulfill that promise, or I can fulfill that promise for him. Bhishma has fallen under the sway of demons, and the reaction that will accrue to them will also fall upon him. That is the way of karma."

Hearing Lord Krishna's advice, Yudhisthira said, "It will certainly be as You say, O Madhava. All these Kauravas taken together cannot bear Your prowess. I am sure that all my desires will be fulfilled as long as You, My Lord, are our protector. O Govinda, what is there to say about Bhishma, although he is a mighty warrior? Before the battle he agreed to to give counsel to us although he would not fight on

our side. Therefore, O slayer of Madhu, let us approach him and ask him to advise us about this situation. When we were fatherless and orphans, he raised us with great affection. Thus we love him much. O to hell with the profession of a kshatriya!"

Hearing these words, the descendent of Vrishni, spoke to Yudhisthira, "O son of Pandu, your counsel is filled with wisdom and very pleasing to hear. Let us go to Bhishma's tent and ask him how we can obtain his death. When you question him, he will certainly reply with the truth."

Thus the Pandavas followed Lord Krishna to Bhishma's abode and offered their obeisances unto him. Then the mighty armed Bhishma addressed them, "Welcome, O descendent of Vrishni, welcome O Dhananjaya. Welcome, King Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. What can I do to enhance your joy? Even if it is difficult to achieve, I will endeavor with all my soul to fulfill it."

Unto the chief Kuru descendent, Yudhisthira lovingly spoke the following words, "O worshipable grandfather, you are conversant with all knowledge. How shall we obtain victory and sovereignty? How also can this needless destruction of the kshatriya race be stopped? Please answer these questions, and also tell me how you will meet with death? It is not in our power to stop your progress. While releasing your arrows, no one is able to tell when you draw the string, place the arrow and release the arrow. This all happens in one motion. O bull of the Bharata race, where is the man who can stand in front of you as you shower your arrows causing great destruction. Tell me, O Grandsire, how will we vanquish you in battle and gain sovereignty."

Replying to Yudhisthira's inquiry, Ganga's son said, "As long as I am alive, O son of Pandu, you will not have victory. O possessor of great wisdom, this is the fact of the matter. After I am slain, you will be triumphant. If you, therefore, desire victory, then kill me without delay. I give you permission to do so. You are fortunate to know my position, for if you had not solicited my advice, then there would have been days of misfortune ahead. Listen to my words, and act upon what I say. With my large bow and other weapons, I fight very carefully in battle. No one, not even the demigods headed by Indra, can defeat me. If, however, I lay aside my weapons, then you may defeat me. It is known that I will never fight with a woman or one who was once a woman. The son of Drupada, Shikhandi, was once a woman in his youth and has since attained manhood. Keep Shikhandi before Arjuna, and let Arjuna release his arrows and pierce my body. I will not fight with Shikhandi. At that time I will lay down my weapons, and taking this opportunity, Arjuna may strike me on all sides and gain victory. Except for Devaki's divine son, Lord Krishna, or Arjuna, there is no one who can defeat me. After I am vanquished, you will be able to defeat Dhritarastra's sons and their allies."

After hearing the Grandsire's instructions and offering their respectful obeisances, the Pandavas went back to their tents. Knowing that he would have to be the cause of his grandfather's death, Arjuna said to the Personality of Godhead, "How, O Madhava, will I be able to fight with the Grandsire who is senior in years, who

possesses great wisdom, and is the oldest member of our dynasty? While sporting in our childhood days, O Vasudeva, I used to climb up on his lap and smear him with dust. O Janardana, he is my grandfather worthy of great respect. I use to address him as father, but he would correct me and say, 'I am the father of your father.' O how can I kill this worshipful person in combat. Let my army perish, and let me also perish. I will never kill one who is worthy of my worship."

Lord Krishna replied, "Having vowed to kill Bhishma before, O Jishnu, how can you refrain from keeping your vow? You will not be triumphant without slaying Ganga's son. This is predestined by the desires of the demigods. It cannot happen otherwise. You are to be an instrument in this great battle, and you should not consider yourself the cause. Such were my instructions before the battle. Do not hesitate. Follow the advice given by the Grandsire and obtain victory."

"O Krishna," Arjuna said, "I will do as you say. It is true that destiny's course cannot be changed. Therefore, keeping Shikhandi before me, I will slay Bhishma, the greatest warrior that lives. I will check the other maharathis with my weapons, and myself and Shikhandi will cause the Grandsire to fall from his chariot." Having settled the affair with Bhishma's permission, the Pandavas along with Lord Krishna, retired for the night with contemplative hearts.

Thus Ends the Ninth Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Ninth Day of the Great Battle; The Invincible Bhishma.

## Chapter ten

### The Tenth Day of Hostilities;

#### The Fall of the Grandsire Bhishma

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, on the tenth day of the famed battle, how did Shikhandi challenge Ganga's son? The great Bhishma had received a benediction from his father that he would die only when he desired. Therefore, how would it be possible for Shikhandi or even Arjuna to take the life of that great soul? Please tell me in detail, O Suta, how the grandsire advanced against the Pandava army.

Sanjaya said: O King, the grandsire Bhishma has always acted as your father, friend and counselor. For your fault, you will now hear about the fall of this great soldier. When the hour of sunrise came, the Pandavas and the Kauravas arranged their divisions in battle formation. The Pandavas placed Shikhandi at their head, protected by Arjuna and Bhima. Behind them were the five sons of Draupadi and Abhimanyu. The other maharathis that were supporting them were Satyaki, Chekitana, Dhristadyumna, Virata, Drupada, the five Kaikeya brothers, Dhristaketu, and Uttamaejas.

The Kauravas, placing Bhishma in their forefront, prepared for battle. Behind Bhishma were Dhritarastra's sons and supporting them were Drona, Ashvatthama, Bhagadatta, Kripa, Kritavarman, the mighty Sudakshina, the King of the Kambhojas, Jayatsena, the ruler of Magadha, Shakuni and Brihadvala. Behind them were millions upon millions of soldiers eager for battle.

The two armies rushed at each other, and the clash of weapons and armor was uproarious. Shikhandi assaulted the grandsire and released three arrows that pierced Bhishma's chest. Grandfather Bhishma did not return any weapon, but destroyed Shikhandi's supporting troops like a forest fire consuming trees. Bhishma refused to fight with Shikhandi. Despite the fact that Shikhandi deluged Bhishma with arrows, the Grandsire would not fight with the son of Drupada. He addressed Shikhandi, "Whether you chose to strike me first or not, I will never fight with you. You are a woman by birth, and I can never challenge one who has changed his sex."

"I know that you can decimate the kshatriya race," Shikhandi replied, "and that you have even defeated the mighty Parashurama. Despite this fact, I will fight with you and slay you. Whether you chose to strike me or not, you will not escape with your life. O Bhishma, prepare yourself for the next world."

Ignoring Shikhandi, Bhishma began to rout the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. Fighting with all his energy, he killed ten thousands elephants, and ten thousand horsemen as well. On this final day the Grandsire killed a full two hundred thousand foot soldiers. Even though this slaughter was going on, the Pandavas did not waver in battle. They came forward with upraised weapons desiring to kill Bhishma.

Beholding Bhishma's prowess, Arjuna ordered Shikhandi, "Fight with Bhishma! Do not feel the slightest fear for your life. Providence has ordained his fall." Following Arjuna's command, Shikhandi, followed by Dhristadyumna and Abhimanyu, rushed at the Grandsire releasing their powerful weapons.

At this time Drona was also engaged in battle with the Pandava forces. Drona began to perceive omens indicating a great Kaurava loss. That mighty warrior spoke to his son, "On this day, my son, the mighty Partha will try his best to conquer the Grandsire. Today, my arrows are not coming from their quiver of their own accord. My bow seems to yawn, and my strength is leaving my body. My weapons are unwilling to answer my call. Animals and birds are uttering fearful and terrible cries. My heart is cheerless, and the sun seems to have lost its radiance. The four quarters are ablaze, and vultures are flying overhead. The bodies of kings, belonging to the Kaurava army, seem pale though decorated with golden ornaments. In all directions the sound of the Panchajanya and the twang of the Gandiva can be heard. Without doubt, Arjuna is trying to engage only the Grandsire avoiding the other maharathis. He seeks to kill Bhishma by keeping Shikhandi in front of him. Alas, what will be our fate?" Thus contemplating the future, Drona again battled with the Pandava warriors.

On this day Bhishma was causing a slaughter of the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. Arjuna, too, was taking away the lives of hundreds and thousands of chariot fighters, horsemen and infantry. So great was the bloodbath on both sides that it was hard to tell which side would become victorious. Bhishma was scorching the Pandava army, and after ten days, he gave up all desire to protect his life. Wishing his own death would come, he thought, "I will no longer engage in the merciless act of slaughtering large numbers of warriors."

Upon seeing Yudhisthira near him, he advised him, "O Yudhisthira, listen to my words and carry out my request. I have spent so many days killing large divisions of soldiers. O Bharata, I no longer desire to protect this body. If you wish to fulfill my desire, then kill me as I stand on my chariot. Place Shikhandi and Partha in the forefront of your army, and cause my ascendance to the heavenly planets."

Understanding Bhishma's intention, Yudhisthira ordered the Shrinjaya army headed by Dhristadyumna to attack Bhishma. Arjuna also, following Shikhandi, began to release his deadly arrows at the grandsire. Within a short time the Grandsire killed fourteen thousand chariot fighters. Shikhandi then released fourteen broad headed arrows that struck Bhishma in the chest. The son of Ganga, however, only looked at Shikhandi with wrath.

Arjuna ordered Shikhandi, "Rush quickly and slay the grandsire! Do not hesitate. Challenge him immediately!" Following those instructions, the son of Drupada released his deadly weapons for slaying the foremost Kuru warrior.

Coming up to protect the Grandsire was Duryodhana. He ordered all the great warriors with their combatants to kill Arjuna. Seeing them coming, Arjuna called upon his celestial weapons and caused a great carnage. His celestial weapons

released hundreds of thousands of arrows severing the heads, arms, and legs of the oncoming enemy. Angered by the prowess of his grandson, Bhishma, invoking a celestial weapon, rushed at Arjuna in the sight of all bowmen. However, seeing Shikhandi in the forefront, the grandsire withdrew the blazing weapon.

Bhishma then fixed his attention on slaying the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. He single handedly killed ten thousand elephants and seven great rathas amongst the Panchalas and the Matsyas. He then sent to Yamaraja's abode ten thousand horsemen and five thousand foot soldiers. Having thinned the ranks of the Pandava army, Bhishma then killed Satanika, the brother of Virata. Whoever followed Partha, was sent by Bhishma to the other world. Bhishma was achieving the most glorious feats on this tenth day of the Kurukshetra war. No one could stand before the Grandsire as he released his weapons. The King of the Panchalas, Drupada, Dhristadyumna, Nakula and Sahadeva, Virata, Abhimanyu, Satyaki, the sons of Draupadi, Ghatotkacha, Bhima, and Kuntibhoja were sinking in the ocean of the Grandsire. Coming to save them was Arjuna. He encouraged them and in their presence, he killed all of Bhishma's supporting soldiers. Then all together the great adhirathas and the maharathis of the Pandava army attacked Bhishma hoping to kill him. Keeping Shikhandi in front of them, they pierced Bhishma with hundreds of Arrows. Arjuna managed to cut Bhishma's bow, and with this act the Kauravas became enraged. They all attacked Arjuna using their celestial weapons and showering upon him thousands of arrows. Shikhandi continued piercing Bhishma, but the Grandsire ignored him and penetrated through the enemy ranks. Arjuna attacked Ganga's son and tore his bow to pieces. Bhishma took up another weapon, but that was also shattered by Arjuna's arrows. Partha managed to cut all the bows taken up by Bhishma. Bhishma was furious and took up a dart, and with all his might hurled it at Arjuna. Arjuna, however, tore it to pieces as it came toward him. Seeing his dart cut off, Bhishma reflected, "With a single bow, I could kill the Pandavas, if Vishnu had not been their protector. For two reasons, I will not fight with them. One is that they are protected by Lord Krishna, and the other is that Shikhandi stands in front of them. I cannot be killed on the battlefield. Such was the benediction given by my father Shantanu. He said that I would die only when I wanted too. Now I think that that time has come."

Reflecting like this, the demigods and rishis confirmed his meditation by saying, "Your departure from this world is close at hand, O King. Withdraw your heart from battle." With these words, a fragrant and auspicious breeze filled with water particles began to blow in all directions. In the heavens Bhishma heard the sounds of conchshell, drums and bugles. Showers of flowers then began to fall from the sky upon the Bhishma. All this was only seen by Bhishma who now thought of attaining the kingdom of God.

Meanwhile, the great warriors attacked Bhishma with greater boldness. Arjuna struck Bhishma in every part of his body, but Ganga's son did not waver the slightest. He returned those arrows and began once again to afflict the enemy ranks. Shikhandi and Arjuna maneuvered their chariots near the Grandsire. Arjuna once again cut his bow from his hand and also cut his banner from the chariot. Shantanu's son then picked up another bow, but that was also cut to pieces.

Repeatedly Arjuna cut all Bhishma's bows, and thus Bhishma no longer desired to fight with Arjuna. Arjuna began to pierce the Grandsire with hundreds of arrows as he stood on his chariot. Seeing Duhshasana near him, Bhishma said, "Just see, the great Bowman Arjuna is piercing me with thousands of arrows. I cannot be subjugated by the heavenly gods and asuras combined, what to speak of ordinary warriors of this world. These arrows that are piercing my body are not Shikhandi's but Arjuna's. Only he can cause me the pain I am presently feeling. These arrows are released with the power of the thunderbolt. They are like virulent poison, and they are entering deep into my body. Besides the wielder of the Gandiva bow, there is no one that can cause me this much pain."

Saying this much, Bhishma picked up a dart and hurled it at Arjuna. Partha, however, cut that weapon to pieces. Then Shantanu's son picked up a sword and shield to fight with Arjuna, but the son of Kunti shattered the sword and shield before the Grandsire could descend from his chariot. This feat was wonderful on the field of battle.

Then King Yudhisthira ordered his army, "All rush at Ganga's son! Do not be afraid!" With these words, the Pandava army assaulted Bhishma with their upraised weapons. Releasing hundreds of arrows, Arjuna pierced Bhishma in every part of his body. Indeed, there was not a two-fingered breadth of space where there was not an arrow. Mangled in this way, the aged grandsire of the Kuru dynasty fell from his chariot to the ground. Great sounds of lamentation were heard from the Kaurava divisions. When the grandsire fell from his chariot, the hearts of the Kauravas fell with him. It was as if one of the heavenly gods had fallen. He fell down from his chariot with his head facing the eastern direction. Knowing the sun was in an inauspicious course, he did not allow his soul to leave his body. Because his mortal frame was pierced with many arrows, he did not touch the ground. At that time, Bhishma looked divine. The clouds poured a cool shower, and the earth trembled. Seeing her son fallen from his chariot, Ganga sent rishis in swan-like form. Circumambulating him, they requested him not to leave his body until the sun had entered its northern course. He then spoke to them, "I will never pass from this world while the sun is in its southern route. I will proceed from this world when the sun changes to its northern passage." The celestial swans then again entered the heavens and informed Ganga of her son's decision.

When the great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, the foremost warrior, had fallen from his chariot, both armies ceased fighting. The Pandavas and the Shrinjayas uttered loud roars like bulls. The Kurus were overcome with grief. Duryodhana and Kripa sighed and wept tears of anguish. Duhshasana went to the division where Drona was fighting and informed him of the Bhishma's fall. Hearing the dreadful news, Drona fell from his chariot momentarily senseless. Upon regaining consciousness, he forbade his troops to fight with the Pandavas. Laying aside their armor, both the Pandavas and the Kurus came to Bhishma's side. They offered their obeisances to the Grandsire and stood with joined palms. He then spoke to them, "Welcome all you great heroes. I am joyous to see your sight before leaving this world." Bhishma's head had not been pierced with arrows and was hanging down. He requested the warriors present to fetch him a pillow. Quickly they brought him

pillows of the finest silk. However, Bhishma said, "O Kings, this is not a hero's pillow." He then requested Arjuna, "O Dhananjaya, I am in need of a pillow. Please give me a pillow as you think fit."

Stringing his bow tearfully, Arjuna filled the ground under Bhishma's head with many arrows. Laying his head upon that pillow fit for a warrior, Bhishma said, "You have given me a pillow and a bed that is worthy of a kshatriya. This is the way one should sleep on the battlefield. I will sleep on this bed until the sun takes its northern course."

Duryodhana, thinking to save Bhishma's life, brought many physicians to heal his grandfather's wounds, but Bhishma sent them all away, desiring death only. With the greatest respect, all the Pandavas and the Kauravas paid their respect to the eldest member of the Kuru family. They stationed guards to protect him from Rakshasas and carnivorous animals. Then they circumambulated him and returned to their tents.

When the night had passed away, the Pandavas and the Kurus came again to resting place of Grandfather Bhishma. Many people from Hastinapura had come to pay their last respects to the dying Bhishma. They were sprinkling flowers and sandalwood powder upon his body, and some were blowing on trumpets and some were blowing conchshells.

When the Pandavas and the Kauravas had surrounded Bhishma, the son of Ganga asked for some water. The Kings immediately brought many pitchers of water to quench his thirst. He refused them all and called for Arjuna. He said, "My body, covered with arrows, burns and my mouth is dry. You are an exalted Bowman and are able to give me water in a befitting way." Understanding his grandfather's mind, Arjuna picked up his Gandiva bow and placed upon it the parjanya weapon. He then pierced the earth causing a stream of water to quench his grandfather's thirst. Bhishma then addressed Arjuna again, "O mighty armed Arjuna, this feat is not so wonderful. With Lord Krishna as your ally, there is nothing in this world that you will not achieve. Narada has told me that you are none other than Nara, the ancient rishi of old, and that Krishna is Narayana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You are the greatest Bowman that has graced the earth and you are unequalled among men. I have tried repeatedly to convince Duryodhana of this fact, but he would not listen. Now, like a fool, he will lay on the Kurukshetra plain overcome by Bhima's mace."

Hearing these prophetic words, Duryodhana's heart saddened. Looking in his direction, Bhishma advised him, "Listen, O King, abandon your anger. You have seen how Arjuna has pierced the earth with his celestial weapon. There is none other who can perform such an act. Indeed, all the celestial arms are known to Arjuna as well as to Lord Krishna. There is no one else who possesses them. This Arjuna is superhuman and cannot be conquered. While the remnants of your brothers have not yet been killed, why don't you make peace with the Pandavas? As long as Krishna has not cast his wrathful glance upon your army, make peace. I speak this wisdom for your good. Give Yudhishthira his city of Indraprastha, and let all these monarchs return to their kingdoms. If you do not listen to my advice, then you will

have to lament your fate." Speaking these words out of affection for Duryodhana, Bhishma fell silent. Duryodhana could not accept his grandfather's counsel because of his wicked heart. Thus he was like a dying man refusing to take medicine.

After the Kauravas and the Pandavas had returned to their tents, Karna came to the Grandsire as he lay mortally wounded. He approached Bhishma and offered his obeisances. With a faltering voice and tears falling from his eyes, he said, "O chief of the Kurus, I am Radha's son, who you have always looked upon with anger."

Hearing Karna's voice, Bhishma opened his eyes and seeing the place deserted of men, he embraced Karna with one of his arms. He then said with great affection, "If you had not humbly come to me, things would have not gone well with you. Do you realize that you are Kunti's son and not Radha's? I have heard about this from Narada as well as Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa. Without doubt it is true. Honestly, I bear no hatred toward you. It was only for cooling your envy of the Pandavas that I spoke to you in such a way. Without any reason you have spoken ill of the Pandavas. Due to bad association with Duryodhana, you have become like him. Indeed, you are equal to Arjuna and Krishna in bowmanship. There is no doubt about this. Whatever anger I have had against you is gone. The heroic sons of Pandu are your brothers. Therefore, unite with them and let these hostilities end."

"What you have told me is true," Karna replied. "I am Kunti's son, but I have been raised by a suta. I was abandoned by Kunti to die. For so long I have enjoyed Duryodhana's wealth with my relatives. I dare not falsify it now. As Krishna is dear to the Pandavas, so Duryodhana is dear to me. I know well that Arjuna and Krishna are undefeatable in battle, but still it is my duty to try to kill Arjuna on behalf of my friend Duryodhana. Please give me your permission to fight. Please also forgive any offense which I may have committed against you out of foolishness."

"If you are not able to cast off this anger," Bhishma said, "then I give you permission to fight. Through Arjuna you will attain the regions of heaven. I have tried to make peace, but I have not succeeded. All good fortune to you. Go and fight." Having said this much, the Grandsire became silent. Karna then offered his obeisances to Bhishma and circumambulated him. He then proceeded to Duryodhana's tent.

Thus Ends the Tenth Chapter of the Bhishma Parva, Entitled, The Tenth Day of Hostilities; The Fall of the Grandsire Bhishma.

Thus Ends the Bhishma Parva to the Summary Study of the Mahabharata.

## Drona Parva

### Chapter One

#### The Eleventh Day of Rivalry;

#### Dronacharya Becomes Commander

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after the Kauravas had lamented the fall of the renowned Bhishma, what did my sons do, urged on by their fate? Indeed, the grandsire Bhishma was invincible and without a second on the front line of the army. Who did my son next chose to lead these famed divisions?

Sanjaya said: O King, after Bhishma had fallen on the battlefield, Duryodhana inquired from Karna, "Bhishma was our commander for ten days. He achieved lasting fame and killed thousands upon thousands of men. This was all done fairly. Now that he is about to ascend to the higher regions, who, O Karna, should be the commander in chief of our troops? Without a leader, this army, which is like a boat without a captain, will sink into the Pandava Ocean. Who, now, is capable to lead my forces to victory?"

Karna replied, "Anyone of the maharathis is certainly qualified to lead your forces. All of them are proficient in weaponry and are expert in arraying large armies. If one among them is chosen, then the others will feel offended. However, the preceptor Drona is senior and is the most revered. Among all the Kings and princes, there is not one who will not accept the leadership of this esteemed bowman. He is also your preceptor and worthy of your worship."

Agreeing with Karna's advice, Duryodhana went to Dronacharya who was standing in the midst of the troops. Offering obeisances to his preceptor, Duryodhana requested, "O sire, among our forces, you are senior by birth. You are born of noble parentage and are superior to us in learning and intelligence. By your ascetic penances, you have realized the eternality of Brahman. Your prowess on the battlefield exceeds all others in my army. With you as its protector, we will feel confident that we will cross the great Pandava ocean. O sinless one, take command of these eleven akshauhini divisions and, fighting in the forefront of my army, lead us to victory."

Drona said, "I am acquainted with the six branches of Veda, and I also know the science of Varnashrama. I possess the divine astras and know how to array large divisions. I will display all these virtues, for you are desiring victory. However, I will not be able to kill the Pandavas or Drupada's son, Dhristadyumna, for he is born to slay me."

After agreeing to take command of the huge divisions, Drona was formally installed in that position. He then prepared for the day's battle, and arranged the divisions in the form of a cart called Sakata. The Pandavas arranged their army in the formation of a crane called Kraunca. Before the battle began, Duryodhana went to Drona and requested a boon, "If you are inclined to give me a benediction, then I request that you capture Yudhisthira alive and bring him to me."

Drona replied, "Why do you want Yudhisthira alive? Would you not be content with his death? It is wonderful that no one wishes to see his death, and therefore, he is known as Ajatashatru. Even you bear this affection for him."

Duryodhana said, "If Yudhisthira were killed, I would still not be victorious. If Ajatashatru were slain, then Arjuna would annihilate my whole army. All of them cannot be killed even by the heavenly gods united. If Yudhisthira is brought here alive, then I will challenge him again at dice and send him to the forest for another thirteen years."

Understanding the vile intention of Gandhari's son, Drona said, "If Yudhisthira were not protected by Arjuna, then it is possible to capture him. However, Arjuna has become too powerful. It is true that I was his martial preceptor, but since that time he has received all the divine astras. He has even acquired celestial weapons from Lord Shiva and Indra. Therefore, he has become invincible. If Arjuna can be lured away from Yudhisthira, then it will be possible to capture the King. If Arjuna can be taken to another part of the battlefield, then without doubt, I will abduct Yudhisthira."

When Drona had agreed to this proposal, Duryodhana thought that victory was his. However, through spies, Yudhisthira learned of Duryodhana's plan and assembled his brothers as well as the other Kings that supported him. In their presence he requested Arjuna, "You have heard Duryodhana's plan which Drona will try to accomplish. This ruse cannot be carried out as long as you are close by. Therefore, always stay near me and protect me at all costs."

Arjuna replied, "Just as Drona's death will never happen at my hands, so, O King, I will never allow you to be captured by the enemy. The stars in the sky may disappear, or the earth may split into fragments, but still I will not allow Drona to seize you. Even if Indra himself leads Duryodhana's army, I will never allow you to be captured. As long as I am alive, O great King, you have no need to fear Drona. I have never spoken an untruth, nor have I ever made a vow that I could not keep."

After Arjuna had pledged Yudhisthira's protection, the army was made ready for combat. When the Kaurava host attacked the Pandava army, there was a great bloodbath on both sides. The invincible Drona began to afflict the Pandava sea with arrows that resembled thunderbolts of lightning. Coming up to challenge him was Yudhisthira supported by his vast army of rathis and maharathis. They challenged the preceptor Drona who rode on his golden chariot drawn by red horses.

While this encounter was taking place, Shakuni assaulted Sahadeva. He pierced the chariot, the standard and the charioteer with many sharp arrows. Laughing at the deceitful gambler's lack of prowess, Sahadeva cut the bow from Shakuni's hands, felled his standard and killed his charioteer. He then pierced the Gandhara King with sixty arrows. Shakuni jumped from his chariot, mace in hand and killed Sahadeva's chariot driver. Sahadeva also stepped down from his chariot with his mace and began to fight with the son of Suvala.

Meanwhile King Paurava attacked Abhimanyu and covered him with a curtain of arrows. Abhimanyu countered and pierced Paurava with seven shafts, felled his banner and pierced the chariot driver with three shafts. Then Arjuna's son placed on his bowstring an arrow capable of killing his enemy. However, Kritavarman cut the arrow and the bow from Abhimanyu's hands. Throwing aside the broken bow and arrow, the son of Arjuna took up a sword and shield, and descending from his chariot, ran at Paurava. Whirling his sword and shield, he jumped onto Paurava's chariot and knocked him unconscious. Abhimanyu raised the King up by his hair and was about to kill him. Seeing Paurava about to be slain, Jayadratha jumped from his chariot with sword and shield, challenging the son of Arjuna. Abhimanyu then left Paurava and jumped to the ground. Many warriors then released lances, arrows and scimitars to encompass the death of Subhadra's son. However, Abhimanyu cut all those weapons to pieces with his sword. There then ensued a battle between Jayadratha and the son of Arjuna that was fierce and wonderful. Those two warriors encircled each other and whittled at each others body thirsting for victory. When Jayadratha struck Abhimanyu's shield with his sword, it broke. With no weapon to fight with, the Sindhu King ran from the battlefield. Ascending his chariot, the son of Arjuna then began to scorch the Kaurava divisions.

Witnessing Jayadratha's defeat, Salya took up a deadly dart and threw it with all his strength at Abhimanyu. However, Arjuna's son caught that weapon in the air. Releasing that same weapon, it killed Salya's chariot driver and knocked Salya to the chariot floor. All the Pandavas cheered at Abhimanyu's victory and exclaimed, "Well done!, Well done!"

Salya then stepped down from his chariot and challenged Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu also stepped down from his chariot and rushed at Salya. However, Bhima appeared on the scene and asked Abhimanyu to step aside. Then those two bulls amongst the kshatriyas began to whirl their maces, which looked like streaks of lightning. Both iron maces had the power to slay hundreds of warriors at a time. Both warriors were extremely bitter, and both began to beat each other with fury. Although both managed to hit the other with their upraised maces, still neither appeared injured. Highly provoked they rushed at each other, and with all their might, they struck each other at the same time. Battered by a blow from Bhima's mace, Salya fell senseless to the earth. Bhima also fell from the blow of Salya's mace. At that time the revered chariot fighter, Kritavarman, appeared and took Salya on his chariot. Bhima then stood up and prepared once again to fight. Dismayed at the loss of Salya, that division of the Kaurava army retreated in fear.

Beholding the army broken, the son of Karna, Vrishasena, single handedly protected it. He released thousands of arrows and began to kill the Pandava chariot fighters and horsemen. Nakula's son Satanika assaulted Vrishasena and pierced him with ten arrows. The son of Karna, however, cut the royal banner and bow of Satanika. When this happened, the other sons of Draupadi challenged Vrishasena and covered him with weapons. Coming up to protect Karna's son was Ashvatthama. He quickly stopped the assault of Draupadi's sons. The Pandavas, with a desire to protect their sons, also came up to fight with Ashvatthaman. Both armies met and the battle was wonderful. Gradually the Pandava army began to break the front lines of the Kaurava host, and the warriors on Duryodhana's side began to flee the battlefield. Drona rebuked them, "Heroes do not run away. I will give you protection." Encouraged by the preceptor's words, that multitude of soldiers returned for battle.

Drona then ripped into the Pandava ranks and killed thousands of soldiers. Having penetrated deep into the Pandava army, Drona was looking for the opportunity to seize Yudhishthira. Kumara, a powerful warrior who was protecting Yudhishthira's chariot, stopped the advance of the preceptor by releasing a thousand arrows. Not tolerating that action, Drona severed the great warrior's head. As Drona was coming closer to Yudhishthira's chariot, Virata, Drupada, Satyaki, Singhasena and Vyaghradatta, the Panchala Prince attacked him. Vyaghradatta pierced Drona with fifty arrows and Singhasena also attacked him. However, Drona released from his mighty bow two broadheaded shafts that severed those warrior's heads. With no one to oppose him, Drona assaulted Yudhishthira. At this time loud cries were heard from the troops, "The King is slain! Today, Drona will surely capture Yudhishthira.!"

These exclamations were heard by Arjuna who quickly appeared on the scene filling the sky with the sound of his Gandiva bow. He was mowing down the Kaurava ranks causing a great carnage. Arjuna suddenly came upon Drona's division, and with his celestial weapons, he pierced every warrior which threw them into confusion. Intent on saving his elder brother, Arjuna was releasing arrows so fast that no one could tell when he pulled the arrow from the quiver, or when it was released from his bow. All this happened as fast as lightning. Seeing Arjuna's anger, both Drona and Duryodhana ordered the troop withdrawal for the day. The Shrinjayas and the Panchalas, filled with joy over Arjuna's triumph, began to blow on their conchshells and beat on drums.

In the Kaurava's camp, Duryodhana assembled all the kings to assess the day's events. In that assembly, Drona said, "I have told you that when Arjuna is near Yudhishthira, it will be impossible for me to capture him. Although all the great warriors fell upon Arjuna, our attempts were frustrated. Do not doubt what I say; Krishna and Arjuna are undefeatable. If, however, Arjuna can be separated from the King, then I will surely be able to seize him. Let someone challenge Arjuna and draw him to another part of the battlefield. The son of Kunti will not return till he has defeated his enemy. Meanwhile, while Partha is fighting with his opponent, I will take the opportunity to capture Yudhishthira. In Dhristadyumna's presence, I will bring King Yudhishthira under my control. This scheme will prove more fruitful than the defeat of the whole Pandava army."

Hearing Drona's plot, the Trigarta King, Susharman, volunteered, "In the past, we have been humiliated by Arjuna. My brothers and I have never injured him, yet he always seeks to kill us. Our hearts burn in anger, and we are not able to sleep at night. Tomorrow we will challenge him and take him to another part of the battlefield. We take this vow today that either we will kill Arjuna, or he will kill us. We will never retreat in battle. Myself, along with my brothers, Satyaratha, Satyavarman, Satyavrata and Satyeshu, will challenge Arjuna in battle and slay him. This is our promise!" Having made their resolutions, those great kings rested for the night and waited for dawn when they could fulfill their vows.

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Eleventh Day of Rivalry; Drona Becomes Commander.

### Chapter Commentary

It has become apparent to Duryodhana that he cannot defeat the Pandava army by fair means. Therefore, in his usual conniving way he is trying to defeat them by other methods. He took their kingdom by foul play in the gambling match, and now he wants to capture Yudhisthira and force him to gamble again. Drona, also, has taken the same mentality. Although Drona is a good man, by bad association he has become contaminated. Association is like a mirror. Whoever we associate with we will become like. If we associate with saintly persons, we become saintly, and if we associate with evil persons, we become evil. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness has been set up by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada to give common persons association with sadhus or saintly persons. By such association common persons can give up their bad habits and lead a pure life. It is stated by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, sadhu sanga, sadhu sanga-sarva shastre kaya, lava matra sandhu sanga, sarva siddhi haya, "The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success." (Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya 22.54)

Conversely, by lingering with evil hearted persons, one becomes contaminated. By too much association with Duryodhana, Drona has taken a similar mentality.

## Chapter Two

### The Twelfth Day at Kurukshetra;

#### The Fall of King Bhagadatta

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, my army seems incapable of bearing the Gandiva bow. That chariot, which has Vishnu for its driver and Dhananjaya for its warrior, cannot be conquered by the gods and asuras combined. How can the Pandavas meet defeat when they are protected by the wielder of the Sarnga bow (Krishna)? O Suta, the divine feats of Vasudeva are unequalled by anyone on earth. While Krishna was being brought up in Nanda Maharaja's home, He made the might of His arms known to the world. He killed the rakshasi Putana while still a small child. In His infancy He also killed Kamsa's friend, Trinavarta, and slew the Keshi demon on the Yamuna bank. This horse was equal to the celestial steed Uchaishravas. In His childhood He also slew a great asura in the form of a bull. The divine son of Devaki has also killed Pralamba, Naraka, Jambha and Mura who were the terror of the heavenly gods. And also Kamsa, who was protected by Jarasandha, was slain by Krishna with His bare hands. Krishna then slew the Surasena King, Sunaman, who retained a full akshauhini division. Lord Krishna caused Jarasandha's death, who had elephant-like strength. He also hurled into the sea the demoniac city of Saubha which was owned by the great Shalva. He has defeated the Angas, the Vangas, the Kalingas, the Magadhas, the Kasis, the Koshalas, the Vatsyas, the Gargyas, the Karushas, and the Paundras. He, who has lotus petal eyes, has also defeated the Avantis, the Southerners, the Mountaineers, the Kambhojas, the Pandyas, the Trigartas, the Malavas, as well as the Yavanas. He has defeated the great Indra and Varuna in battle, and He has bewildered the creator of this universe, Lord Brahma. We have never heard of any king who was able to defeat Him. O Sanjaya, we personally experienced Krishna's universal form in our royal court before these hostilities began. O Suta, there can be no end to the infinite prowess of Hrishikesha. Will that Vasudeva, who the rishis describe as the Father of all, fight for the Pandavas? Will that Supreme Lord call upon His family members to assist Him? Will the heroic Samba, Pradyumna, Gada, Akrura, Carudeshna and Sarana take their weapons and fight with my sons? Will the Yadu host and Vrishni houses bring their wrath against my wicked son? Will Balarama, the carrier of the mace and plough, come to the Pandava's assistance? If this does happen, then my sons will be in greater danger. O Sanjaya, if Vasudeva puts on His armor, there will none amongst us who can withstand Him. Where there is Krishna, there will certainly be victory and fame. Krishna and Arjuna are none other than Narayana and Nara. O Suta, please tell me how the battle progressed, and how ultimately the great Drona fell from his chariot.

Sanjaya said: O King, I can see everything with my inner vision. Listen as I describe how the preceptor Drona was slain by the invincible Dhristadyumna in the presence of all warriors. When the night had passed, Drona arrayed the troops in the formation called Garuda. In Garuda's mouth was the powerful preceptor himself. The head of Garuda was Duryodhana supported by the remnants of his brothers.

Kritavarman and Kripa formed the two eyes of that gigantic bird. Bhurishrava, Salya, Somadatta, and Bahlika, surrounded by a full akshauhini division, became the right wing of that formation. Vinda and Anuvinda, Sudakshina, the Kambhoja ruler, and Ashvatthama formed the left wing of the huge bird. In the midst of that army stood Bhagadatta, the King of Pragjyotishapura. He was riding on his invincible elephant, Supritika. He was surrounded by many Kings from the mountainous regions. The Samsaptakas, so named because they took a vow to either conquer or die, were arrayed in a formation like a half moon. They were headed by King Susharman and his brothers. They were intent on killing Arjuna or dying in the attempt. Seeing this impenetrable formation, Yudhishthira arrayed his troops in a half circle.

When the day's combat commenced, the Trigartas challenged Arjuna to battle. When the Samsaptakas saw Arjuna coming toward them, they were filled with joy and sent up loud shouts. The whole sky was filled with their vibrations, and they rushed at Arjuna's beautiful chariot which was driven by the lotus-eyed Lord Krishna. Smiling all the while, Arjuna said to Krishna, "Just see, O son of Devaki, the Trigarta brothers, who are about to be slain in battle. They are joyous at a time when they should be lamenting." After saying this, Arjuna took up his conch, the Devadatta, and blew it forcefully. Terrified, the Samsaptakas no longer wore a cheerful smile, but stood paralyzed and motionless. All their animals stopped, and with wide open eyes they passed stool and urine simultaneously. After the Samsaptakas had regained their proper consciousness, they attacked Arjuna. They released thousands of arrows to encompass Arjuna's death. The son of Kunti, however, cut those arrows to pieces, and with a broad headed arrow cut off the leather gloves of Susharman's brother Suvahu. In return, Sudharman, Sudhanvan, and Suvahu pierced Arjuna with ten arrows each. Enraged, Arjuna killed Sudhanvan's horses, and then he cut off his head that was graced with a beautiful turban. With the fall of that hero, the rest of the warriors fled away in fear.

King Susharman quickly rallied his troops and reminded them of their vow. They once more returned to challenge Arjuna. Seeing their heroic attempt, Arjuna said to Hrishikesha, "Urge the horses, O Krishna, towards the Samsaptakas. They will not give up the battle without dying. Today, I will kill all these warriors like a forest fire consumes trees." Approaching Arjuna, that multitude of warriors released thousands of arrows covering the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna again blew on his conch, and released a weapon called Tvashtara. This weapon created the illusion of many thousands of Krishna's and Arjuna's. Confused by the illusion, the Samsaptakas began to kill each other thinking that they were Krishna and Arjuna. They pierced each other saying, "There is Arjuna! This one is Krishna!" Uttering such loud shouts, they killed each other. When the illusion disappeared, the remnants of the army rushed at Arjuna like moths entering fire. When their weapons filled the sky, Krishna questioned Arjuna, "Because of this dense darkness, O Partha, I cannot see you. Are you alive, O slayer of the enemy?" Not responding to Lord Krishna, Arjuna invoked the Vayavya astra that blew away those large numbers of weapons. This weapon presided over by the wind god then began to carry away vast numbers of horses, elephants and chariot drivers like the wind carries away dry leaves. While in that state, Arjuna severed their heads, arms and legs. So great was the carnage that blood flowed like a river, and the foot soldiers were ankle deep in bloody mud.

Meanwhile, Drona was also causing a great slaughter of the Pandava troops. When Yudhishthira saw Drona coming near him, he informed Dhristadyumna, "O son of Drupada, here comes Drona who is intent on capturing me. Take precaution that he will not abduct me." Dhristadyumna replied, "O King, you will never be touched by the preceptor. Today, I shall check his progress and slay his followers. As long as I am alive, you will not need to feel any anxiety. I have taken birth for Drona's death, and under no circumstances will he defeat me."

Having made this promise, Drupada's son assaulted Drona, scattering his mighty arrows. Seeing Drona checked, Durmuka came up to challenge Dhristadyumna and overpowered him with many weapons. While those two heroes were fighting, Drona began to crush Yudhishthira's divisions with his celestial weapons. Then Yudhishthira, seeing Drona near him, released hundreds of arrows to stop his progress. Satyajit, whom Arjuna had appointed to protect Yudhishthira, released a celestial weapon that pierced Drona in many parts of his body. He then lacerated the preceptor's chariot driver with five arrows and his horses with seven. With his powerful weapons Satyajit cut the royal insignia from Drona's chariot and sent up a loud roar. Beholding the feats of the mighty Satyajit, Drona decided that the Panchala prince should be sent to the other world. Drona shattered his bow and arrows and pierced him with ten shafts. Taking up another bow, Satyajit struck Drona with thirty arrows. The mighty car warrior Vrika then pierced Drona in the chest with sixty arrows. Not tolerating this impudence, Drona shattered the bows from the hands of Vrika and Satyajit. With a broad headed shaft, Drona killed Vrika, and with a crescent shaped arrow, he severed Satyajit's head. Drona began to slaying the foremost Pandava chariot fighters one after another. With nine arrows, Drona overthrew Dridhasena, and with another twenty arrows, he killed Kshema, the leader of a chariot division. Making his way toward Yudhishthira, he killed the mighty Kshatradeva and another Pandava general name Vasudeva. Seeing the Pandava heroes vanquished one after another, King Yudhishthira fled to another part of the battlefield to avoid capture.

While this was going on, Duryodhana rushed against Bhima. Seeing his arch enemy coming toward him, surrounded by his elephant divisions, Bhima licked his lips. Assaulting the elephant army, Bhima began to penetrate the bodies of those huge beasts with his powerful arrows. Covered with hundreds of arrows, those mighty creatures either fled or fell to the ground dead. Not tolerating Bhima's success, Duryodhana struck him with many sharp arrows. Bhima in turn shattered his bow and royal banner, and sent up a loud roar like a lion. Coming up to protect Duryodhana was the Anga King riding on his elephant. With a long shafted arrow, Bhima split the elephant's head between his two eyes. Passing through the elephants head and body, that arrow entered the earth. Stopped in his tracks, the elephant fell to the earth deprived of its life. As the elephant was falling, Bhima cut off the head of the Mleccha king with a crescent shaped arrow. Witnessing Bhima's display of power, the elephant army broke and ran from the battlefield.

When those troops had been broken by Vrikodara, the ruler of Pragjyotishapura, Bhagadatta, advanced against Bhima. He was riding on his white elephant Supritika and was furious. Seeing him coming Bhima got down from his chariot. Within a twinkling of an eye, that mighty elephant crushed, with his two front legs, Bhima's

chariot and horses. Bhima ran under the elephant and began to pound it with his bare arms. The elephant, pained by Bhima blows, began to whirl around trying to trample Bhima with his feet. The son of Kunti then came from underneath that huge creature and stood facing it. Supritika grabbed Bhima around the neck with his trunk and threw him down to the ground. Upon being picked up again, Bhima freed himself, and once more ran under the elephant. This elephant was not ordinary. It seemed invincible and could not be slain even by Bhima. Bhima then ran out from underneath the elephant to a distant place waiting for the arrival of his own elephant army. Soon, the King of the Dasarnas, riding on his mammoth elephant, came forward and attacked Supritika. Supritika, whirling around, ripped open the elephant's flank and killed it outright. Then Bhagadatta, with seven lances, killed the Dasarna King as he fell with his elephant.

Witnessing the King's death, Yudhisthira surrounded Bhagadatta with his foremost chariot fighters and began to afflict that elephant with many arrows. The ruler of Pragjyotishapura was unmoved by the large number of maharathis that surrounded him. He urged his elephant toward the chariot of Satyaki. The gigantic elephant pushed his way out of the circle of chariots, and with his trunk seized the car of Satyaki. Satyaki quickly jumped to safety, but the elephant raised his chariot high in the sky and smashed it to the ground horses and all. The mighty elephant then began to grab the chariot fighters and throw them to the ground. Bhima once again attacked the huge elephant, rushing toward it on his beautiful chariot. However, Supritika covered the horses with water from his trunk, and the horses reared and took Bhima away from the battlefield. The son of Kriti, Ruchiparvan, mounted on his chariot, quickly assaulted Bhagadatta, scattering arrows in all directions. However, King Bhagadatta dispatched that great warrior to Yamaraja's abode with a single shaft. Endeavoring to stop Supritika were Abhimanyu, the sons of Draupadi, Chekitana, Dhristaketu and Yuyutsu. When those great warriors came within reach of the elephant, Supritika stepped on Yuyutsu's horses, crushing them into a heap of bones, flesh and blood. The gigantic elephant then grabbed the chariot driver and dashed him to the ground, instantly killing him. Yuyutsu ran away to a distant place completely helpless.

Beholding in the distance a huge dust cloud, and hearing the wailing of the troops, Arjuna spoke to the lotus eyed Krishna, "O slayer of Madhu, it appears the ruler of Pragjyotishapura has created a great slaughter among our troops. I think that he is the foremost elephant warrior in this world. His elephant appears to be divine, and no other elephant can compete with it. It seems to be immune to all weapons, and fire cannot harm it. Without doubt it will destroy our army if not stopped. Except for us there is no one who is capable of subduing that creature. Go quickly to Bhagadatta for I will kill him and his great white elephant also."

Following His devotee's order, Lord Krishna began to guide the chariot in the direction of King Bhagadatta. However, the Samsaptakas again challenged Arjuna to battle and would not let him go. Arjuna decided to finish the task of killing the Samsaptakas, and he invoked the Brahma weapon, upon which hundreds of thousands of arrows began to rain from the heavens. Piercing those soldiers, it severed their arms, legs, and heads. Falling from their chariots, their horses and

their elephants, those warriors were deprived of their lives. Such was the power of this weapon. Gigantic elephants as huge as hills were seen prostrated on the battlefield with their sides and heads split open and gushing with flesh and blood. Having killed thousands upon thousands of warriors with his celestial weapons, Arjuna ordered Lord Krishna, "Go towards Bhagadatta!"

Lord Krishna then urged the horses toward Bhagadatta, but again Arjuna was challenged by Susharman. In perplexity, Arjuna inquired from the lotus eyed Lord, "O thou of unfading glory, this Susharman again challenges me to battle. Our army is being broken to the north by Drona and again by Bhagadatta. Shall I slay the Samsaptakas or save my divisions from further danger." Without answering Arjuna, Lord Krishna turned the chariot around and directed the horses toward the Samsaptakas. Arjuna pierced Susharman, the Trigarta King, in the chest with seven arrows. Susharman countered by releasing a dart at Arjuna and a lance at Lord Krishna. Arjuna quickly shattered the dart, and the lance and then with his celestial weapons caused a downpour of weapons upon Susharman's chariot knocking him senseless. He then scattered the Samsaptaka forces, and turning his chariot toward the north, he made his way toward Bhagadatta.

When King Bhagadatta saw the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, he greeted them with a shower of weapons. Pulling back the string of the Gandiva bow, Arjuna released arrows that pulverized those weapons before they could reach him. Bhagadatta urged his elephant forward to trample the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Beholding that elephant coming toward him, Lord Keshava quickly moved the chariot out of the way. Although Arjuna had the opportunity to kill the King and his elephant from the back, he did not do so, remembering the rules of warfare. Supritika then came upon other elephants and chariots and decimated them all. Arjuna could not tolerate this and again attacked Bhagadatta. The king of Pragjyotishapura then pierced Lord Krishna with iron tipped arrows decorated with golden feathers. They appeared like meteors blazing through the sky. Those arrows, released from Bhagadatta's bow, pierced the transcendental body of Lord Krishna and entered the earth. Of course, no weapon of this material world can harm the transcendental body of the Lord for His body is made of sat cid ananda or eternality, knowledge and bliss. Playing the part of an ordinary living being, the Lord allowed His body to be pierced, but since the spiritual body of the Lord is not under the influence of the material laws, there is no question of pain or death coming to the Lord.

Arjuna then severed Bhagadatta's bow and killed the men that were protecting the elephant's legs. King Bhagadatta then released fourteen javelins that were as bright as the rays of the sun. However, Arjuna cut each of those into three pieces, and then Kunti's son shattered the armor in which the elephant was encased. The King of Pragjyotishapura quickly released an iron dart that was decked with gold. Arjuna cut it in two. He then cut off the king's royal umbrella and banner, and pierced him with ten arrows. Bhagadatta became enraged and released two lances that knocked Arjuna's crown slightly from his head. Arjuna then placed his crown on his head properly and yelled at Bhagadatta, "Take a last look at this world, O great King!" Enraged at Arjuna's words, Bhagadatta took up a golden bow and released hundreds

of arrow against Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Before those arrows reached the chariot, Partha shattered them and the bow, and pierced Bhagadatta with seventy-two arrows. Overcome with excessive pain, the Pragjyotishapura ruler was furious. Using celestial mantras, he turned his elephant hook into a Vaishnava weapon and hurled it to finish Arjuna's life. However, Lord Krishna rose up in the chariot, and the weapon hit His chest turning into a garland of flowers. Arjuna then chided the lotus eyed Lord, "O Hrishikesh, you are only to guide my horses and not take part in this battle. Why are You not keeping Your vow? If I am in a dangerous situation, You may protect me, but not when I am competent to defeat the enemy. You know well that I am able to destroy the hosts of gods and demons."

"Listen, O Partha," Lord Krishna replied, "to the history and secret behind this weapon. Once upon a time Mother Earth came to Me seeking a benediction for her son, the demon Narakasura. She asked for the benediction of the Vaishnava weapon by which her son could not be slain, even by the gods and demons united. Agreeing to her proposal, I handed over that invincible weapon by which Naraka was able to conquer the three worlds. This Narakasura or Bhaumasura took the earrings of Aditi and conquered Indra. He also conquered a portion of heavenly mount Meru. He then went to Varuna and conquered him, taking his very valuable umbrella. When complaints came to me in Dvaraka, I went to Pragjyotishapura and killed this Bhaumasura. That Vaishnava weapon has been handed down to Bhagadatta, and he has released it to kill you. No one can defeat that weapon except Myself. It is for this reason that I have baffled it breaking my promise. Now that Bhagadatta has been deprived of his weapon, his elephant can now be slain, and also you can kill the King as I killed his father for the benefit of the world."

Understanding the situation, Arjuna smiled and then rained upon Bhagadatta a shower of arrows. With a long shafted arrow, Arjuna pierced Supritika's frontal globe splitting his head in two. Although repeatedly urged by Bhagadatta, the elephant wouldn't move. With his limbs paralyzed, he fell down to the earth deprived of life. As the elephant fell, the son of Kunti released a crescent headed arrow that pierced Bhagadatta's chest. When struck by this weapon, the ruler of Pragjyotishapura loosened from his grasp his bow and arrow, and fell from his elephant. The turban that was decorating his head fell off like a lotus petal falling from the lotus flower. While laying on the ground, decorated with golden garlands, beautiful clothes and ornaments, Bhagadatta's dead body looked wonderful. Arjuna then descended from his chariot and circumambulated the great hero. He offered his obeisances to him, and then ascending the chariot once again began to afflict the Kaurava ranks.

After Bhagadatta had been killed, two of Shakuni's brothers attacked Arjuna. They were Vrishaka and Achala. One brother released arrows in front of Arjuna, and the other released arrows from behind. Arjuna killed the horses and charioteer of Vrishaka and then killed five hundred Gandhara warriors rushing toward him with upraised weapons. The mighty Vrishaka then mounted Achala's chariot, and together they began to assault Arjuna. When those warriors were standing side by side on their chariot, Arjuna killed them both with a single arrow. Having seen Lord Krishna and Arjuna at the last moments of their lives, they attained a divine destination.

Not tolerating his brothers' death, Shakuni came to fight with Arjuna. He was adept in mystic illusion, and caused thousands upon thousands of clubs, iron balls, rocks, Satagnis, darts, maces, bludgeons, scimitars, lances, mallets, axes, razors and arrows to fall upon Lord Krishna and Arjuna's chariot. Arjuna then saw asses, camels, buffaloes, tigers, lions, carnivorous deer, leopards, bears, wolves, vultures and Rakshasas rushing at him. Releasing his celestial weapons, Partha pierced all those animals, and they fell to the earth screaming in terror. Then a darkness covered the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna, from which loud voices chastised the son of Kunti. However, Jishnu released the Jyotisha weapon which sent out light in all directions. When the darkness was gone, huge tidal waves appeared. To dry up those waters, Arjuna released the Aditya weapon. When those illusions were dispelled, Shakuni, having no more mystic powers to display, fled the battlefield.

Meanwhile, the renowned Drona was causing a great slaughter. Coming up to challenge him were Dhristadyumna, Satyaki and Bhima. Shattering those great warrior's bows, Drona continued to kill thousands upon thousands of men. Arjuna was gradually making his way toward Drona to challenge him. He was leaving a path of destruction wherever he went. The back of the Kaurava army was broken, and they all sent up screams of anguish.

Hearing the wails of the troops, Karna came up to challenge Arjuna. Karna invoked the Agneya weapon and released it at Arjuna, but Partha countered that weapon and released his own arrows. Dhristadyumna, Satyaki and Bhima also rushed at Karna, but Karna baffled their progress and pierced them with three arrows each. Those warriors then released darts at Radha's son, but Karna cut those arrows to pieces with his own weapons. Arjuna then pierced Karna with seven arrows, and with six more arrows, he killed one of Karna's brothers named Satrunjaya. He then killed two more brothers of Karna, one of which was named Vipatha. Arjuna severed his head in the very sight of Karna. With sword in hand Bhima jumped down from his chariot, and killed ten chariot fighters that supported Karna. Mounting his chariot, Bhima then pierced Karna with ten arrows. Dhristadyumna, taking up a sword, killed the ruler of the Naishadas, Vrihatkshatra. He also killed a king named Charmavarman. Satyaki, taking up another bow, pierced Karna with ten arrows and cut his bow from his hand. Trying to save Karna from certain death, Duryodhana, Drona and Jayadratha came to fight with Satyaki.

The fighting became fierce, and all the combatants fought reckless of their lives. Infantry soldiers fought with infantry soldiers, and chariot fighters fought with chariot fighters. Those fighting on elephants also fought with chariot fighters, and also foot soldiers fought with horsemen. Soon the slaughter became too great to behold. The whole battlefield became a bloody nightmare as the bodies of horses, elephants and men lay everywhere. Heads with bulged out eyes lay here and there with their teeth pressed to their lips in rage. The battlefield was so thick with dead bodies that it became impassable, and the chariots, instead of riding on the ground, began to ride upon slain warriors. When both armies were badly mangled and extremely tired, the sun set on the horizon, and with it the sounds of the conchshell indicating the end of the day's engagement. Slowly both armies retired to their tents and rested for the night.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Twelfth Day at Kurukshetra; the Fall of Bhagadatta.

### Chapter Commentary

Arjuna and the Samsaptakas fought a fierce battle. Whenever Susharman, the Trigarta King, challenged Arjuna, Arjuna would not turn his back. This was the quality of warriors in the Vedic age. The rules of warfare were there for those who wanted to attain a higher destination after this life. One may question, "Who is witness of my activities?" The answer is that the demigods are witnesses to our activities, and they testify to that in the court of Yamaraja after one leaves this body. If one dies following the rules of combat, one is elevated to the heavenly realm, and if one has cheated on the rules, he does not attain heaven, but is punished by Yamaraja, the justice of death. It is a shame that today's armies don't follow the rules of Vedic warfare. If the heads of state challenge each other and fight in a secluded place away from the general populace, then innocent lives are saved, and if a president dies facing the enemy on the battlefield, then he will be elevated to a higher destination.

### Chapter Three

The Thirteenth Day at Kurukshetra;

The Death of Abhimanyu

Dhritarastra said: After the fall of the great Bhagadatta, O Sanjaya, what was the state of my troops? I think that Dhananjaya himself is sufficient to destroy my army. Tell me, O Suta, what happened on the thirteenth day of the great battle.

Sanjaya said: O King, your troops, broken by Arjuna's prowess and not able to capture Yudhisthira, were considered defeated. As they retired for the night they could only remember the countless merits of Arjuna and his friendship with the lotus eyed Krishna. They rested that night as if cursed and spoke little to each other. When the morning came, Duryodhana went to Drona and spoke harshly, "O best of the brahmanas, behold the great slaughter of my troops by the sons of Pritha. Allowing this to happen, surely you have marked us down as men to be destroyed. Even though you had the opportunity, still, you did not seize Yudhisthira. Without doubt, one who falls within your sight, cannot escape even if aided by the heavenly

lords combined, much less the insignificant Pandavas. You have promised me a benediction, but you could not fulfill it. One of noble character like yourself is always truthful to his vow in all circumstances."

Thus chided by Duryodhana, Bharadvaja's son felt greatly ashamed. Replying to the King, he said, "O Duryodhana, I have endeavored to my best ability to capture Yudhisthira. However, as long as the Pandava army is protected by Arjuna, it cannot be defeated by the combined forces of the world. Wherever there is Lord Krishna, the creator of this universe, and wherever there is Arjuna, the son of Kunti, there has not been one, nor is there one now, nor will there be one in the future, who can defeat them. Truly I have always told you this, and it shall not be otherwise. Today, I can promise you that one of the adhirathas on the Pandava's side will die. I will form an array that even devas cannot penetrate. It is known as the Chakravyuha. It will be successful only if Arjuna is taken away from the battlefield. Arjuna knows the art of penetrating this formation, and it will not succeed as long as he is present."

Sanjaya continued: After Drona had spoken these words, the Samsaptakas challenged Arjuna, taking him to the southern side of the battlefield. In Arjuna's absence, Drona arrayed the troops in the form of a Chakra (wheel). Abhimanyu, at Yudhisthira's command, penetrated the formidable arrangement and killed thousands of your troops. Having achieved the most difficult feats, at last he was surrounded by six great maharathis. In the end he was extremely fatigued due to battle and was slain by Duhshasana's son. With this great victory, your troops withdrew for the night.

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, hearing of the unfair slaughter of Arjuna's son, my heart breaks. Cruel, indeed, are the duties of the kshatriyas in that cowardly men desiring sovereignty unfairly killed a young boy with their mighty weapons. O Sanjaya, tell me how this fearless youth was defeated by my forces by entering into the chakravyuha.

Sanjaya said: O King, I will describe to you in detail what you are asking me. Listen, O Monarch, with attention as I describe how Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, fought with the great maharathis as if they were toys, but in the end was slain by them. Be still, O King, I shall speak to you of the great slaughter of your kinsmen.

Sanjaya continued: The Pandavas are invincible and are above all fatigue. In righteousness, in actions, in family tradition, in intelligence, in achievements, in fame, in prosperity, there never was and there never will be a King such as Yudhisthira. In the front line of the battle, the powerful Lord Shiva, the son of Jamadagni, Parashurama, and the second son of Kunti, Bhima are spoken of as equals. As far the wielder of the Gandiva bow, Arjuna, is concerned, I do not see an equal to him anywhere on earth or in heaven. Six qualities are ever present in the son of Madri, Nakula: reverence for superiors, worship of the brahmanas, humility, self control, handsome features and heroism. In knowledge of the scriptures, gravity, sweetness of temper, righteousness and prowess, the heroic Sahadeva is equal to the Asvini-kumara demigods.

All the good qualities that are found in Lord Krishna and the Pandavas are found in Abhimanyu alone. In firmness, he was equal to Yudhisthira; in good conduct, he was equal to Lord Krishna; in achievements, he was equal to Bhimasena; in knowledge of the scriptures, in prowess with the bow and arrow, and in beauty of person, he was equal to Dhananjaya. In humility, he was equal to Nakula and Sahadeva.

Sanjaya continued: O King, the preceptor then arranged his forces in the array known as chakravyuha. The petals of that formation were the invincible maharathis such as Drona, Karna, Salya, Kripa, Ashvatthama, Duryodhana, Jayadratha, Duhshasana and Bhurishrava. Protecting those division leaders were millions upon millions of troops.

The Pandavas headed by Bhima then approached that impenetrable array protected by Bharadwaja's son. Assisting him were Satyaki, Chekitana, Dhristadyumna, Kuntibhoja, Drupada, Abhimanyu, Kshatrardharman, Vrihatkshatra, Dhristaketu, Nakula and Sahadeva, Ghatotkacha, the powerful Yudhamanyu, the undefeated Shikhandi, Uttamaujas, Virata and the five sons of Draupadi. All came forward to fight with the preceptor Drona, but all were pushed back like the waves of the ocean attacking the beech. The Pandavas were unable to stand before him as he released his deadly arrows. The strength of Drona's arms was unbearable, and he was defeating them separately and all together. Regarding Drona as invincible, Yudhisthira put a heavy burden on Abhimanyu. Addressing Abhimanyu, who was not inferior to Vasudeva, the King requested, "O child, fight in such a way that Arjuna will not rebuke us upon returning from battle with the Samsaptakas. None of the warriors here know how to break this circular formation which is about to devour my divisions. Only Krishna, Arjuna, Pradyumna and yourself know how to pierce that array. O mighty armed one, there is no fifth person that can be found to accomplish such a feat. O Abhimanyu, grant us this benediction. Take up your arms and destroy this formation before Arjuna's return."

"I will penetrate this chakravyuha formed by Drona," Abhimanyu replied, "and gain victory for my father and my uncles. My father, Arjuna, has taught me the key to penetrate this array. However, I do not know how to escape from it if I fall into danger."

"O foremost of all warriors," Yudhisthira requested, "break this formation just once. We will follow you and give you protection. Have no fear for once inside that great formation, we will shatter it to pieces."

"Today," Abhimanyu replied, "I will penetrate Drona's invincible formation, and you shall behold large divisions slain by me, a mere boy. If anyone, encountering me, escapes with his life, I shall not regard myself as Arjuna's son. Today I will destroy the whole Kaurava army."

Abhimanyu then ordered his charioteer to proceed toward Drona. His charioteer, Sumitra, then advised the intelligent son of Arjuna, "A heavy burden has been placed upon you by the Pandavas. You should carefully ascertain whether or not you can bear such a burden. The preceptor Drona is a master of superior weapons and

mature in battle. You are still a youth and have been brought up in luxury unaccustomed to the front lines of battle."

Laughing all the while, Abhimanyu said to his charioteer, "O Sumitra, who is this Drona? Who are any of these warriors of mortal frame. I have the courage to encounter Indra himself what to speak of all these common warriors assembled here. Endowed with the vitality and strength of my uncle Krishna and my father Arjuna, I do not waver at the thought of challenging anyone." Disregarding the words of his charioteer, Abhimanyu ordered, "Maneuver this chariot towards the preceptor Drona!"

Thus commanded, the charioteer urged the horses toward the front line of the battle. The Pandavas followed behind him desiring also to enter that powerful formation. Beholding him coming towards them, the Kauravas sent up loud roars and attacked him with all their strength. Arjuna's son was encased in golden mail, and his royal insignia bore the sign of a Karnikara tree. He fearlessly encountered Drona like a lion attacks a herd of elephants. The Kaurava warriors tried desperately to stop Abhimanyu, but within Drona's sight, Subhadra's son pierced that powerful formation and split it open. Endeavoring to close the open gap, large divisions of elephants, chariots and horsemen challenged Arjuna's son. They shouted loudly at him, "Wait, Wait! Stand and fight!" However, the aggressive Abhimanyu, coursing the battlefield, killed all those warriors who challenged him. With his mighty weapons, Arjuna's son cut off their heads, arms and legs as they approached him. Although the enemy rushed at him with great speed and were armed with every kind of weapon, their approach was like moths coming close to fire. Abhimanyu was severing the heads of the leading chariot fighters, and their empty chariots were running wild over the battlefield. Elephant divisions were slaughtered together and fell upon the infantry crushing their ranks. These huge beasts then formed a barrier between Abhimanyu and the enemy force, so great was the slaughter. Severed heads littered the ground, their eyes bulging from their sockets. Armless and headless trunks were lying here and there covered with blood and dust. There were countless fallen heroes who were covered with golden armor, garlands, sandalwood paste and fragrant oils. Many heroes lay with their tongues rolling out, and their eyes detached from their sockets, and others lay with their intestines and livers drawn out by Abhimanyu's arrows. Abhimanyu crushed the Kaurava ranks and caused them to flee from the battlefield.

Upon witnessing the rout of his army, Duryodhana was furious and assaulted Subhadra's son. Knowing that the King could not defeat this young boy, Drona ordered Ashvatthama, Kripa, Salya, Karna, Kritavarman, Shakuni, Brihadvala, Bhurishrava, Sala, Paurava and Vrishasena to protect Duryodhana. Rushing at Arjuna's son, they released their shower of arrows and quickly took away the King. They took him away like one trying to snatch a food morsel from a hungry lion. Abhimanyu challenged each of those warriors and covered them with his arrows. He then sent up a loud roar of victory. Not tolerating such action, all the great warriors released their weapons intending to kill Arjuna's son. However, Abhimanyu shattered those arrows before they reached him. Failing in the attempt to pierce him, all the great maharathis covered him with more arrows hoping to frighten him away.

Abhimanyu, however, countered those weapons and pierced each of the great warriors with three arrows.

The son of King Asmaka was able to come within close range of Abhimanyu and pierce him with ten arrows. Abhimanyu countered those arrows, and with ten arrows of his own killed his enemies horses and charioteer. Abhimanyu then cut off the arms and head of that powerful hero. When Karna came within reach, Abhimanyu pierced his armor with his blood sucking arrows. Penetrating his body, they entered the earth. Karna, struck senseless, fell to the floor of his chariot. Abhimanyu covered the battlefield with great speed, challenging the great warriors and defeating them all. He came upon the ruler of Madras, Salya, and covered him with golden arrows. Struck in this way, the ruler of Madras fainted away and was taken from the battlefield.

Witnessing Abhimanyu's victory, the demigods, the Pitris, the Charanas and the Siddhas sang his glories from the heavens. Meanwhile, Salya's brother assaulted Abhimanyu like a tempest. He covered him with many arrows and sent up a loud roar. In return, Abhimanyu released hundreds of arrows that killed his horses and charioteer, severed his royal standard, cut off the wheels and canopy of that car, and shattered all his weapons to pieces. Abhimanyu then severed the head of Salya's brother, and with this action all the supporting troops fled away in fear.

After rallying the troops, many great warriors rushed at Abhimanyu screaming, "Today, you shall not escape with your life!" Smiling all the while, Arjuna's son tormented those warriors with the weapons he had received from Krishna and Arjuna. Disregarding the heavy burden placed upon him by Yudhisthira, he fearlessly released his arrows. Like Arjuna, his bow was constantly drawn in a circle. No one could tell when he drew the arrow from the quiver and when it was released from the bow. Witnessing Abhimanyu's prowess, the other Pandavas took no part in the battle, but acted only as spectators.

Duryodhana was maddened to see the rout of his army. He urged the great maharathis as follows, "The preceptor, Drona, out of affection does not wish to kill Arjuna's son. No one can escape Drona's wrath when he is provoked. Arjuna is the preceptor's disciple, and this is Arjuna's son. Drona looks upon him with pride and does not wish to kill him. It is for this reason that this foolish boy is victorious. I order all of you to crush him."

When ordered in this way, Duhshasana said to his brother, "O monarch, I take an oath that I will slay Arjuna's son within the very sight of the Pandavas. I will devour Abhimanyu like Rahu devours the sun. When the two Krishnas hear of Abhimanyu's death, they will also die out of lamentation. Once they are dead, it will be easy to defeat the rest of the Pandavas. With the death of this one person, we will attain victory."

Saying this much, Duhshasana assaulted Abhimanyu, covering him with his mighty weapons. Seeing him coming, Abhimanyu taunted him, "It is by good luck that today I am able to behold you, who are the embodiment of a braggart and a fool. In the

king's assembly at Hastinapura, you insulted Draupadi as well as my father and my uncles. O wicked person, today you shall receive the fruit of such actions. I shall today chastise you in front of the whole army. Today, I shall free myself from the debts I owe to the angry Krishna, and to my father, who always looks for the opportunity to challenge you. O Kaurava, I shall today free myself from the debt I owe to Bhima. Only if you run away from the battlefield, will you escape with your life."

Having spoken these words, Abhimanyu invoked a radiant celestial weapon. Releasing that arrow endowed with lightning speed, it pierced Duhshasana's shoulder joint up to the feathers. He then released twenty-five more arrows that resembled fire. Severely pained, Duhshasana sat down on the chariot floor and fell into a deadly swoon. He was then taken away from the battlefield. Beholding this, the Pandavas were filled with joy and caused the battlefield to resound with conches, drums and bugles.

Karna again came forward to challenge Abhimanyu. He pierced Abhimanyu with many arrows stretching his bow to its fullest extent. The son of Phalguna felt no pain and released his deadly arrows that killed Karna's horses and charioteer. Abhimanyu cut the royal standard from his chariot and shattered his bow to pieces. Beholding Karna in the grip of death, his younger brother proceeded quickly against Arjuna's son. He roared loudly, and stretching his bow, he released ten arrows that pierced Abhimanyu's royal banner, umbrella, charioteer and horses. With this action, the Kaurava heroes sent up loud shouts. However, with a cool and calm mind, Abhimanyu, with a single shaft, cut off the head of Karna's brother, and the smiling faces of the Kauravas changed to one of disbelief. Karna ascended another chariot, and in great anger, eager to avenge his brother's death, he assaulted Abhimanyu. However, Abhimanyu shattered his bow and countered his weapons, causing him to run from the battlefield.

Having routed the Kaurava army, no one stood before Abhimanyu except Jayadratha, the Sindhu ruler. That bull amongst the kshatriyas, Abhimanyu, then blew upon his conchshell and roared loudly bringing great joy to his uncles.

Sanjaya continued: The Pandavas accompanied by Satyaki, Shikhandi, Dhristadyumna, Virata, Drupada, and Dhristaketu followed the path of destruction left by Dhananjaya's son. They were hopeful to rescue him from the Kaurava ocean. Seeing them coming, your son-in-law, Jayadratha, the ruler of the Sindhus, stopped them from going any further. The powerful son of Vriddhakshatra, invoking his celestial weapons, resisted the advance of those great heroes, thus closing the gap in the great formation.

Dhritarastra said: A heavy burden was placed upon Jayadratha, inasmuch as he alone had to stop their advance. What benedictions had he received to single-handedly impede those great warriors?

Sanjaya replied: While the Pandavas were living in the forest, Jayadratha insulted Draupadi and was beaten almost to death by Bhimasena. When humiliated in this

way, Jayadratha began to perform austerities, reducing his body to skin and bones. Jayadratha, trying to please Lord Shiva, ate little and slept little. When Lord Shiva was pleased with him, he appeared to Jayadratha in a dream and asked him what he wanted. With folded palms, Jayadratha asked for a boon by which he could defeat the Pandavas once. Lord Shiva granted the benediction saying, "You may defeat all of the Pandavas, except Arjuna." Now with this benediction he is standing before them like a maddened lion.

Sanjaya continued: Listen, O King, as I describe in detail how Jayadratha defeated the sons of Pandu. Jayadratha rode on a beautiful chariot drawn by Sindhu horses. His royal banner bore the device of a large silver boar. Drawing his bow to a full stretch, he released death dealing arrows obstructing the Pandava army from advancing further. He pierced Satyaki with three arrows and Bhima with eight. He struck Dhrishtadyumna with sixty shafts, Shikhandi with ten and Drupada with five. He pierced Yudhishthira with seventy and covered the Pandava army with his celestial weapons. Yudhishthira quickly cut Jayadratha's bow, but the Sindhu King quickly took up another and pierced Yudhishthira with ten arrows. Bhima then shattered Jayadratha's bow, cut off his royal standard as well as the beautiful umbrella that adorned his car. The mighty Jayadratha took up another bow and destroyed Bhima's chariot and horses. Bhima quickly got down from his chariot and ascended Satyaki's. With this action the Kaurava army cheered and rushed forward to fill up the gap made by Abhimanyu. Although the Pandavas and their divisions tried desperately to follow Abhimanyu, they were halted by the Sindhu King on account of Lord Shiva's benediction.

Non the less, Abhimanyu was mowing down the divisions that opposed him. The son of Karna, Vrishasena, attacked Abhimanyu with full force, but Arjuna's son shattered his bow, killed his charioteer and felled his standard from the chariot. Injured, Vrishasena was taken away from the battlefield by his unbridled horses. The leader of a chariot division, Vasatiya, then assaulted Abhimanyu releasing hundreds of arrows. He pierced Arjuna's son and screamed, "As long as I am alive, you shall not escape with your life!" Before he could finish what he had to say, Abhimanyu pierced the braggart's armor and sent him to death's abode.

Then the Kaurava host came in thousands to fight with Phalguna's son. As they approached him, they were sent in thousands to the other world. Salya's son, Rukmaratha, desired to save the Kaurava army from the ocean of Abhimanyu. He spoke to his forces, "Have no fear from this son of Arjuna! I will capture this one alive and hand him over to you as a present." Having taken this oath, Salya's son assaulted Abhimanyu and pierced him in the chest with three arrows, and in the right and left arms with three arrows. He then uttered a loud roar. Abhimanyu, however, severed his right and left arms as well as the hero's head. With the death of Salya's son, thousands of his friends rushed at Abhimanyu. They made Abhimanyu invisible with their shower of weapons, and they all thought that he was dead. Enraged and desiring their death, Abhimanyu invoked the Gandharva weapon received from his father. That weapon caused great confusion among Rukmaratha's troops and while in that state, Abhimanyu killed them all.

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, this victory of Subhadra's son is indeed wonderful and almost impossible for an ordinary human to accomplish. After Duryodhana was defeated and the hundred princes slain, what did my army do against Subhadra's son?

Sanjaya said: Beholding the army broken and fleeing from the battlefield, Drona, Ashvatthama, Brihadvala, Kripa, and Duryodhana rushed at Abhimanyu releasing their powerful weapons. However, they were all beaten back, and the only one left to challenge Abhimanyu was Lakshman, Duryodhana's son. He was young, proficient in weaponry and inexperienced in warfare. Still, he challenged Abhimanyu, and released his selected arrows hoping to kill his opponent. Anxious about his son, Duryodhana followed him close behind. Other chariot fighters came up to protect Duryodhana, and they all began to shower their weapons upon Abhimanyu. Lakshman struck Abhimanyu the chest and arms. He roared loudly encouraging the retreating troops. Abhimanyu then spoke to Lakshman, "Look one last time upon your kinsmen, for in the presence of your father, I will despatch you to Yamaraja's abode." Saying this, Abhimanyu pulled out a broad headed arrow resembling a snake and released it at Duryodhana's son. Scorching through the sky, it severed Lakshman's head. Beholding Lakshman slain, Duryodhana was furious and ordered Drona, Kripa, and Karna with the words, "Slay this wretched person." Nevertheless, Abhimanyu beat them all off though they had encircled him desiring his death. Arjuna's son then began to cover the battlefield like the wind, and soon came upon the divisions of Jayadratha.

Coming up to challenge him were Drona, Karna, Kripa, Brihadvala, the mighty Kosala King, Kritavarman and Ashvatthama. Abhimanyu greeted them with a shower of arrows. He pierced Drona with fifty and Brihadvala with twenty. He pierced Kritavarman with eight and Kripa with sixty. He struck Ashvatthama with ten arrows and with a barbed arrow, he pierced Karna in the ear. He then killed Kripa's horses and the chariot warriors that were protecting his chariot. He then killed the brave Vrindaraka who was very dear to the Kaurava generals.

Not tolerating Abhimanyu's success, the ruler of the Koshalas, Brihadvala, pierced Abhimanyu with a barbed arrow, and sent up a loud roar. King Brihadvala had brought a akshauhini division to fight against the Pandavas, and he was a mighty maharathi, one of Duryodhana's top generals. However, Abhimanyu pierced the King in the chest with a long shafted arrow and split his heart in two. Having slain the great warrior, Arjuna's son raced across the battlefield leaving a path of total destruction wherever he went.

Abhimanyu could not be stopped. Again Karna came up to challenge him, but Arjuna's son quickly killed Karna's six counselors that protected his chariot. Abhimanyu then killed the son of Jayatsena, the ruler of Magadha, and with six shafts he killed the great warrior Asvaketu. With a razor headed arrow, Arjuna's son then killed the Bhoja prince Martikavata. With this action, Abhimanyu sent up a loud roar frightening the Kaurava army.

When Shakuni had been defeated by Abhimanyu, he went to Duryodhana with an evil plan, "In single combat there is none of us that can kill him. Let all six of us challenge him at once and grind him." Hearing this cowardly plan, all the six maharathis, Drona, Karna, Kripa, Kritavarman, Ashvatthama and Shakuni discussed how to slay Abhimanyu. Karna then inquired from Drona, "Abhimanyu is invincible and cannot be killed by any of us. Tell us the means by which he may be slain."

"I am also not able to stand in front of this foremost chariot driver as he courses the battlefield." Drona replied. "The same lightness of hand and knowledge of weapons that is in Arjuna, is also in this boy. He is piercing me deeply and causing me much pain. Abhimanyu is young, and his prowess is magnificent. His coat of mail is impenetrable. The only way to stop him is to cut his bow string, kill his horses and slay the protectors of his wheels when he is not looking. If we all attack him at once, we will succeed."

Agreeing with this sinful plan, Karna quickly proceeded to the spot where Abhimanyu was fighting. While he was engaged with another warrior, Karna cut his bowstring when he wasn't looking. Kritavarman then killed his horses, and Kripa killed the protectors of his wheels. Defeated unfairly in battle, Abhimanyu was incited with wrath. The handsome son of Arjuna descended from his chariot, sword in hand, and ran toward the six great warriors to kill them. Quickly Drona shattered the sword, and Karna shattered his shield. Abhimanyu then picked up a chariot wheel and rushed at Drona to kill him. The other Kings, however, tore the wheel to pieces. That great chariot fighter then took up a mace and ran at Ashvatthama with the speed of the wind. Ashvatthama quickly descended from his chariot and ran in the opposite direction. The son of Arjuna killed Ashvatthama's horses, and the warriors that were protecting his chariot. While this was happening, those cowardly so-called Kings were piercing Abhimanyu with their arrows as he walked on foot. He was so covered with arrows that he looked like a porcupine. Abhimanyu then killed Shakuni's son, Kalikeya, along with seventy Gandhara followers. He then killed ten elephants and ten car warriors, and proceeded towards Duhshasana's son. By this time Abhimanyu was tired and hopeless of life. Still, he fought on as only the son of Arjuna could. The son of Duhshasana descended from his chariot mace in hand and rushed at Abhimanyu saying, "Wait, Wait!" Rushing at each other, they were determined to kill the other. Raising their weapons, they struck each other at the same time. They both fell to the earth, and as Abhimanyu was rising, Duhshasana's son struck him on the head, shattering his crown and depriving him of his life. As he lay there on the Kurukshetra plain, he appeared like a wild elephant slain by cowardly hunters. All the warriors gathered round and began to cheer and shout loudly their victory. In the heavens were heard this sound, "Alas, Abhimanyu was killed by six maharathis unfairly. This is an unrighteous act."

Hearing the unembodied voice, the Pandava warriors began to shed tears. Yudhisthira fainted away, and with great effort was brought back to consciousness. All the famed warriors then gathered around Yudhisthira, and contemplated that youth with a beautiful smile and thought of his prowess in battle. In the absence of Krishna and Arjuna, this injustice had taken place. Withdrawing to their tents for the

night, they did not know what to say to Arjuna upon his return. Thus they sat around the son of Dharma sunk in the depths of grief.

Thus Ends the Third Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Thirteenth Day at Kurukshetra; the Death of Abhimanyu.

### Chapter Commentary

Because Duryodhana could not defeat Abhimanyu fairly, he had to resort to cheating methods and relied on his old sinister friend, Shakuni. It was Shakuni's idea to attack Abhimanyu from behind. Demons cannot fight by fair means. The very nature of the demoniac mentality is cheating. Duryodhana had been cheating the Pandavas since they were little boys, and he wasn't about to stop. Whatever would further his cause, he would accept even if it meant attacking Abhimanyu from behind, which is against the rules of warfare. Duryodhana could not understand that every previous member of the Kuru dynasty was a spotless exalted king who earned their name and fame by performing good deeds. Unfortunately, he did not have the mentality of a rajarshi, or saintly king, and thus his name would go down in history among demoniac kings like Ravana, Vena, Jarasandha, Kamsa, Shishupala, Shalva, Dantavakra etc.

### Chapter Four

#### Arjuna Vows to Kill Jayadratha

Dhritarastra inquired: After the great chariot fighter, Abhimanyu, had fallen in battle, unfairly slain by the six great warriors, what did the sons of Pandu do after lamenting the loss of their son?

Sanjaya said: Listen, O King, as I describe in detail the oath that Arjuna took in an assembly of Kings and princes that brought great joy to Pandava warriors. After the slaughter of the Adhiratha, Abhimanyu, who was but a mere boy, the Pandava warriors returned to their camps. They put aside their bows and armor, and sat surrounding King Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira, overwhelmed with grief, lamented in the following words, "Alas, Abhimanyu, desiring my welfare, pierced the chakravyuha that was formed by the preceptor Drona. While in that formation, the heroic son of Arjuna fought and killed many of the celebrated Kaurava warriors. That youth with lotus like eyes was then slain unfairly by six maharathis. Alas, what shall I say to Arjuna or to the blessed mother Subhadra? He, who was only a child, sacrificed himself instead of refusing to do my bidding. Alas, we shall also lay down our lives when pierced by the wrathful glances of Arjuna. Enraged at his son's slaughter, Partha will now exterminate the Kauravas. It is evident that the cruel minded

Duryodhana is desiring the extinction of his army in that he sanctioned the death of that young boy."

Sanjaya continued: While King Yudhisthira was lamenting in this way, the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa came to him. Yudhisthira immediately arranged worship of the great Rishi, and after seating him comfortably, King Yudhisthira poured out his heart, "O great sage, what can I say to you about our welfare? While battling with great chariot fighters of wicked mind, the son of Subhadra was slain. He fought in battle against overwhelming odds and was unfairly killed. On my orders he opened the preceptor, Drona's, formidable array and fearlessly entered it. While endeavoring to protect him, we were stopped by the ruler of the Sindhus, Jayadratha. Abhimanyu, who was but a child in years, was butchered by those evil minded Kauravas. I lament the loss of that great hero."

Vyasadeva then consoled the King, "O King Yudhisthira, O thou of great wisdom who is conversant with the Vedas, persons like your self never lament for the dead bodies of others. It is known to you that the soul is eternal and can never be slain. This brave youth, having killed innumerable warriors, has ascended to the spiritual world. Indeed, that person for whom you lament acted like one mature in years. He has attained a destination that great yogis fail to attain after performing thousands of years of penances and austerities. O Bharata, death takes away the life of all living entities. This is the law of material nature, and no one can transgress it. Abhimanyu has now taken a spiritual body just befitting an inhabitant of the spiritual world. He now stands radiant in his own splendor. Therefore, O Ajatashatru, you should not grieve for one who has achieved perfection. It has already been decided that a great slaughter of the earth's warriors will take place on this Kurukshetra plain. It has been ordained by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and no one can change that. Just become an instrument in this great battle. Fight with your enemy and attain great glory." After speaking these words of wisdom, the great sage left that place and returned to his own ashrama.

After receiving enlightenment from Vyasadeva, the grandfather of the Pandavas, Yudhisthira derived some consolation over Abhimanyu's death. However, in the next instant he thought to himself, "What shall we say to Dhananjaya?" Thinking like this, they waited for the return of Lord Krishna and Arjuna.

After the sun had set and the evening twilight still illuminated the sky, Arjuna proceeded toward his tent having slain a large number of Samsaptakas. Noticing evil omens in all directions, he spoke to Lord Krishna, "O Keshava, my speech falters, and my heart is fearful. My limbs are weak and thoughts of disaster plague my mind. These are all indications of a great calamity. Certainly the death of a great warrior has taken place. Let us go quickly and inquire about Yudhisthira."

Causing the horses to proceed at a faster pace, Lord Krishna, acting as his devotee's servant, soon brought the chariot to where the Kings and princes had gathered. Beholding the warriors in a dejected mood and everything in confusion, Vibatsu spoke to the Supreme Lord Krishna, "O Janardana, I do not hear the auspicious sounds of the trumpets, drums and conches. I do not hear the sweet sound of the

vina and the clapping of hands. The warriors do not rush to me to tell me of their achievements. Alas, my son, Abhimanyu, who is always cheerful, does not come with his brothers to receive me after returning from battle."

When Krishna and Arjuna entered the camp, they saw the Pandava warriors cheerless and plunged into grief. Not seeing his son, Arjuna inquired, "All your faces are pale, and there are no sounds of victory. Where is my son Abhimanyu? Why does he not come to congratulate me? I have heard that the preceptor Drona arrayed his troops in the formation of a Chakra. There is none amongst you who could pierce that array except my young boy, Abhimanyu. Did you, out of hopelessness, cause that boy to enter that formation alone? Alas, has that heroic youth with lotus eyes pierced that great formation, and upon fighting with numerous warriors give up his life? What warrior deprived of his senses has slain my dearest son, that favorite of Draupadi and Keshava and dearly beloved of Kunti? What shall I say to Subhadra upon returning without her son? What shall I say unto Uttara, his dear wife, upon returning to the palace? Alas, it would be better for me to enter Yamaraja's abode than look upon the crying faces of those ladies."

Unto the lamenting son of Kunti, the lotus eyed Lord Krishna said, "O son of Pandu, do not yield to sorrow. Abhimanyu has taken the path that all brave heroes follow. He has attained the regions reserved for exalted ascetics. Death is certain for one who does not retreat in battle. Do not grieve, O tiger among men. Those who know the Vedas have declared that the highest merit a kshatriya can attain is death on the battlefield while fighting the enemy. O best of the Bharatas, your brothers are cheerless upon seeing you plunged into grief. Knowing that the soul never dies and that your son has achieved perfection, give comfort to your brothers and friends."

In reply to Lord Krishna, Arjuna said, "O Lord of the earth, I now desire to hear how Abhimanyu fought with the wicked Kauravas. You will see how I exterminate those who killed my son. I will slay them along with their friends and their kinsmen. All of the great warriors here were competent to save my son. Therefore, how could you have allowed him to be killed. If I had known that the Pandavas and the Panchalas could not have protected my son, then I would have protected him myself. Alas, all of you have no manliness nor prowess, since in the very sight of all of you, Abhimanyu was killed. Perhaps, I should chastise myself, for knowing that all of you were weak, cowardly and irresolute, I went away. Alas, do you wear your coats of mail and fine weapons for decoration only? How is it that you could not give my son protection?" Arjuna then sat down overcome by grief and anger. He was holding his bow and fine sword. No one could look upon him or speak to him. None could address him save Yudhisthira or Lord Krishna.

When there was complete silence, King Yudhisthira explained how the Kauravas unfairly killed Abhimanyu, "O might armed hero, after you had encountered the Samsaptakas, the preceptor Drona endeavored to capture me. We succeeded in resisting Drona at all points. However, the circular formation was too formidable to penetrate, and without you, our army would have been annihilated. Approaching Abhimanyu, we requested him to break the formation and lead all the great warriors to victory. Agreeing to the proposal and equipping himself with weapons that he had

received from you, he penetrated the chakravyuha. We also followed close behind desiring to protect that lotus eyed youth. However, the wretched Sindhu King, having obtained a benediction from Lord Shiva, defeated us in battle. While we were struggling with the sinful Jayadratha, that formation closed on us, and Abhimanyu was surrounded by six great maharathis. They were Drona, Kripa, Karna, Asvatthama, Kritavarman and Brihadvala, the King of the Koshalas. These cowardly men deprived Abhimanyu of his chariot and weapons. While fighting on foot, he was finally killed by the son of Duhshasana. Your son fought bravely, killing eight thousand chariot fighters, two thousand princes and nine hundred elephants. He killed King Brihadvala as well as Lakshman, the son of Duryodhana. Dying in great glory, he has ascended to the spiritual world."

Arjuna was furious. He was wringing his hands, and tears were falling from his lotus petal eyes. Casting his glances like a mad man, he took an oath, "Truly do I swear that tomorrow I will kill Jayadratha! This despicable person is the cause of my child's slaughter. Whoever desires to protect this vile person, I will cut them to pieces with my deadly arrows. Whether it be Drona, Kripa or Karna, I will defeat all of them and kill the Sindhu King. I promise that I will enter the hellish regions reserved for sinful persons if I do not sever the head of that vain king. If tomorrow the sun sets without my having killed Jayadratha, then I will enter blazing fire. Let the Kauravas, the demigods, the Asuras, the Rishis, whoever there may be, try to protect that sinful person, still, I will cut off the head of Abhimanyu's enemy." Having said these words, Arjuna began to stretch his Gandiva bow with both arms. The sound of the Gandiva bow ascended to the sky and touched the heavens. After Arjuna had taken this oath, Janardana blew his conchshell the Panchajanya, and Arjuna blew his the Devadatta. When Arjuna had taken that vow, the sounds of thousands of musical instruments were heard rising from the Pandava camp.

Sanjaya continued speaking to Dhritarastra: When Duryodhana's spies informed their master of the cause of excitement in the Pandava camp, Jayadratha became overwhelmed with fear. He said to the assembly of Kings, "Arjuna has taken a vow to kill me. I shall, therefore, give up my weapons and return home to save my life. O foremost of the kshatriya race, protect me by the force of your weapons. Listen, you brave heroes, Partha seeks to slay me. Please render me fearless. Drona, Kripa, Karna, Duryodhana, Bahlika, Salya, and Duhshasana are capable of protecting a person who is on the point of death. When I am threatened by Phalguna, won't all of you joined together protect me? Having heard the joyous shouts of the Pandavas, my limbs are trembling in fear. Without doubt, the wielder of the Gandiva, has taken a vow to take my life. Who is there who can withstand Partha in battle? Who amongst you is competent to defeat that best among men? Even the very gods themselves cannot defeat him. Therefore, I take your permission to leave the battlefield. I will hide myself so that no one can find me."

While Jayadratha was indulging in such lamentations, King Duryodhana consoled him, "Do not fear, O tiger among men. No one will seek to encounter you while you remain in the midst of the great heroes on our side. Myself, Karna, Drona, Bhurishravas, Salya, Sudakshina, Vikarna, Duhshasana, Vinda and Anuvinda, Ashvatthama and Shakuni--these and many more will face Arjuna and protect you.

These eleven akshauhinis of troops that I own will be carefully arrayed for your protection. Dispell your fear!"

After hearing these reassuring words from Duryodhana, the Sindhu King went to Drona and inquired, "O illustrious preceptor, I wish to know the difference between myself and Arjuna. I wish to know in truth the chances I have to survive in battle against him."

"As far as instructions from a teacher are concerned," Drona replied, "you are both equal. In consideration of ascetic merit and the qualities of righteousness, he is superior to you. However, you should not fear Partha, O Jayadratha. Without doubt I will protect you from this fear. The demigods themselves cannot defeat he who is protected by my arms. I will form an array that even Phalguna will not be able to penetrate. Do not allow death to be an object of terror to you. All men meet with death, taking with them the deeds of this life. The Kauravas, the Pandavas, the Vrishnis and all men are mortal and short lived. Act according to the duties of a brave kshatriya and fight your enemy." When Drona had banished Jayadratha's fear of Arjuna, Jayadratha set his heart on battle. Thus the joyful sounds of drums and kettledrums were heard in the Kaurava's camp.

After Partha had taken a vow to kill the ruler of the Sindhus, Jayadratha, the mighty armed Lord Krishna addressed Arjuna, "Without consulting Me, you have taken a vow to kill Jayadratha. How will you fulfill this oath? You have taken a great burden upon your shoulders which will be difficult to lift. I have heard from spies, that upon learning of your vow, the Kaurava warriors have taken precautions to save Jayadratha. They have three formations planned. The first will be the Shakata formation, the second will be a needle formation, and the third will be a Chakravyuha formation. From the front line of the battle to the point where Jayadratha will be stationed will be many many miles. Guarding Jayadratha will be six great maharathis: Drona, Kripa, Karna, Asvatthama, Bhurishrava and Vrishasena. The prowess of these six car warriors, O Partha, will, without doubt, be difficult to defeat."

"These six chariot warriors, whom you have mentioned, are not equal to half my prowess," Arjuna replied. "You will see, O slayer of Madhu, the weapons of all these warriors cut to pieces, and myself heading in the direction of Jayadratha. In the presence of Drona and all the great warriors, I will kill Jayadratha. Even if the demigods and asuras combined were to help them, I will still cut off the head of the Sindhu King. I will use all the celestial weapons at my disposal-those obtained by Yamaraja, Kuvera, Varuna, Indra and Lord Shiva. Do not think lightly of the might of my arms and my weapons. When I have vowed Jayadratha's death, know that he is already slain. Besides this, I know that because I have You as my friend and chariot driver, it will be easy to conquer all the soldiers in the universe."

After speaking to Lord Krishna, Arjuna requested Him, "O Janardana, I cannot bear to see the face of Subhadra, who has just lost her son. I have no words to console her with. Please go and comfort her so that she will not grieve so much over the death of Abhimanyu. Also give solace to Abhimanyu's wife Uttara, and also give

comfort to Draupadi who loved Abhimanyu as one of her own sons." Agreeing to the requests of His devotee, Lord Krishna then went to Upaplavya to console the aggrieved relatives.

Upon reaching the city of Virata, Lord Krishna entered the palace where Subhadra and the other ladies were staying. Seeing His sister lamenting crying over the loss of her son, He began to give her instructions about the eternality of the soul, "O lady of the Vrishni race, do not grieve for the loss of your son. All living entities have but one end as ordained by eternal time. The end your son met was the pride of any kshatriya. Having vanquished thousands of chariot fighters, your son has attained the spiritual world. He has gone to that place where great yogis attain only after long observance of penances and austerities. Dispel your sorrow, and do not grieve. Tomorrow, that wretched King of the Sindhus, who caused your son's death, will die on the field of battle. Arjuna has vowed to end the life of Jayadratha before the sun sets tomorrow. Therefore, do not shed any more tears."

After consoling his sister, Subhadra, Lord Krishna returned to Kurukshetra and entered Arjuna's tent. At that time Arjuna offered his daily worship to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He brought all kinds of auspicious articles and worshiped the Lord to his full satisfaction. After smearing His body with scented oils and adorning Him with flower garlands, Arjuna sat down beside his dear friend. Krishna then said, "Lay down and sleep soundly for tomorrow there will be a great battle. I will now go to My own tent." Saying this much Lord Krishna went to take rest for the night. He was accompanied by His chariot driver Daruka.

When half the night had passed, Lord Krishna was still awake talking with Daruka. He said, "O Daruka, Arjuna has vowed to kill Jayadratha before the sun sets tomorrow. For protecting Jayadratha, Drona will arrange the troops in such a way that it will be impossible to come near him. It will be difficult to slay one who is protected by Dronacharya. Therefore, I will, if necessary, do the needful so that Arjuna can fulfill his vow. I will not be able to live on earth without Arjuna. Taking up my weapons, I will kill Karna and Duryodhana along with all their forces. He who hates Arjuna, hates Me, and he that is a friend to Arjuna, is also a friend to Me. O Daruka, when the morning comes, equip My chariot with the Kamodaki mace, the Sarnga bow and My Sudarshana discus. Also yoke My horses, Sugriva, Meghapuspa, Balahaka and Saivya to My chariot and make sure they are cased in golden mail. Upon hearing the blast of My Panchajanya conchshell on the Rishava note, you will come to Me quickly. I will then proceed to kill Jayadratha in the presence of all the Kauravas." Daruka replied, "Arjuna will be certainly victorious tomorrow for You, my Lord, are his charioteer. However, I will do as You have commanded me and ready Your chariot."

Meanwhile, as Arjuna lay on his bed, he was contemplating the next days activities. As he thought deeply of Lord Krishna, he fell asleep. He then had a dream, and in that dream, Lord Krishna came to him. "You possess the weapon given by Lord Shiva," He said. "It is called the Pashupatra astra. However, you do not know how to use this weapon. Let us go together to Lord Shiva's abode and receive instructions on how this weapon may be implored to kill Jayadratha." Taking Arjuna by the hand,

Lord Krishna took him to Kailasa. Passing through many beautiful regions, those two heroes, Nara and Narayana, finally came to the abode of Lord Shiva. Upon seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva offered his obeisances. Lord Krishna is the source of all the devas including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma. After offering his worship to Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva inquired from them, "You are both welcome here. Please tell me the reason for your journey, for I will satisfy your desires, and grant whatever you wish."

"You have previously given me the celestial weapon Pashupatra astra," Arjuna replied. "I now desire to learn how to use this powerful weapon."

Hearing Arjuna's desire, Lord Shiva said, "I will grant your request. Just near here is a lake full of amrita (nectar). This is where I keep my celestial bow and arrows. Go there and bring them to me."

Lord Krishna and Arjuna then went to the lake, and in the water they saw two snakes spitting fire and poison. They approached those snakes chanting prayers to Lord Shiva. As they came closer, the two snakes turned into a bow and arrow. Arjuna then took the bow and arrow and returned to Lord Shiva. While glancing at the bow, Lord Shiva produced a brahmachary from the sides of his body. That brahmachary, who was bluish in complexion, then took the bow and strung it. Placing his feet properly and chanting the proper hymns to invoke the astra, the brahmachary released the arrow into the lake nearby. After releasing the arrow, he then threw the bow into the lake. Then Lord Shiva called for the bow and arrow and gave it to Arjuna, and also gave him the benediction that he would fulfill his vow. Arjuna and Lord Krishna, fully satisfied with the worship of Lord Shiva, returned to Kurukshetra and to their own tents. Thus through that dream Arjuna learned how to use the weapon owned by Lord Shiva.

When the morning came all the Pandavas rose from their nightly rest and offered their morning prayers. In the presence of all the assembled Kings, Yudhishthira said to Lord Krishna, "O Krishna, relying on You alone, we seek victory and eternal life. You, O Lord, are aware of the loss of our kingdom at the hands of these vile sinners. O Lord of lords, You are compassionate to Your devotees who rely on You for their very existence. O slayer of Madhu, please help Arjuna to realize his vow. O descendent of Vrishni, become the boat that will take us across this vast ocean of the Kauravas. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You who are the eternal Lord, the Supreme Destroyer. O eternal Vishnu, O Hari, O Vaikunthanatha, Narada has described You to be the Supreme Lord, Narayana, who carries the Sarnga bow and who wields the Sudarshana cakra. O Lord of all creatures, please be merciful to us and do not allow Arjuna to enter fire at the end of the day. O Lord, may his vow be fulfilled."

To these prayers, Lord Krishna replied, "O Yudhishthira, in all the three worlds, there is no Bowman who compares to Arjuna. He is the possessor of great weapons and wields the prowess of thousands of warriors. Treading over the heads of his enemies, he will certainly fulfill his oath. This very day you will see that sinful person, Jayadratha, laying on the Kurukshetra plain and his soul entering Yamaraja's

abode. Today, vultures and jackals will feast on the flesh of his dead body. Even if all the demigods united become Jayadratha's protectors, that ruler of the Sindhus will not live. Dispell all your anxiety and lamentation."

While Lord Krishna and Yudhisthira were speaking, Arjuna came into their presence. Yudhisthira, rising from his seat, embraced Arjuna and smelt his head. He then addressed him, "It is evident from your smiling face that victory awaits you today. With the full blessings of our eternal well wisher, Lord Krishna, I shall see you here at the end of the day with you vows fulfilled."

Arjuna then described to all present his dream of the previous night. He described how Lord Shiva had instructed him to use the Pashupatra astra. He also told them that Lord Shiva blessed him with the fulfillment of his desires. Hearing this excellent story, all were struck with wonder and exclaimed, "Excellent! Excellent!" Then with joyous hearts they proceeded to the battlefield to make preparations for the day's battle.

Thus Ends the Fourth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, Arjuna Vows to Kill Jayadratha.

#### Chapter Commentary

Upon the death of Abhimanyu there was much lamentation in the camp of the Pandavas, so much so that Vyasadeva had to appear and preach to King Yudhisthira. He fell into illusion much similar to the way Arjuna fell into illusion before the battle of Kurukshetra. One can be under the Yogamaya potency (divine potency of the Lord) or the Mahamaya potency (deluding potency of the Lord). The difference being that one under Mahamaya falls into deeper separation from the Lord when calamities appear, and one who has fallen under Yogamaya potency increase his attachment for the Lord when disaster happens. Through this whole episode we will see how the Pandavas increase their attachment for Lord Krishna. There was some temporary despondency at the death of Abhimanyu, but this only caused the Pandavas to increase their service attitude toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Pandavas were only instruments for the Lord's purpose of decreasing the burden of the earth. To fulfill the Lord's desire, Arjuna had to increase his anger toward the sinners. The unfair death of Abhimanyu was the catalyst to fulfill the Lord's desire.

In this chapter Lord Krishna again stated his loving attachment for Arjuna. He told His charioteer, Daruka, "I cannot live on Earth without Arjuna. If necessary I will take up weapons against the Kauravas so Arjuna can keep his vow." By serving Lord Krishna one gradually increases his attachment for the Lord so much so that the

Lord agrees to carry what we lack. Before the battle Lord Krishna told Arjuna, *ananyas cintayanto mam, ye janah paryupasate, tesam nityabhiyuktanam, yoga-kshemam vahamy aham*, "But those who worship Me with devotion, meditating on My transcendental form-to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they have." (B.g. 9.22) Always thinking of Krishna is the best insurance policy we could have. He is our eternal father and the protector of His devotees.

## Chapter Five

The Fourteenth Day at Kurukshetra;

Arjuna Makes His Way Toward Jayadratha

Dhritarastra inquired: After the death of Abhimanyu, what did the Pandavas do to avenge his death? Knowing the prowess of Savyasachin (Arjuna), how could the Kauravas remain fearless on the front line of battle? Beholding the ape bannered son of Kunti in the forefront of the army, how did my sons react to his presence. A dark cloud of gloom has overcome the Kaurava camp, for no longer are heard the sounds of music and singing. The soldiers no longer talk of their day's achievements or listen to the Vedic hymns. I think today a great calamity will overcome Duryodhana and his followers. O Sanjaya, please relate to me all that happened on that fourteenth day of the great battle.

Sanjaya said: O King, I will tell you everything for I can see the Kurukshetra field with divine vision. Listen calmly, for these calamities are your fault. If you had formerly restrained Yudhisthira and your sons from playing at dice, this tragedy would have never come. Again, before the battle, when the peace proposals were being considered, if you had restrained both sides, then this great slaughter of kinsmen would have never happened. If you had encouraged the Kurus to bind and slay the sinful Duryodhana, then this disaster to your dynasty would have never taken place. If you had done any one of these, then world peace would have been in your grip. Formerly Lord Krishna showed more respect toward you than to Yudhisthira. However, since you have fallen from the duties of a Godly king, the divine son of Devaki no longer looks toward you as a king capable of upholding religious principles. There is no need to indulge in various lamentations this late in the war. The reaction to your indifference will be the loss of your kinsmen. Listen as I describe in detail the slaughter of the Kauravas on the fourteenth day of the great war.

After the night had passed away and the dawn had arrived, Dronacharya arrayed the massive divisions in three formations. The first formation was in the form of a cart known as Sakata. The second array was the formation known as Chakravyuha. Within the Chakravyuha was the formation known as Suchimukha or the needle point formation, in which Jayadratha was protected by many soldiers and maharathis. The front line of the battlefield measured a full forty eight miles tapering off to a twenty mile width at the rear of the formations. From the front line of the battle to the point where Jayadratha was stationed was a full twelve miles.

After arranging the troops according to his desire, Drona went to Jayadratha and spoke encouraging words, "O ruler of the Sindhus, there should be no fear within your heart. I have arranged our great divisions in such a way that even the demigods will not be able to penetrate them. Bhurishrava, Karna, Ashvatthama, Salya, Vrishasena and Kripa will be near to give you protection. In front of you, in the form of a needle, will be a hundred thousand horsemen, sixty thousand chariot fighters, forty thousand elephants, and one hundred and twenty thousand foot soldiers. From the front line of the battle to your point of protection will be a distance of twelve miles. There is no need to fear Arjuna. If the heavenly gods headed by Indra cannot pierce this formation what will the mortal Pandavas do?"

Comforting Jayadratha in this way, Drona then took up his position at the opening to the Chakravyuha. Within the Chakravyuha was the Suchimukha (needle) formation. At the point of that needle array was Kritavarman and next to him was the ruler of the Kambhojas and Jalasandha. Next to those stood Duryodhana and Karna. At the very front line of the battle stood Durmarshana, and behind him stood Duhshasana and Vikarna. Seeing this powerful formation arrayed by the preceptor Dronacharya, the heavenly denizens and rishis were filled with wonder.

Sanjaya continued: O King, your troops rejoiced at the thought that Arjuna would have to enter fire at the end of the day. They beat on drums and sounded their conches giving joy to the whole army. Standing in the forefront of the Pandava divisions was Dhananjaya, who desired to slay Jayadratha. He also blew his conch, the Devadatta, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead blew upon His, the Panchajanya. The son of the wind god, Hanuman, who was riding on the banner, also roared loudly. His loud voice, mixing with the conch sounds of Nara and Narayana, caused fear to enter the minds of the Kaurava troops. Their hearts trembled, and their hair stood on end. The elephants and horses passed stool and urine simultaneously, and the infantry troops were terrified. Some lost their strength, and some lost their senses.

Then Arjuna, the carrier of the Gandiva bow, requested Hrishikesha in these words, "O Krishna, urge the horses toward Durmarshana's division. I will penetrate this Sakata formation at that point and make my way to Jayadratha."

Thus ordered by Arjuna, Lord Keshava drove the horses to the spot where Duryodhana's brother was releasing his mighty weapons. Unleashing arrows like a downpour of water, Arjuna began a great slaughter of the Kaurava army. He began to sever the heads of many esteemed chariot fighters. The sound of the severed

heads falling to the ground sounded like the falling of ripened fruits from a tree shaken by an elephant. Very soon the battlefield became a nightmare of headless trunks, dead horses and elephants. Angered by his son's death, Arjuna was killing soldiers in tens of thousands. Using his celestial weapons, Arjuna was making a path of destruction. No one could stand before him, and no one could come near him. He was carving a path through the enemy ranks hundreds of yards wide. Cutting through the elephant army, Arjuna caused ten thousand of those huge beasts to lie on the ground deprived of life. Routing the the division of Durmashana, Arjuna continued making his way through the Sakata formation. Cut up by Arjuna's arrows, the soldiers that supported Durmashana broke and fled for their lives. Huge elephants, full of fear, retreated into the divisions of foot soldiers crushing thousands of men as they went.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, when the van of my army was broken by the son of Kunti, who were the heroes that came to oppose him? How did the preceptor Drona manage to stop the forward progress of that mighty hero?

Sanjaya replied: The next division to attack Arjuna was Duhshasana. Your son was followed by thousands upon thousands of angry elephants. They speedily came upon Arjuna, and seemed capable of devouring the whole earth. Quickly rushing towards them, Arjuna began to slay that elephant army with his powerful shafts. Heads began to fall from the warriors who were riding those elephants. Sometimes Arjuna would pierce, with a single arrow, as many as two or three men riding on the same elephant, and they would fall to the ground hooked together by that arrow. Elephants were roaming the battlefield with armless and headless trunks hanging off their sides. Blood and flesh, flowing from the elephants and decapitated soldiers, created a ghastly scene that few could witness. Duhshasana was not able to ward off Arjuna's forceful weapons. Within a very short time thousands upon thousands of elephants littered the battlefield like huge barriers in a maze. Some of them had been pierced with one arrow and others with thousands. Some had their heads cut off, and others had their skulls spit open, gushing forth flesh and blood. Some of the huge beasts were completely cut in two and lay on the ground deprived of life. Some were only partially killed and lay on the ground shrieking in agony. Some of the elephants, upon falling to the ground, crushed foot soldiers and horsemen that were protecting them. The whole battlefield became a nightmare as Phalguna completely routed the huge division of elephants. Fleeing the battlefield, the remnants of that army sought Drona as its protector.

Sanjaya continued: O Monarch, completely routing your son's army, the mighty chariot fighter, Dhananjaya, proceeded against the division of Drona. Coming upon his preceptor, Arjuna solicited him, "Give me your blessings, O brahmana. Through your grace, I will penetrate this formation and fulfill the vows I have taken. You are to be worshiped by me even as I worship Yudhisthira or Krishna. Truly I tell you that even as you protect Ashvatthama you should also protect me. O foremost brahmana, stand aside for I desire to slay the ruler of the Sindhus. I request that you assist me in accomplishing my vow."

Thus requested by Arjuna, the preceptor smilingly replied to him, "O Vibhatsu, without defeating me, you will not be able to kill Jayadratha." Saying this much, Drona covered Arjuna with a thick shower of arrows. As Arjuna rushed forward, he struck his martial guru with nine arrows. Drona then drew the string of his bow to his ear and released many arrows resembling fire and poison. Those arrows pierced Krishna and Arjuna inflicting extreme pain. Drona then cut the string of Arjuna's bow. Stringing his bow again, the son of Kunti released six hundred arrows as if he had released only one. He then released seven hundred, then a thousand, then ten thousand. All these arrows killed the troops that were protecting Drona. Not tolerating Arjuna's victory, Drona released a long shafted arrow that struck Arjuna forcefully. Trembling from that arrow, Arjuna sat down on his chariot. Pulling out the arrow and rising once again, Phalguna pierced his preceptor with many winged shafts.

Not wanting to waste time in this duel, Lord Krishna advised Arjuna, "O Partha, we should not waste time. We must proceed avoiding Drona. It will not be long before the sun sets, and there is still a great distance to cover." Responding to the wisdom of Lord Krishna, Arjuna ordered that the horses be taken to the right of Drona. When Drona saw that Arjuna was avoiding him, the preceptor spoke angrily, "Where are you going, O son of Pandu? You should not continue on till you have defeated your enemy."

"You are not my enemy," Arjuna replied, "but my beloved preceptor. I am your disciple, and therefore, like a son. Besides, I do not see a warrior in the whole world who can subdue you in battle."

Sanjaya continued speaking to Dhritarastra: Saying these words, the mighty-armed son of Kunti proceeded on penetrating deep into the Chakravyuha formation. He was followed by Yudhamanyu and Uttamaujas who protected his chariot wheels. The army in front of Arjuna was a thick mass of chariots, infantry, calvary and elephants. Carving a path hundreds of yards on both sides of his chariot, that great hero cut open the Kaurava army and caused it to bleed profusely. Arjuna's chariot rose above the ground, because of the mass of dead men, horses and broken weapons. It was a scene of devastation as Arjuna mowed down the Kaurava ranks with his celestial weapons. Chariots, without fighter or charioteer, were running wild all over the battlefield. Horses were running here and there with the decapitated trunks of their riders caught in the stirrups. There was a stream of hot blood flowing from the trunks of these dead warriors. The blood of the elephants mixed with the blood of the horses and soldiers caused a river to flow on the field of battle. Men were struggling ankle deep in bloody mud. Wild elephants with no rider bolted and were trampling their own soldiers to death.

Arjuna was being quickly pursued by the preceptor Drona. Catching up to his disciple, Drona struck Arjuna with twenty five arrows. When Drona released his most formidable weapon, Arjuna invoked the Brahma weapon and baffled the shower of arrows released by his teacher. Drona managed to pierce Krishna with seventy arrows and Arjuna with twenty five. Not wanting to waste his time battling with the invincible Drona, Arjuna penetrated the army between the divisions of Kritavarman

and Sudakshina, the ruler of the Kambhojas. When Kritavarman saw Arjuna coming, he released ten arrows at him. Countering those arrows, Arjuna pierced him with a hundred arrows. Arjuna then shattered his bow and struck him in the chest with nine arrows.

Lord Krishna, not wanting to waste time in duels, told Arjuna, "Do not show any mercy to Kritavarman because he is My relative. Immediately crush and slay him!" Then Arjuna released a long shafted arrow that hit Kritavarman in the chest, causing him to fall to the floor of his chariot. By the time Kritavarman had regained consciousness, Arjuna had penetrated deep into the Kaurava army. Kritavarman then began to fight with Yudhamanyu and Uttamaejas. Yudhamanyu quickly shattered Kritavarman's bow and pierced him with five arrows. Kritavarman countered and cut the bows of both Yudhamanyu and Uttamaejas. Taking up stronger bows, they fought on trying to follow Arjuna's path. However, Kritavarman would not allow them to proceed further.

Beholding the lotus-eyed Arjuna coming toward him, King Srutayudha pierced him with three arrows and Krishna with seventy. Not tolerating the impudence of Srutayudha, Arjuna quickly killed his horses and his charioteer. Abandoning his chariot, Srutayudha ran at Arjuna with an upraised mace. The heroic Srutayudha was the son of Varuna and his mother was the river Parnasa. To protect her son, she begged Varuna, "Let my son be immortal on earth."

"No man is immortal in this world," Varuna replied. "However, I will bestow upon him a celestial weapon by which no earthly person may kill him. Therefore, you will have no fear for your son's life." Varuna then gave Srutayudha an invincible mace, and instructed him, "This mace should not be hurled at one who is not engaged in warfare. If hurled at such a person, it will come back and kill you." As Srutayudha came toward Lord Krishna and Arjuna, he released that powerful mace at Lord Krishna. Disobeying his father's instructions, he brought death upon his head. The mace bounced off Krishna and came back to Srutayudha causing his own death. When Srutayudha fell on the field of battle, all the troops that were supporting him broke and fled.

Next came Sudakshina, the ruler of the Kambhojas. He had brought with him an akshauhini division of troops for the sake of Duryodhana. He was a powerful maharathi and was undefeated in battle. Sudakshina pierced Arjuna with seven shafts and Lord Krishna with three. Phalgun then countered and released seven arrows that passed through Sudakshina's body and entered into the earth. Becoming enraged, the Kambhoja King released ten arrows that pierced Arjuna in the chest. Greatly angered, Arjuna cut his enemy's bow and standard. Sudakshina then picked up an iron dart that was covered with jewels and gold. Aiming it carefully, he released it with all his might. That dart, blazing through the sky, pierced Arjuna's armor and entered into the earth. Arjuna then fell into a swoon and sat down on his chariot. Licking his lips and flaming up in rage, Arjuna decided to put an end to this King's life. Releasing hundreds of Arrows, Partha shattered the King's chariot and killed his horses. Arjuna then released a single golden shafted arrow that struck the Kambhoja King in the chest. Piercing his armor, it deprived him of his life, and he

then fell from his chariot to the earth. With the death of this maharathi, all the warriors that were supporting him fled in great fear.

The next great warriors to approach Arjuna were Shrutayus and Achutayus. Rushing toward the son of Kunti, Shrutayus released a javelin that pierced Arjuna's armor, causing him to fall into a deadly swoon. At the same time Achyutayus forcibly struck Partha with a javelin also. Deeply pierced by both javelins, Arjuna supported himself by seizing his flag staff. All the troops that supported those two warriors roared in triumph thinking that Arjuna had been slain. Then those foremost chariot fighters poured upon Lord Krishna and Arjuna a shower of arrows. Coming to his senses and drawing out both javelins, Arjuna saw thousands of arrows coming toward him. He quickly invoked a weapon named Sakra and from one arrow came tens of thousands. Piercing those two warriors as well as their troops, he deprived them of their legs, arms, heads and their very lives. All the supporting warriors of those two generals were also slain leaving a ghastly scene of devastation.

Ripping open the ranks of the Kauravas, Arjuna continued to make his way toward Jayadratha. There was a solid mass of soldiers in front of him, but the son of Kunti blew them all away with his Vayavaya weapon. Picking them up like the wind picks up leaves, that weapon blew elephants, chariots, horses and infantry into the air landing them a great distance away.

While thus proceeding, Srutayus, the king of the Amvashtas, resisted him. Arjuna, quickly, killed the horses that were drawing his chariot. He then shattered his bow and killed his charioteer. Srutayus picked up a mace and descended from his chariot. With his weapon upraised, he ran at Krishna and Arjuna, stopping the progress of their chariot. He struck Lord Krishna on the head, but the divine son of Devaki did not budge an inch nor was He affected. Arjuna immediately cut the mace in two with his arrows. Quickly, Srutayus picked up another mace from the ground and hit Arjuna with all his strength. Before Srutayus could strike him again, Arjuna cut off his arms with a couple of broad headed arrows. Then with another arrow, he severed his head that was decorated with a crown and glittering earrings. With the death of this great warrior, the supporting troops in his division fled out of fear.

Thus Ends the Fifth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Fourteenth Day at Kurukshetra; Arjuna Makes His Way Toward Jayadratha.

## Chapter Six

### Arjuna Continues His Path of Destruction

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after Partha had slain the ruler of the Kambhojas, Sudakshina, what did that mighty warrior do, who was desiring to kill the Sindhu King, Jayadratha?

Sanjaya said: O King, after that great adhiratha, Phalguna had cut open the the first two formations, your son Duryodhana went to the preceptor Drona and prodded him as follows, "O best of the brahmanas, you are the sole refuge to save us from the forest fire of Dhananjaya. It was settled before the day's battle that Arjuna would not be able circumvent your position and open the formation. It seems that my troops have lost their power. O brahmana, are you devoted to the Pandava's cause? I was not aware that you were a razor dipped in honey. If I had known that you could not fulfill your vow to protect Jayadratha, then I would have allowed the ruler of the Sindhus to return to his homeland. Before the sun sets on the horizon, make the necessary arrangements that Jayadratha is not slain by the third son of Kunti."

Pierced to the core of his heart by Duryodhana's harsh words, Drona replied, "O child, I do not find fault in your immature vision. Believe me when I say that you are as dear to me as Ashvatthama. However, you must now act according to my instructions. Of all charioteers, Krishna is the foremost. His horses are divine and cannot be slain. Did you not see that today Arjuna was releasing arrows a full two miles behind his chariot? Overcome with the passing of time, I cannot keep up with him. The Pandava divisions are now penetrating the forefront of our army, and Yudhisthira is close by. I will now try to capture that great King. As for yourself, you can defeat Arjuna. You are both the same age, and both of you belong to the same dynasty. You are also equal in great achievements. You are the ruler of the world and a great King. O brave hero, you should go yourself and challenge Dhananjaya and by so doing achieve lasting fame."

"O preceptor," Duryodhana replied, "how will it be possible for me to withstand Partha in battle. After he has defeated Kritavarman and your very self, what can I do to withstand Arjuna's onslaught? Do you think that I am competent to fight with that mighty armed son of Pandu? I am dependent on you like a slave is to his master. Protect my fame."

"Arjuna is certainly undefeatable in battle," Drona said. "But today the world shall witness how you will check him in battle. Here I have a golden coat of armor that cannot be pierced by the weapons of the demigods. I will fasten this to your body in such a way that Arjuna will not be able to penetrate it. Today you will not need to fear the wrath of Arjuna for this armor will give you full protection."

Drona then uttered certain mantras and attached the golden armor to Duryodhana's body. It was tied together by Vedic mantras and was impenetrable. Having blessed

the King with victory, Drona sent him into battle with Arjuna. The puffed up King then proceeded with confidence to the spot where the son of Pandu was battling the Kaurava army.

After sending Duryodhana to fight with Arjuna, Drona began to contend with the Pandava army. He fought a fierce duel with Dhristadyumna in which the horses of both chariots were tangled. Dhristadyumna descended from his chariot with a sword and shield. As he moved toward Drona, Drona could not find an opportunity to kill him. When Dhristadyumna came out from the cover of the horses and ran at Drona, Drona shattered his shield and sword with special arrows. He then took an arrow out of his quiver capable of killing Drupada's son. However, Satyaki cut that arrow to pieces before it could be released. He then took Dhristadyumna on his chariot and proceeded to another part of the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Arjuna was making his way toward Jayadratha causing a tremendous massacre of men. He was releasing his arrows a full two miles in all directions. When Arjuna released his arrows ahead of the chariot, by the time the arrow pierced his enemy, Krishna and Arjuna had arrived there on that spot. The horses of Arjuna's chariot were as white as the milk ocean and traveled at the speed of the wind. Indeed, those horses traveled by Arjuna's desire. After penetrating many miles into the Kaurava divisions, those celestial horses became tired and drew the chariot with great difficulty.

Understanding that the horses of Krishna and Arjuna were tired, the Kings of Avantipura, Vinda and Anuvinda, assaulted the son of Pandu confident of victory. They pierced Arjuna with sixty four shafts and Krishna with seventy. They then covered Arjuna's tired horses with a hundred arrows. Encouraged by their victory, they sent up loud shouts and rushed again with great force. Arjuna, not tolerating their stupidity, cut off their bows as they closed in. Taking up stronger bows, they released deadly arrows and fought with all their strength. With a cool and calm mind, Arjuna cut off their bows again and then killed their horses and chariot drivers. He also killed the supporting soldiers of those two mighty kings.

Vinda and Anuvinda were related to Lord Krishna as brothers-in-law. Krishna had forcefully taken their very beautiful sister Mitravinda from the svayamvara in which she was to choose her husband. Since that time, Vinda and Anuvinda became avowed enemies of Lord Krishna. They had brought an akshauhini division of soldiers to fight with the Pandavas. Not caring for family relationships, Arjuna cut off Vinda's head with an arrow as sharp as a razor. Beholding his elder brother killed, Anuvinda took up a mace and ran at the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Filled with rage, Anuvinda struck Lord Krishna on the head with all his might. Lord Krishna did not waver in the least, but sat on the chariot like a mountain. Then Arjuna pulled six arrows from his quiver and cut off the legs and arms of that great hero. As he was falling, Arjuna cut off his head with a crescent shaped arrow. Upon seeing Vinda and Anuvinda slain, a huge force of elephants, chariot fighters and horsemen rushed at Arjuna. However, without the slightest difficulty, Arjuna sent all those warriors the the abode of Yamaraja.

Arjuna then spoke to Hrishiksha these words, "The ruler of the Sindus is still a great distance away, and our horses are very tired. What do you think is our best course of action? O Krishna, You are the personification of wisdom. The Pandavas have You for their eyes, and You for their ears. Please guide us in all circumstances."

"I shall unbridle the horses and remove these arrows," Lord Krishna replied. "I will give them water and rest them."

"O Hrishiksha," Arjuna said, "I will hold the whole army in check with my powerful weapons. Do what is necessary so that the horses may continue with full strength."

Sanjaya continued speaking to Dhritarastra: O King, descending from the chariot, Arjuna stood fearlessly with his Gandiva bow in hand. Taking this as their golden opportunity, thousands of chariot fighters rushed at the son of Kunti desiring to slay him. They rushed at him as the ocean covers the beech. Releasing his infallible arrows, Arjuna was able to keep them at bay. Meanwhile Lord Krishna informed Arjuna, "There is no well from which these horses may drink water and feel refreshed."

Understanding Lord Krishna's desire, Arjuna released an arrow into the ground creating a lake that was filled with fish, lotus flowers and beautiful birds. Witnessing Arjuna's mystic power, the heavenly denizens were struck with wonder. They had never seen a lake created in the middle of a battlefield. Even the great sage Narada came to see the lake created by Arjuna's arrows. To the amazement of all, Arjuna then created a protective house out of arrows from which the horses could drink the water. Seeing this, Lord Krishna exclaimed, "Excellent! Excellent!" Vasudeva then unyoked the horses and lead them to that house made of arrows. Lord Krishna plucked out their arrows and rubbed His transcendental hand over their wounds relieving them of all fatigue and pain. He then lead them to the water where they drank as much as they desired. All this was done in the thickest of fighting. Lord Krishna, acting as if He were in an assembly of women, calmly took the horses back to the chariot and bridled them in their proper positions. To all who witnessed this action, it seemed highly wonderful. After yoking the horses to the chariot, Lord Krishna and Arjuna proceeded further into the Kaurava ranks. After penetrating the divisions of Drona and the divisions of Kritavarman, Arjuna was coming closer to the place where Jayadratha was being protected.

Meanwhile, Duryodhana caught up with the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna. Seeing him coming, Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna, "Behold Dhritarastra's son coming towards us. Providence has offered an opportunity to fight with this great hero. Remembering the offenses this sinful person has made against your brothers and your wife, you should kill him immediately. By deceit he has taken away your kingdom and sent you into the forest. Therefore, remembering the offenses this person committed, send him to the court of Yamaraja today."

When Duryodhana was rushing toward the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna, the Kaurava host thought that the King would now be slain. Understanding their mentality, Duryodhana encouraged them, "Let your fears be dispelled. I will kill both

Krishna and Arjuna and cause them to enter death's abode." After reassuring the troops, Duryodhana then challenged Partha, "O son of Kunti, If you have been actually begotten by the great King Pandu, then fight with me using all the weapons you have received from the demigods. I want to see your display of prowess. You always speak of achievements that we have never seen. You may now show me those feats by which you have won your fame."

After speaking these boastful words, King Duryodhana pierced Arjuna with three arrows, Krishna with ten and the horses with sixteen. He then cut off the whip that the lotus-eyed Lord Krishna was holding. Countering those arrows, Arjuna released fourteen at the King, but they were repelled by Duryodhana's armor. Arjuna then shot twenty nine arrows, but those also proved fruitless. Arjuna then said to Lord Krishna, "O Hrishikesha, I think the armor that Duryodhana is wearing has been put on him by Drona. That armor cannot be penetrated by any weapon. Only Drona knows how to apply it, and from that best among men, I have also learned it. However, Duryodhana does not know what to do with the armor. He wears it like a woman. Behold now, O Janardana, the strength of my arms and bow, as I vanquish this wretched person."

Having said these words, Arjuna invoked a celestial weapon that was capable of piercing Duryodhana's celestial armor. However, Ashvatthama cut off the weapon while it was still on the Gandiva bowstring. Seeing his weapon frustrated, Arjuna spoke to Krishna, "This weapon cannot be invoked twice, for if it is, it will slay myself as well as my troops." While speaking to Lord Krishna, Duryodhana pierced him with nine more arrows. Looking over Duryodhana's body, Arjuna saw that there was not a part that was not covered by that protective armor. Still Arjuna, enraged at the King's vanity, killed his four horses and charioteer. He then killed the supporting troops that protected the King. Stretching his bow to full length, Arjuna cut up Duryodhana's royal chariot into fragments and then pierced his palms with many arrows. Seeing the distressful situation the Kuru King had fallen into, Duryodhana's troops rushed at Arjuna in thousands. However, as they approached Krishna and Arjuna, they were all slain.

Meanwhile, in the front line of the battle, Drona was striving to fulfill his promise to capture Yudhisthira. When Drona came upon the divisions of Yudhisthira, there was a terrible battle that ensued. Drona shattered Yudhisthira's bow and pierced his horses with many arrows. Yudhisthira, however, countered and cut off Drona's bow. Enraged, Drona then killed Yudhisthira's horses and charioteer. Yudhisthira then released a celestial dart with all his strength. As it came towards Drona, the preceptor invoked the Brahma weapon and reduced the weapon to dust. As the Brahma weapon continued toward the King, that first son of Kunti baffled it with his own weapons. Drona then released a mace at Yudhisthira, but the King also released a mace, and the two collided creating a great flash of light. Now that Yudhisthira was weaponless and carless, Drona rushed to capture him. However, Yudhisthira was taken onto Sahadeva's chariot and those horses bore him away from the battlefield.

In a great duel King Brihatkshatra fought with Kshemadhruti and severed his head with a crescent shaped arrow. King Dhrishtaketu, who had brought an akshauhini division of troops for Yudhisthira's cause, was engaged in fighting with a prince named Viradhanwan. Dhrishtaketu pierced Prince Viradhanwan's armor with a powerful dart and thus took his life. Sahadeva was engaged in combat with Durmuka, the son of Dhritarastra. In that fight Sahadeva killed Durmukha's horses as well as his charioteer. Durmukha then mounted the chariot of Niramitra. However, Sahadeva killed Niramitra with a broad headed shaft.

Satyaki was engaged with a Trigarta prince named Vyaghradatta. Satyaki pierced his golden armor and deprived him of life. Satyaki then began to mow down the ranks of the Trigartas. The sons of Draupadi were engaged in fighting with the son of Somadatta. The son of Arjuna quickly killed his horses, the son of Bhima cut off his bow, the son of Yudhisthira cut off his standard, and the son of Nakula killed his charioteer. Seeing him about to leave the battlefield, the son of Sahadeva cut off his head with a razor faced arrow. With the death of all these great generals, the Kaurava army broke and fled in all directions.

Coming to the front line of the battle was the great Rakshasa Alambusha. He attacked Bhima and killed thirty chariot fighters that were supporting him. Bhima, laughing all the while, pierced the Rakshasa with nine arrows. Uttering a loud and awful sound, Alambusha pierced Bhimasena with five arrows and destroyed four hundred chariots that were assisting him. Bhima fell down to the floor of his chariot senseless. Quickly recovering, he pierced the Rakshasa with many sharp pointed arrows. Remembering how Bhima had killed his brother Baka, Alambusha challenged the second son of Pandu, "Stand before me in battle, O son of Pritha. I am now remembering how you killed my brother, Baka, when I was not present. It is true that you killed him, and now I will kill you." Boasting these words, he covered Bhima with a hundred shafts. The Rakshasa then became invisible, and from the sky began to pour thousands of arrows at the Pandava army. When the Rakshasa became invisible, Bhima filled the heavens with thousands of arrows greatly afflicting the powerful Rakshasa. Alambusha then entered the earth by his mystic power, and very soon, he was seen again in the sky assuming many hideous forms. He was sometimes large and sometimes small. He uttered frightful cries that echoed in all directions. He then caused thousands of arrows, darts, scimitars, lances, spiked maces and battle axes to fall from the sky upon the Pandava army. Hundreds of Pandava warriors were literally cut up into thousands of pieces by those weapons. Not tolerating the Rakshasa's victory, Bhima invoked the Tvashtri weapon that produced thousands of weapons destroying the Rakshasa's mystic illusions. Struck in every part of his body, Alambusha fled the battlefield.

Alambusha then went to another part of the battlefield and began to destroy the ranks of the oncoming enemy. While he was battling with the foremost Pandava warriors, he came upon the son of Bhima, Ghatotkacha. The son of Bhima pierced Alambusha with nine arrows and again with twenty. Those two mystic Rakshasas then began to throw up mystic illusions to slay the other in battle. Alambusha destroyed the mystic illusions of Ghatotkacha and produced his own to kill the son of Bhima. Seeing this, the other Pandavas came to the aid of Ghatotkacha and

hemmed in the gigantic Rakshasa Alambusha. They covered him on all sides with thousands of arrows. Baffling that shower of arrows with his mystic illusions, he then freed himself from that encirclement of chariots. All of the Pandavas, Bhima, Yudhisthira, Nakula and Sahadeva as well as Ghatotkacha pierced the Rakshasa with hundreds of arrows. The Rakshasa Alambusha did not waver in the least and began to pierce those great warriors with his own arrows. He released countless arrows at Ghatotkacha piercing him deeply. Then the Pandavas, the sons of Draupadi and Ghatotkacha all rushed at Alambusha releasing their powerful weapons. Seeing them all coming with such great anger, Alambusha did not know what to do. Ghatotkacha came near the chariot of Alambusha and jumped upon it. He took the mystic Rakshasa by the hair and threw him from the chariot. Raising him up in the air and whirling him about, he dashed him to the ground with great force. With all his limbs smashed and blood flowing from the pours of his body, Alambusha gave up his life. The Pandava warriors sent up loud roars and blew their conches announcing Ghatotkacha's victory. With great enthusiasm, they again rushed against the Kaurava army killing them in thousands.

Thus Ends the Sixth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, Arjuna Continues His Path of Destruction.

## Chapter Seven

### Satyaki Follows the Path of Arjuna

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, what happened to my forces after the great Rakshasa Alambusha was killed? Did Drona succeed in capturing King Yudhisthira? What happened to the son of Kunti, Arjuna, who took a unattainable vow to kill Jayadratha before the sun set on the horizon?

Sanjaya replied: O King, for the offences your son committed against the Pandavas, one great maharathi after another was killed. The fructification of the cruel deeds in the gambling match took place in the form of the death of your kinsmen. Listen, as I describe the slaughter of your forces by the great Adhirathas, Arjuna, Satyaki and Bhima.

Beholding the great maharathis slain one after another, Drona flared up in anger. He rushed at Satyaki, and a mighty battle ensued between those foremost chariot fighters. In the course of the duel Drona began to gain the upper hand, and it appeared as if Satyaki would be devoured by the great ocean of the preceptor Drona. Seeing the situation, Yudhisthira ordered Dhristadyumna to assist the esteemed hero of the Vrishni race. He requested Drupada's son, "Drona is rushing at Satyaki like Rahu rushes toward the sun and moon. Dronacharya is a great Bowman and is playing with Satyaki like a boy plays with his toys. All of you headed by Bhimasena should fight with the preceptor and save Satyaki from the jaws of death."

While Drona was resisting the Pandava forces, Yudhisthira heard the sound of the Panchajanya conchshell. Not hearing the sound of the Gandiva bow, the King became worried. The son of Pandu repeatedly thought, "All is not going well with Arjuna, for I hear the loud shouts of the Kauravas, but I do not hear the sound of the Gandiva bow."

After contemplating what to do, Kunti's first son requested Satyaki, "O grandson of Sini, it is now time to relieve our distress. O descendent of Vrishni, I will now lay a great burden upon you. Arjuna is your friend and preceptor, and I think that he may have fallen into great trouble. Alone he has penetrated the great divisions of Drona and is now proceeding toward the divisions of Jayadratha. I can hear in the distance the loud roars of the Kauravas engaged in fighting with Arjuna. I have just heard the sound of the Panchajanya conchshell, but not the sound of the Gandiva. I know that Lord Krishna is with Arjuna, and there should be no need to fear, but still I want to see Arjuna given all protection. I do not want to see him drown in the Kaurava ocean. Among all the chariot fighters of the Vrishni race two are regarded as adhirathas. They are Pradyumna and yourself. Therefore I request you to enter this vast army of the Kurus and assist Arjuna in achieving his goals. I know that you have been chosen to protect me from Drona, but there are many great warriors here to safeguard me such as Bhima and Dhristadyumna. I now order you to enter this vast Kaurava ocean and attain lasting glory."

Hearing Yudhisthira's command, Satyaki replied, "O great hero, these words befit a great King concerned for those who are committed to him. As for myself, I am prepared to cast away my life for the sake of Dhananjaya. What is there to say about the force of the Kauravas? I am prepared to fight with all the demigods and asuras united. Truly I vow to you that I can reach Arjuna in safety and again return. However, I was strongly ordered by Arjuna to protect you from Drona. Without leaving you in the hands of someone competent, how can I follow Arjuna as you have requested?"

"O mighty armed one," Yudhisthira said, "I think that Bhima will give me protection in your absence. Also there is Dhristadyumna who was born from the sacrificial fire for Drona's death. There are also many others such as the five sons of Draupadi, Virata, Drupada, Shikhandin, Ghatotkacha, Dhristaketu, as well as my other brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva. All these are here to protect me like the beech resisting the sea. Therefore, go, O grandson of Sini, and with an easy heart, free from anxiety, aid Arjuna in his attempt to kill Jayadratha."

After being ordered by the great King Yudhisthira, Satyaki readied himself for the task ahead of him. His horses were sufficiently fed and watered. Their arrows were plucked out, and their bodies decorated with golden mail and chains. All this was done by the younger brother of Daruka who was expert in guiding horses in battle. Satyaki's chariot was then filled with enough weapons to carve his way to the presence of Arjuna. There were many bows and thousands of arrows. Satyaki had access to all the celestial weapons, and they were also present in his chariot. Satyaki then worshiped the brahmanas and gave away in charity many valuable presents. He also worshiped the lotus feet of the King and then ascended his chariot.

Proceeding towards the Kaurava host, he appeared like the sun in the sky dissipating the early morning fog. As he rushed at the Kaurava army, Yudhisthira, surrounded by his forces, followed Satyaki to help him penetrate the great array.

When Satyaki came upon the preceptor Drona, a fierce battle ensued in which neither of the great heroes could gain the upper hand. Both warriors fought to their best ability, and both covered the other with hundreds of arrows. While the fighting was going on, Drona spoke to Satyaki, "Your teacher, like a coward, avoided me while I was fighting with him. O descendent of Vrishni, if you stand before me for a little while, you will not escape with your life."

"At the command of King Yudhisthira," Satyaki replied, "I will follow the path taken by my preceptor. O great brahmana, I will lose time if I fight with you, and besides a disciple should follow the example set down by his martial guru."

Having said this much, the grandson of Sini proceeded on avoiding Drona. Satyaki then spoke to his charioteer, "Listen to my orders and proceed carefully. O suta, just in front of us is the division of the Avantis and next to them is the host of the Southerners. Beyond them are the Balhikas and beyond them is the division of Karna. All these great divisions are supporting each other. Take me to the point where the Southerners and the Balhikas are arrayed. Between them on the left is an open space. Guide the horses to that point for there I will pierce this Chakravyuha."

While Satyaki was heading in the direction of the Kaurava army, Drona chased him from behind releasing his deadly arrows. When Satyaki came to the point where he intended to penetrate the great formation, the Kaurava soldiers broke and fled. Seeing this, Kritavarman came forward to resist Satyaki. The grandson of Sini quickly killed his four horses and pierced Kritavarman with many arrows. Furious that he was hit with arrows, Kritavarman released an arrow that pierced the Satyaki's body and entered into the earth. He then shattered the bow and arrows of that great hero. Satyaki was not affected, but quickly killed Kritavarman's charioteer and covered him with hundreds of arrows. He then proceeded on piercing through the Chakravyuha. Kritavarman was outraged by his defeat. He ascended another chariot, but before he could proceed, Satyaki was out of sight. Drona placed him at the gate of the large formation and then he, himself set out to challenge Satyaki.

Meanwhile the Pandavas headed by Bhima fell upon Kritavarman's forces. The son of Hridika, Kritavarman, was enraged that Satyaki had defeated him, and he fought with superhuman force. He pierced Bhima with many shafts and caused him to fall down to the floor of his chariot in a deadly swoon. To protect their brother, Yudhisthira, Nakula and Sahadeva covered Kritavarman with hundreds of arrows. Recovering consciousness, Bhima picked up a dart and hurled it with all his strength. However, before it could reach him, Kritavarman cut it to pieces. Kritavarman was then attacked by many of the great Pandava generals. Shikhandin came forward to assist in the fight as well the sons of Draupadi and Dhristadyumna. Shikhandin released a mighty sword at Kritavarman that shattered his bow and arrows. Kritavarman quickly picked up another large bow and pierced all his opponents. He caused Shikhandin to fall to the floor of his chariot, and to save his life, Shikhandin's

charioteer bore him away from the battlefield. The Pandavas headed by Bhima then came forward to fight with Kritavarman, but the son of Hridika kept them all in check.

When Satyaki heard the fierce uproar that was taking place behind him, he ordered his charioteer to turn back. He then rushed at Kritavarman and killed his four horses and charioteer, shattered his bow and pierced him with many shafts. After vanquishing him in battle, he proceeded on his way. He then came upon the divisions of Drona. Satyaki said to his charioteer, "Behold, O Suta, the vast divisions of Drona. Its leader is the great chariot fighter Rukmaratha. It is filled with huge elephants and many chariots. The Trigartas also lie within this vast division. Head in that direction for I will subjugate them in the very sight of the preceptor."

Satyaki, also known as Yuyudhana, then rushed at Drona's divisions which were filled with elephants. Coming up to challenge him was the powerful Jalasandha, the ruler of the Magadhas. He quickly cut Satyaki's bow and pierced him with many arrows. Satyaki then countered by taking up a stronger bow and pierced Jalasandha and also shattered his bow. Jalasandha then picked up a lance and threw it with all his might, lacerating Satyaki's arm and entering the earth. Not affected by the King's javelin, Satyaki pierced him again and sent up a loud roar. Jalasandha then took up a huge scimitar and hurled it with full force at Satyaki. That sword cut Satyaki's bow and arrows, and fell to the earth like a circle of fire. Smiling all the while, Satyaki took up another bow and with a couple of razor faced arrows cut off the arms of the Magadha King. Those two arms fell off either side of the elephant, and while his enemy was still alive, he cut off his head with a third arrow. After Jalasandha was killed, Satyaki pierced the huge elephant on which the Magadha Monarch was riding. Bolting in the opposite direction, the elephant trampled chariots, horses and infantry in hundreds. After the fall of the Magadha King, Satyaki continued to make his way toward Arjuna.

Satyaki then came upon Duryodhana and defeated him easily. He killed his horses, charioteer and smashed his chariot. Duryodhana, not being able to fight with Satyaki, ran away like a coward. Kritavarman came again to fight with the grandson of Sini, but Kritavarman was defeated in his attempt. Satyaki, with an intense desire to find Arjuna, quickly pierced Kritavarman's armor with many arrows. Falling into a swoon, Kritavarman was taken from the battlefield.

Drona, who was following Satyaki from behind, caught up to him and began to afflict him with many arrows. A duel then ensued which caused great wonder to enter the minds of the Kaurava soldiers. Finally, in the end, Satyaki killed Drona's charioteer, and Drona's horse ran wild across the battlefield. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Satyaki continued making his way through the Kaurava host hoping to find his Martial Guru.

Satyaki then came upon a valiant King named Sudarshana. Sudarshana desired to stop Satyaki from achieving his goals. He covered Satyaki with hundreds of arrows and sent up a loud roar. Satyaki returned arrows as fast as lightning killing Sudarshana's horses. Then with a long shafted arrow, he severed his head.

Traveling through the Kaurava host like a meteor, the grandson of Sini killed the prominent division leaders. At Duryodhana's command, one thousand chariot fighters, one hundred rathas, two thousand elephants, and countless foot soldiers rushed at Satyaki to kill him. Seeing them approaching him, Satyaki sent them all to the abode of Yamaraja. Every warrior without exception was slain. Enraged at the complete rout of that mighty force, Duhshasana ordered the mountaineers to fight against Satyaki. The mountaineers were expert in throwing huge boulders at the oncoming enemy. Some soldiers carried boulders as big as elephant heads. They all ran at Satyaki and released their boulders with lightning force. Seeing the mass of boulders coming, the grandson of Sini cut them into fragments with his celestial weapons. The stone fragments lit up like meteors and fell back upon the mountaineers slaughtering great numbers of them. Those warriors fell down to the ground shrieking in agony.

Seeing Duhshasana hesitating to fight with Satyaki, Drona spoke harshly, "Why, O Duhshasana, are these chariot fighters fleeing from battle, and why are you hesitating to fight? Don't you remember the gambling match where you tried to disrobe the beautiful Draupadi. Having been the cause of this great war, why do you flee the battlefield like a coward? Where is your pride now, and where is your boastful tongue? All these warriors are fleeing because you are afraid to engage the enemy. This is only one warrior, and here there are many. What will you do when you come face to face with the wielder of the Gandiva bow? The arrows of Satyaki are not equal to the powerful arrows of Phalgunas. Before the Pandavas kill all your brothers in battle, make peace with the Pandavas. Formerly Bhishma warned you that the Pandavas were undefeatable in battle, but your ignorant brother would not listen. Therefore, set your heart on combat. Go quickly and engage the enemy before he destroys the whole army."

Sanjaya said to Dhritarastra: When chastised by Drona, your son, O King, did not reply, but headed into battle with Satyaki, pretending not to hear the preceptor's words.

Dronacharya then engaged in battle with the Panchalas, the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. He came upon a son of Drupada named Viraketu. A fierce encounter arose between those two renowned warriors, catching the attention of all on the battlefield. In the end, however, Drona invoked a celestial weapon that resembled blazing fire. Released with a meteor's speed, and piercing the Panchala prince, it deprived him of his life. Then four of Viraketu's brothers rushed at Drona to avenge his death. Drona very easily stupefied them and cut off their heads like one picking flowers from a tree.

Dhristadyumna could not tolerate the death of his step brothers. He rushed at Drona and struck him with many shafts. Deeply pierced, Drona fell to the floor of his chariot in a swoon. Taking the opportunity, Dhristadyumna descended from his chariot and rushed at him with sword in hand. He quickly ran to Drona's chariot desiring to sever his head. Drona regained consciousness as Dhristadyumna was approaching. Taking up his bow, he pierced him with short range arrows. Dhristadyumna was weakened and retreated to his own chariot to engage Drona in

battle. In the end Drona killed his charioteer, and the horses, lacking a driver, ran uncontrolled over the battlefield.

Sanjaya continued relating the activities of the battle to the the blind King Dhritarashtra. He said: O King, your son Duhshasana then assaulted Satyaki with the intention of killing him. He was surrounded by five hundred mighty chariot warriors who covered Satyaki's chariot with hundreds of arrows. Within a short span of time, Satyaki killed every heroic fighter that was supporting Duhshasana. Greatly enraged, Duhshasana pierced Satyaki with nine arrows and then again with three. Satyaki countered by killing the charioteer and horses of your son. He then cut off the wheels of his chariot and killed the soldiers protecting those wheels. Duhshasana quickly ascended the chariot of the King of the Trigartas and fled away. Satyaki did not endeavor to kill him remembering Bhima's oath.

Sanjaya continued: In the afternoon of that day, O King, a dreadful battle took place between Drona and the foremost Pandava heroes. The five Keykaya brothers headed by Vrihatkshatra attacked the preceptor Drona. Drona released fifteen arrows at the Kekaya Prince but they were shattered by Vrihatkshatra's arrows. Drona then invoked the Brahma weapon which issued from Drona's bow like lightning. However, Vrihatkshatra released a Brahma weapon of his own that baffled Drona's weapon. Drona, stretching his bow to its fullest extent, pierced Vrihatkshatra's armor. The Kekaya Prince was furious with Drona and pierced him with many shafts. He also killed his chariot driver. Dronacharya then killed Vrihatkshatra's horses, and with a single arrow, the preceptor pierced his heart, taking the prince's life.

Upon the death of the Vrihatkshatra, Dhristaketu, the son of Shisupala, came forward to fight with Drona. He had brought to Pandava's cause an akshauhini division of soldiers. After the Rajasuya sacrifice, when Shisupala had been killed by Lord Krishna, Dhristaketu was enthroned as King, and he became a subordinate ruler to the Pandavas. He was one of the seven commanders on the Pandava's side and was a great maharathi. He soon came upon Drona and lacerated him with many shafts. He then hit the horses and charioteer of the preceptor with flaming arrows. Smiling all the while, Drona quickly killed his four horses and with a single shaft severed his charioteer's head. He then pierced Dhristaketu with twenty five arrows. The King of the Chedis descended from his chariot and released a mace with all his strength. Drona countered that weapon by striking it with hundreds of arrows. The sounds of the colliding weapons echoed all over the battlefield. Dhristaketu then released an iron javelin and then a dart covered in gold. Drona cut up the javelin with five arrows and the dart with four. Having no mercy upon his enemy, Drona released a long shafted arrow that pierced Dhristaketu in the chest, causing him to fall to the ground mortally wounded. With the death of that great maharathi, the supporting soldiers fled in different directions.

There then came to fight with Drona the son of Jarasandha, Sahadeva. After Jarasandha's death by Bhima, Lord Krishna enthroned Sahadeva as King of Magadha. He became a subordinate King under Yudhisthira. When it came time for the Kurukshetra war, he brought to the Pandava's cause one akshauhini division,

consisting of chariot fighters, calvary, elephant warriors, and infantry. Sahadeva was a respected fighter like his father, but unlike his father he was very affectionate toward the Pandavas. He rushed toward the preceptor Drona like a fly rushing towards a fire. He covered Drona with many arrows and uttered a loud roar. However, within a twinkling of an eye, Drona killed the son of Jarasandha within the sight of all bowmen. Drona then became like Yamaraja himself killing all who opposed him. He began to kill thousands of elephants, horses and men. The Chedis, the Panchalas, the Matsyas and the Shrinjayas then rushed at Drona, exclaiming, "Drona is slain! Drona is slain!" They fell upon him fighting with their greatest effort.

The son of Dhristadyumna, Ksatradharman, then came upon Dronacharya releasing his formidable weapons. He quickly cut off Drona's bow and pierced him in the chest with five arrows. Not minding those arrows, Drona picked up another bow and pierced Ksatradharman in the chest with a single arrow depriving him of his life. The great preceptor then made a mountain of heads around his chariot as the hosts of the Panchalas came forward to fight with him. Indeed, Drona roamed in the midst of the Pandava forces causing the annihilation of thousands upon thousands of men. Soon the battlefield became like a nightmare as if Drona had been appointed by Yamaraja himself to take away the lives of all living creatures.

Thus Ends the Seventh Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, Satyaki Follows the Path of Arjuna.

## Chapter Eight

### Bhima Endeavors to Find Arjuna

After Satyaki had entered the Chakravyuha, Yudhisthira could no longer hear Satyaki's bow, and fearing that he might have met with some calamity, he decided to send Bhima into the Kaurava army to protect Satyaki. Finding the place where Bhima was slaughtering the Kaurava troops, Yudhisthira requested him, "O Bhima, I do not see Arjuna's banner, nor do I hear the Gandiva bow. Fearing for Arjuna's life, I have sent Satyaki into the Kaurava host. Now I can no longer hear Satyaki's bow or Arjuna's. I can only hear the Panchajanya conchshell and this leads me to believe that Arjuna has been slain, and Krishna is fighting with the Kauravas single handedly. I am in great fear that Yuyudhana (Satyaki) has also been swallowed in the Kuru ocean headed by Drona. Dispel my fears by going forward and protecting those two heroes who fight against great odds."

"I do not see any danger that can come to Krishna and Arjuna," Bhima replied. "However, reverently taking your command on my head, I will search out the place where those two heroes are releasing their arrows. After finding them in safety, I will return and inform you of their welfare." Bhimasena then ordered Dhristadyumna to protect the King in his absence and prepared to follow the path of Arjuna and

Satyaki. He gave charity to the brahmanas, and the brahmanas gave their blessings for Bhima's victory. Bhima then prepared his chariot with all kinds of weapons and allowed his horses to rest. He put on a black coat of iron mail bedecked with golden design work. He appeared like a cloud charged with lightning.

When Bhima was ready to enter into the Kaurava army, he heard the loud sounds of Lord Krishna's Panchajanya conchshell. Hearing the blasts of that king of conches, Yudhisthira said to Bhima, "Undoubtedly Arjuna has fallen into distress, and Krishna, the bearer of the discus and mace, is battling with all the Kurus. Go quickly to the place where Dhananjaya is fighting."

Following his older brother's orders, Bhima sounded his conchshell and send up loud shouts, frightening Duryodhana's troops. He then set out against his enemy. His horses were able to travel at the velocity of wind, and they were guided by Vishoka. The son of the wind god began to stretch his bow to its full length causing destruction to the Kaurava's front line. He soon came upon Drona and showered him with arrows. Drona, with a desire to fight with Bhima, challenged him in the following words, "O Bhimasena, you will not be able to enter the Kaurava host, without vanquishing me in battle. Krishna and Arjuna have penetrated this formation with my permission only, but you will never succeed in doing so."

Hearing the challenge of his preceptor, Bhima said to him, "O worst of the brahmanas, I know that Arjuna has entered this great formation by the speed of his chariot. If he offered you worship, while passing, it was only to give you honor. However, I am not compassionate like Arjuna. Considering you our enemy, I will subjugate you in the presence of your assembled forces." Saying this much and whirling a mace in the air, he hurled it at Drona. To save his life, Drona stepped down from his chariot. That mace thrown with massive force, smashed the Preceptor's chariot and horses and entered into the earth. Drona quickly mounted another chariot and took up his position at the gateway of the formation.

Sanjaya continued: O King, Bhima entered the formation and came upon your sons headed by Duhshasana. Enraged, Duhshasana hurled a dart at Bhima, but Vrikodara cut it in two with his powerful arrows. Bhima then killed your sons Vrindaraka, Abhaya, Raudrakarman, Durvimochana, Vinda, Anuvinda, Suvarman and Sudarshana. He killed them like a tiger kills a herd of deer. Your other sons fled out of fear, but Bhima pursued them with great speed. He took up his mace and hurled it at them sending up a great roar. Overcome with fear, your sons fled away from that spot and the mace descended on your army killing many chariot fighters.

While Bhima was engaged in thinning the enemy ranks, Dronacharya again came to fight with Bhima. He killed hundreds of Bhima's supporting troops and also pierced Bhima with many arrows. Jumping down from his chariot with mace in hand, Bhima ran at his preceptor, his eyes red hot with anger. The second son of Kunti easily bore the deluge of arrows from Drona's bow, and reaching Drona's chariot, he picked it up by its shaft and smashed it to the ground, horses and all. Falling from the chariot, Drona mounted another and proceeded toward the gateway of the formation.

Bhima then proceeded against the huge army destroying it like a hurricane destroys trees. Indeed, Bhima resisted the Kaurava divisions like a mountain resists the ocean. He passed through the division of Kritavarman and the divisions of the Kambhojas and the Mlecchas. Seeing in the distance the chariots of Arjuna and Satyaki, Bhima sent up a loud roar that sounded like the rumble of clouds during the rainy season. Those sounds were heard by Lord Krishna and Arjuna as well as by Yudhisthira. The King could understand that Bhima had sighted Arjuna and Satyaki, and that they were fighting victoriously in battle.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, while the mighty armed Bhimasena was engaged in battle, who among our troops was brave enough to challenge him? I do not see the warrior, O Sanjaya, who could stand in front of the son of the Wind god as he wielded that terrible mace on the field of battle. I do not fear Arjuna or Krishna or Satyaki as much as I fear Bhima who appeared like a blazing fire. Tell me, O Sanjaya, who amongst our troops dared to fight with that mighty son of Pandu.

Sanjaya replied: While Bhima was uttering his mighty roars, Karna was unable to tolerate them. He rushed at Bhima stretching his bow to full length. A great duel then ensued in which thousands upon thousands of arrows were released by those two combatants. Smiling all the while, Bhima cut Karna's bowstring and then killed his charioteer and his horses. Karna descended from his chariot and got onto the chariot of his son Vrishasena. Bhima then roared loudly, and the sound was heard by all the Pandava warriors. Hearing the loud shouts of Bhima, Yudhisthira became enlivened and blew upon his conchshell bringing joy to the other Pandava troops.

With Karna's defeat, Duryodhana prodded Dronacharya with the following words, "O foremost brahmana, Arjuna, Bhima and Satyaki have succeeded in penetrating our formations, and they are now making their way toward Jayadratha. All the soldiers are asking how it is possible for these warriors to defeat you in battle. The destruction of my army is surely at hand. O great preceptor, Arjuna is coming nearer to Jayadratha, and you have promised him protection. What is our next course of action?"

Dronacharya replied, "As of yet only three great warriors have penetrated our formation. However, we have as much to fear from the Pandava army as from these three. Our greatest fear is from Arjuna since it is he who has vowed to slay Jayadratha. Our first duty is to protect Jayadratha from Arjuna's arrows. You should know that our defeat has come about by the deceitfulness of your gambling match. Those dice, which Shakuni threw in the great assembly hall, have now been taken by the Pandavas and turned into deadly arrows. The wager in today's play is the Sindhu Monarch, Jayadratha. There was never victory or defeat in that gambling match, but here at Kurukshetra there will be victory or defeat. Go quickly to Jayadratha and give him all protection. I will stay here and check the advancement of the Pandava army."

Thus commanded by the preceptor, Duryodhana went quickly to the aid of Jayadratha. As he was proceeding, he came upon Yudhamanyu and Uttamaujas, who previously protected Arjuna's chariot wheels. They were still trying to pierce the

formation, and Duryodhana engaged both of them in battle. Duryodhana cut off Yudhamanyu's royal standard and also his bow. He also killed his horses and charioteer. Yudhamanyu ascended the chariot of his brother Uttamaejas, and together they managed to kill Duryodhana's horses as well as his charioteer. Greatly enraged, Duryodhana descended from his chariot and ran at both brothers with an upraised mace. Yudhamanyu and Uttamaejas quickly got down from the chariot while Duryodhana smashed it to pieces. Duryodhana was then picked up by Salya, the King of Madras, and Yudhamanyu and Uttamaejas, ascending other chariots, continued on their way to Arjuna.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, Once before Karna had been defeated by Bhimasena. How, therefore, could the Suta's son again come face to face with the son of Kunti. Now that Karna has been informed of his brotherhood with the Pandavas, has he now become compassionate upon them? O Sanjaya, you are expert in narrating events outside our vision. Tell me truly what happened when those two bulls among the kshatriyas again engaged in battle.

Sanjaya said: O monarch, not tolerating Bhima's victory, Karna came forward to engage in battle again. He covered the son of Kunti with arrows like a cloud covers a mountain with rain. He challenged Bhima with these words, "O Bhima, I did n't know that you knew how to fight. Why are you now proceeding into battle showing me your back? You want to make your way to Krishna and Arjuna, but first you must fight with me and defeat me in battle."

Enraged at Karna's words, Bhima turned on him and covered him with numerous arrows. He became like an angry cobra someone purposely stepped on. Both warriors began to release their mighty weapons trying to achieve the other's death. Both warriors began to look like porcupines as they released their weapons with lightning force. Finally Bhima cut Karna's bow, killed his horses and charioteer, and then pierced him in the chest with arrows as effulgent as the sun. Those arrows passed through Karna's body and entered into the earth. Afflicted like a trampled snake, Karna ascended another chariot and proceeded again toward the second son of Pandu.

When Bhima saw Karna again coming for battle, he covered him with thousands of arrows. Both were furious and released their selected weapons seeking to kill the other. In the end Bhima cut Karna's bow and killed his horses. Karna picked up a huge dart and threw it forcefully at Bhima. Bhima, however, shattered it with eight arrows. The second son of Kunti then killed Karna's charioteer and sent up a loud roar. Karna became confused by the shower of weapons and did not know what to do.

Seeing him in that state, Duryodhana ordered Durjaya, "Go, O Durjaya, and save Karna from certain death at the hands of Bhima." Responding to his brother's order, Durjaya came upon Bhima and pierced him with nine arrows, his charioteer with seven and his horses with eight. Rising up like a cobra, Bhima pierced him with ten arrows that entered his body and stuck out of his back. Becoming senseless, he fell to the ground deprived of life. Overcome with grief, Karna descended from his

chariot and circumambulated Durjaya's dead body, weeping all the while. When Bhima had made Karna weaponless and carless, he covered him with arrows and made him look like a forested mountain.

Karna then quickly ascended another chariot and again began to fight with Bhima. The battle was fierce, but the son of the wind god again deprived him of his chariot by means of a mace. Fighting from the ground, Karna was able to check Bhima's advance as he came rushing forward. Duryodhana, seeing the situation, ordered his brother, Durmukha, "The son of Radha has been deprived of his chariot and is now fighting on foot in desperation with Bhima. Go quickly and take him on your chariot." Following the orders of the King, Durmukha quickly assaulted Bhima and covered him with many arrows. Bhima responded by rushing towards Durmukha and ignoring Karna. Bhima, stretching his bow to full length, released nine arrows that took Durmukha's life. All this happened as Duryodhana and Karna looked on. Fallen from his chariot, Durmukha lay on the ground writhing like a snake. With tears in his eyes, Karna circumambulated Durmukha and then ascended his chariot. That great adhiratha Bhima had now defeated Karna for the third time.

Sanjaya continued: O King, beholding Karna routed, five of your sons then rushed at Bhima to kill him. They were Durmarshana, Duhshaha, Durmada, Durdhara and Jaya. These five heroic sons surrounded Bhima and covered him with numerous arrows. Karna also came to their support. Bhima proceeded against Karna piercing him with arrows on all sides. In the presence of the Suta's son, Vrikodara killed those five sons. They fell from their chariots like trees falling upon the earth. With the fall of these five sons, five other of your sons whose names were Chitra, Upachitra, Charuchitra, Sarasan, Chitrayudha, and Chitravarman rushed at Bhima and surrounded him with their chariots. Although fighting to the best of their ability, they were no match for Bhima. The second son of Pandu pierced each of them with a single shaft and sent them to the abode of Yamaraja. With the death of these great heroes, Karna shed tears and recollected Vidura's words of wisdom.

As he was grieving for the loss of these dear friends, six other brothers of Duryodhana came forward to fight with Bhima. They were Satrunjaya, Satrusaha, Chitra, Chitrayudha, Dridha, Chitrasena and Vikarna. Seeing them coming, Bhima took out seven arrows furnished with wings of gold. Stretching his bow to full length, he pierced each of those heroes in the chest. Those arrows passed through their bodies and continued into the sky. Falling from their chariots, they were deprived of their lives. Bhima momentarily felt aggrieved for Vikarna's death for it was he who stood up in their defense at the gambling match in Hastinapura. It was he who said that Draupadi was not a slave. It was he who was always thinking of the Pandava's welfare. However, due to Bhima's vow, that great hero also met the fate of his brothers. Bhima had now killed thirty one of Duryodhana's brothers, and Duryodhana, overcome with lamentation, also recollected Vidura's words that were filled with wisdom.

Witnessing the death of all these friends, Karna rushed at Bhimasena to kill him. Another great battle ensued in which all of Bhima's weapons became exhausted. Karna was able to kill Bhima's horses and drive his charioteer from his chariot. When

all of Bhima's bows had been broken, he picked up a dart and hurled it at Karna with full strength. The son of Radha then shattered the weapon with his forceful arrows. Desiring either victory or death, Bhima picked up a sword and shield. Karna quickly shattered the shield to pieces with five arrows. Enraged, Bhima threw the huge sword and broke Karna's bow. Karna quickly strung another bow and began to pierce Bhima as he stood in his chariot. Bhima jumped up into the air shouting loudly and ran at Karna to kill him. Karna slumped down to hide himself from the onrushing son of Pandu. Bhima tore off the royal flagstaff on Karna's chariot and waited for him to descend and fight according to kshatriya code. Karna, however, stayed on his chariot, and taking up his bow, began to pierce Bhima as he moved on foot. The son of Kunti was obliged to turn back because he had no weapons. He ran into the midst of many elephants that had been slain by Arjuna earlier. This impeded Karna's chariot which could not proceed further because those huge beasts were lying there in great number. Bhima then picked up one of the elephants and threw it at Karna's chariot. However, Karna cut the dead animal to pieces as it flew through the air. Bhima picked up more elephants, horses, chariots and other objects and threw them with great force at Karna's chariot. The son of Radha then cut up those animals and objects as they came toward him. Bhima then thought of slaying Karna with his bare fists, but he remembered the vow that Arjuna had taken to slay the Suta's son. Karna then came near Bhima and touched him with the horn of his bow. Bhima quickly grabbed the bow and smashed it over Karna's head. Blood began to flow from Karna's head, and Karna was furious. "Beardless Eunuch! Ignorant fool and glutton!" Karna shouted at Bhima, "You are but a child, and your profession should be cooking. Or rather you should again go to the forest and live the life of a muni." Laughing loudly, Karna again yelled to him, "You may fight in battle with others but not with me. Go to Krishna and Arjuna for they will give you protection. Go to them like a child seeks his father."

Bhima also began laughing and scornfully said to the Suta's son, "O wicked person, I have repeatedly routed you, and I have forced you to run away from the battlefield. How can you indulge in such boastful words. You have defeated me only once, but still I have not run away. Even as I have slain the mighty Kichaka, I will also slay you if you stand in front of me for a while."

While Karna and Bhima were taunting each other, Lord Krishna and Arjuna appeared on the scene, and Arjuna began to pierce Karna with many arrows. This proved to be too much for Karna, and he fled from Bhima's presence. As Karna was running away, Arjuna took out a celestial weapon and empowered it with the force of a thunderbolt. He then released the weapon at Karna, but it was cut up in mid air by the weapons of Ashvatthama. Ashvatthama, fearing Arjuna, quickly entered a Kaurava division and hid himself among the elephants. Arjuna then began to engage the Kaurava army in combat slaughtering their ranks in thousands.

Thus Ends the Eighth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, Bhima Endeavors to Find Arjuna.

## Chapter Nine

### The Death of Jayadratha

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, When the sun headed toward the western horizon, what did the mighty son of Pandu do, desiring to kill the ruler of the Sindhus, Jayadratha.

Sanjaya said: O King, when Partha and Krishna saw that Satyaki was making his way toward them, Krishna informed Arjuna, "O Partha, in the distance is the grandson of Sini, Satyaki. This disciple and good friend of yours has vanquished renowned chariot fighters in his endeavor to assist you. He has defeated the preceptor Drona and conquered the mighty Kritavarman. Certainly he has been sent by Yudhishthira to help subjugate the great maharathis ahead of us."

"O Keshava," Arjuna replied, "I am not happy that Satyaki has left the King unprotected. I will now have to worry about Yudhishthira as well as Satyaki. Here comes Bhurishravas to challenge Satyaki. The grandson of Sini appears to be tired, his weapons are exhausted, and his horses are also tired. On the other hand Bhurishravas has not yet engaged any opponent in battle, and his horses and supply of weapons are fresh. I do not know what will be the outcome of this duel."

Sanjaya continued: When Bhurishravas came within range of Satyaki, he uttered the following harsh words, "By good luck, you have come within my vision. Today, I will obtain the wish that my father has cherished for so many years. I will gladden King Duryodhana's heart by killing you in the presence of Krishna and Arjuna. After your death, I will wipe away the tearful eyes of the wives of whose husbands you have killed in battle."

"I have never been overwhelmed by fear in battle," Satyaki replied, "and you will not succeed in terrifying me. What is the use of such boastful words? You will have to accomplish what you have vowed. Hearing you foolish statements, I cannot contain my laughter. By killing you in the presence of all your followers, I will satisfy my preceptor Arjuna, and bring great joy to his heart."

Having said this much, Satyaki engaged in battle with the powerful son of Somadatta. They fought like two elephants, roaring and thirsting for victory. They covered each other with a deluge of arrows, looking for an opportunity to slay the other. Satyaki managed to kill Bhurishrava's horses and Somadatta's son also managed to kill Satyaki's horses. When each became careless, they took up swords and shields and opposed each other like two bulls fighting for the sake of a cow. They struck each other and made graceful revolutions, lacerating each other's arms, head and chest. Finally Bhurishravas struck Satyaki and knocked him to the ground. He picked him up by the hair and kicked him in the chest. He then raised his sword and was prepared to cut off Satyaki's head. Seeing this Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, "O Arjuna, behold, Bhurishravas has defeated Satyaki. Having come a long distance

and overcome with exhaustion, Satyaki is about to be slain by the mighty Kuru warrior. Do not allow this to happen."

"The Kuru prince is dragging Satyaki by the hair" Arjuna replied, "and is about to slay him. To save Satyaki's life, I will stop Bhurishravas."

Having vowed Satyaki's safety, Arjuna pulled out a razor faced arrow and placed it on the Gandiva bow. As Bhurishravas raised his sword to kill Satyaki, Arjuna released his weapon, severing the arm that held the sword. Casting his wrathful glance upon Arjuna, Bhurishravas yelled at him, "O son of Kunti, you have performed a cowardly act in as much as while I was fighting with another, you have cut off my arm. What will you say about your defense in an assembly of mighty warriors. You are of royal descent and have been trained by the mighty preceptors Drona and Kripa. You have received instructions from Indra and Lord Shiva, so how is it that you have committed such a unscrupulous act. This unfair deed has been performed, undoubtedly, with Krishna's approval, since this is His relative who is about to be slain. The Vrishnis and the Andakas are certainly crooked by nature, and by their association, you have been influenced to preform coldhearted acts of cowardice."

Replying to Bhurishravas, Arjuna said, "Out of ignorance, O son of Somadatta, you are chastising Krishna and myself for an act that is not sinful in the least. Knowing the rules of warfare, I would never perform a immoral act on the field of battle. The kshatriyas fight in battle surrounded by their kinsmen and friends. These mighty warriors fight with the help of those who support them. Satyaki has engaged in battle, with me as his support, and it is my duty to protect him. If I had allowed Satyaki to be slain, then sin would have overcome me due to negligence. You wanted to kill Satyaki at a time when he was weakened due to battling single handedly with thousands of the Kuru host. Having come upon him in that state, you have easily defeated him. You should rebuke yourself since you did not take precaution for your own protection. Indeed, O hero, how would you have behaved towards one who was your own dependent?"

Thus chastised by Arjuna, the Kuru general, Bhurishravas, left Satyaki and sat down in yoga meditation to give up his body. He spread a seat of arrows with his left hand and sat down there intending to give up his mortal frame. All the warriors who witnessed his activities spoke highly of Somadatta's son, and they derided the action of Krishna and Arjuna. Not tolerating those critical words, Arjuna spoke loudly to all present, "Everyone here is acquainted with my great vow, that no one shall succeed in slaying anybody on the side of the Pandavas who is within the reach of my arrows. Remembering this, O Bhurishravas, you should not find fault with me. The fact that I have cut off your arm while you were combating Satyaki is not contrary to morality. What morality was there when my son Abhimanyu was unfairly defeated by six great warriors. He was careless and weaponless, but still you pierced him with your arrows." Not replying to Arjuna statements of truth, Bhurishravas sat in meditation determined to give up his life. Arjuna again spoke to him, "O son of Somadatta, you are a member of our family, and you are very dear to me. I love you as much as I do my own brothers. You may now attain that destination which is only obtainable by the meditation of great mystic yogis."

"O Bhurishravas," Lord Krishna said, "I am also pleased with you. You have constantly performed sacrifices and Agnihotras (fire sacrifices). You may now ascend to My spiritual abode that is free from the contamination of this material world. That destination is desired by the foremost heavenly god, Lord Brahma, and is the ultimate objective of life. When your soul leaves your body, my carrier Garuda will take you to the spiritual world."

Sanjaya continued: O King, when Satyaki had regained consciousness, he stood up and drew his sword, desiring to cut off Bhurishravas's head. Although all the warriors forbid him to do so, he raised his sword to kill the sinless son of Somadatta, who was sitting in meditation. Krishna, Arjuna, Bhima, Uttamaujas and Yudhamanyu also forbid Satyaki from performing this apparently mercenary act. While all the soldiers were calling out in disapproval, Satyaki cut off Bhurishravas's head who was preparing to enter the spiritual world. None of the warriors approved of Satyaki's act, and the devas, who were watching from the heavens, expressed their disapproval of the way the great Kuru warrior was slain.

Then the Kaurava heroes spoke amongst themselves, "This is actually no fault of the Vrishni hero for this is a predestined act. It has been decided by higher authorities that Bhurishravas be slain by Satyaki. There is no use passing judgement on whether it is wrong or right."

Satyaki then sharply chastised the Kaurava warriors, "All of you are sinful persons wearing the garb of righteous men. Where was your righteousness when Abhimanyu, while fighting on foot, was killed by seven great warriors. I have already taken a vow that any man who strikes me with his foot will be slain even if he be engaged in the practice of asceticism. That which is ordained by providence must happen."

Sanjaya continued: O King, after Satyaki had spoken these words, none of the warriors on either side said anything, but within their minds, they glorified the heroic son of Somadatta.

Dhritarastra inquired: Satyaki had defeated Drona, Karna and Kritavarman in battle. Having crossed the Kaurava ocean, how is it that the Vrishni hero had been thrown to the ground by the Kuru warrior Bhurishravas?

Sanjaya said: Hear from me, O King, how this predestined activity came about in the form of a benediction offered by Lord Shiva to the Kuru descendent Somadatta. In the Yadu race there was a great hero named Surasena. He had many sons out of which two, Sini and Vasudeva were very famous. During Devaki's Svayamvara ceremony, Sini abducted Devaki and vanquished all the Kings that opposed him. It so happened that Somadatta could not tolerate that action and challenged Sini to combat. A battle then ensued which lasted half a day, and in the end Sini was able to throw Somadatta to the ground and kick him with his foot. Sini kicked Somadatta in the chest in the presence of thousands of warriors. Out of compassion Sini let the Kuru hero live and sent him away with his life. Humiliated, Somadatta went to the forest and performed very severe austerities to solicit Lord Shiva. When the great

Mahadeva was pleased with Somadatta, he appeared before him and asked him to take a benediction. Somadatta requested, "O lord, please give me the benediction of a son who can defeat Sini's son in combat and strike him with his foot in the midst of thousands of warriors." Lord Shiva granted the benediction, and as a result Bhurishravas took birth as Somadatta's son, and Satyaki took birth as the descendent of Sini. The Vrishni heroes can never be defeated in battle for their prowess exceeds all on earth. This has happened due to the benediction offered by Lord Shiva.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after the great maharathi, Bhurishravas had been slain, what happened to Krishna and Arjuna as the sun began to set on the horizon.

Sanjaya replied: O descendent of Bharata, after the Kuru general Bhurishravas had ascended to the spiritual world, the mighty armed Arjuna spoke unto the Lord Vasudeva saying, "O Krishna, take me to the place where the King of the Sindus, Jayadratha, is positioned. The sun is about to set on the western horizon. Jayadratha is being protected by many heroic chariot fighters, and he will be difficult to kill. Urge the horses toward his chariot for I will defeat the Kuru host and kill Jayadratha."

Following the instructions of His devotee, Lord Krishna drove the celestial chariot of Arjuna towards the Suchimukha formation in which Jayadratha was carefully guarded. Seeing him coming, King Duryodhana urged Karna as follows, "O Karna, the time for battle has now come at last. Protect Jayadratha, and prevent Arjuna from fulfilling his vow. If Jayadratha can be protected, then Arjuna will have to enter fire, and with his death, victory will be in our grasp. With Arjuna's death, the other Pandavas will be slain easily, and then we can rule this world, with its oceans and islands, with a contented at heart. In this formation there is Ashvatthama, Kripa, Kritavarman, Duhshasana, Salya, yourself and myself. How then will it be possible for Arjuna to defeat us?"

"O King," Karna replied, "my body has been deeply pierced by Bhima's arrows, and every limb suffers with pain. However, I shall fight to my best ability for I have surrendered my life to you. As long as I shall fight, the heroic Dhananjaya will not be able to kill Jayadratha. Let all the forces witness the duel between myself and Vibhatsu. Regarding victory, that will depend on destiny."

As Karna and the King were talking, Arjuna penetrated the Kaurava host and began slaughtering the ranks in his effort to kill Jayadratha. The foot soldiers, the horsemen, the chariot fighters and those riding on elephants rushed at Arjuna to impede his progress. They were like moths entering fire as they came face to face with Arjuna's celestial weapons. Those who died appreciating the wonderful deeds of Lord Krishna and Arjuna were elevated to the Vaikuntha planetary system in the spiritual world. Those who saw, at the last moment of their lives, Lord Krishna with a bridal whip in His right hand and the reins in His left, moving swiftly across the battlefield, never returned to this material world. Those who meditated on the beautiful lotus like face of Lord Krishna with His black curling hair and dazzling jeweled crown bedecked with a peacock feather, never returned again to inhabit a

mortal form. The Lord appeared to be working hard as He drove the chariot of His devotee. There were beads of sweat on His brow and blood flowed from the arrow wounds on His transcendental body. This enhanced His beauty all the more. By driving Arjuna's chariot, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, was assuring the liberation of all who died in front of Him. Such was His causeless mercy.

Arjuna cut into the Kaurava army and caused a massacre of men. Rushing at Arjuna was Duryodhana, Karna, Vrishasena, Salya, Ashvatthama and Kripa. All those warriors were placed in front of Jayadratha for his protection. They released hundreds of arrows and covered the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna so that it could not be seen. However, Arjuna countered and pierced each of the great warriors with numerous shafts. Bhimasena and Satyaki were close behind assisting Arjuna in his fight with the great Kaurava warriors. Arjuna pierced Karna with a hundred arrows and caused blood to flow from each wound. Karna then released fifty arrows that pierced Phalguna and ten arrows that pierced Krishna. Greatly enraged, Arjuna cut up Karna's bow and penetrated his chest with nine arrows. He then took out a celestial weapon of solar radiance and released it at Karna. However, Ashvatthama shattered it in mid air as it came upon Karna with the speed of a meteor. Karna then took up another bow and began to rain upon Arjuna hundreds of arrows. Roaring like bulls, those two warriors filled the sky with their arrows. Arjuna then cut off the head of Karna's charioteer and caused his horses to run wild. Ashvatthama quickly appeared and took Karna upon his chariot, and they both continued fighting against Partha. Salya pierced Arjuna with thirty arrows and Kripa pierced Lord Krishna with twenty. Arjuna countered and pierced Salya with a hundred and Kripa with twenty. As the fighting was becoming more intense, Arjuna invoked the Varuna weapon causing panic stricken fear to enter the hearts of Duryodhana's army. However, realizing their duty to protect Jayadratha, they all rushed at Arjuna with greater speed. The cardinal directions were filled with weapons as the Kaurava army approached the son of Kunti. Foot soldiers released their javelins and battle axes. Some threw their maces, and others ran at Arjuna's chariot with upraised swords. However, all met with death as the son of Pandu shattered their weapons and severed their limbs from their body. The sound of the Gandiva bow exactly resembled the peal of thunder in a rain cloud, and Arjuna's arrows exactly resembled lightning bolts as they were released from the Gandiva bow. Arjuna then invoked the Aindra weapon, and from His bow came thousands upon thousands of arrows that were blazing with fire. Inspired with the force of a celestial weapon, those arrows took away the lives of thousands upon thousands of infantrymen, horsemen, and chariot fighters. Hundreds of huge elephants fell to the earth as the son of Kunti made his way toward Jayadratha.

The sun and the horizon were meeting together in the distance and that combination caused the sky to turn red. Krishna was driving Arjuna's chariot with greater speed, and finally Arjuna caught sight of Jayadratha. His flagstaff was marked with the sign of a boar. Arjuna quickly pierced him with sixty four arrows and sent up a loud shout. Not tolerating that action, Jayadratha flamed up with anger and pierced Arjuna with six arrows that resembled venomous serpents. He also pierced Lord Krishna with three arrows. The whole Kaurava army surrounded Arjuna and began to shower their weapons. Lord Krishna found that it was difficult

driving the chariot through the mass of dead soldiers. All the great Kaurava warriors attacked Arjuna at once, but not minding them, he quickly severed the head of Jayadratha's charioteer and felled his standard with a single arrow.

The sun was now being devoured by the horizon and seeing the situation, Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna, "Just see, O son of Kunti, how Jayadratha has been carefully protected by the six great warriors. Without vanquishing those six maharathis, you will never be able to kill Jayadratha. I shall, therefore, cover the radiant sun with My Own potencies so that it appears the sun has set. At that time Jayadratha will no longer guard himself closely. Taking this opportunity, you should cut off his head with your arrows. Do not be afraid of the darkness; it is simply a display of My internal potency to aid you in killing Jayadratha."

Then the Supreme Personality of Godhead covered the sun with his mighty potencies and it appeared as if the sun had set on the horizon. All the Kaurava warriors including Jayadratha turned their heads in excitement toward the sun's path. They now thought that Arjuna would now have to enter fire. While Jayadratha was looking at the setting sun, Lord Krishna ordered Arjuna, "Just see how the Sindhu King is looking at the setting sun. He is joyful and has cast off all fear of you. Take the opportunity and cut off his head with the weapon Lord Shiva has given you."

Lord Krishna then drove the chariot with great speed toward Jayadratha. Arjuna began to lacerate each of the great warriors and drove them away from protecting Jayadratha. They were all extremely puzzled about Arjuna's actions. Although they tried to impede his progress, they were driven away by the force of his weapons. The battlefield was thick with soldiers and Arjuna had to carve his way closer to Jayadratha. Arjuna then took out the Pashupati astra given to him by Lord Shiva. As he set it on his bow, Lord Krishna again advised him, "O Dhananjaya, quickly cut off the head of the sinful Jayadratha. However, do not let the head touch the ground. It is known that the father of Jayadratha, Vriddhakshetra, protected his son with a benediction saying that anyone who caused his son's head to fall to the ground would have his own head crack into a hundred pieces. Vriddhakshetra has retired to the forest for meditation. He is just near here at Samanta-panchaka. After cutting off Jayadratha's head, you should guide the arrow and the head to the lap of Jayadratha's father. Vriddhakshetra will then throw the head to the ground, causing his own death."

Following the orders of the Lord of the universe, Arjuna drew the string of his bow to full length and released that mighty Pashupati astra. It pierced the air like a lightning bolt and snatched the head of Jayadratha from his body. It continued on toward the Samanta-panchaka pilgrimage site. King Vriddhakshetra was engaged in offering his evening prayers, and suddenly he saw a severed head in his lap, a head with black hair and glittering earrings. He at once threw the head to the ground causing his own head to crack into many pieces. At this sight the devas were filled with wonder and began to applaud the prowess of Lord Krishna and Arjuna.

When Jayadratha had been slain, the darkness that had been created by Lord Krishna was removed, and again the sun was seen on the horizon. The Kauravas then realized that the darkness had been created by Lord Krishna's mystic power, and they could also understand that as long as the Supreme Lord rode on Arjuna's chariot there was no possibility of their victory. That day Arjuna annihilated seven akshauhini divisions of soldiers. In other words Arjuna himself killed approximately two million men on that fourteenth day of the battle. Those men seeing Lord Krishna on Arjuna's chariot attained liberation from the path of birth and death. They entered either the impersonal brahmajyoti or the eternal kingdom of God. Such was the mercy of Lord Krishna.

Lord Krishna then blew His conchshell, the Panchajanya and Arjuna blew his, the Devadatta. That sound filled the heavens in all directions and was heard by Yudhisthira who was many miles away. King Yudhisthira could understand that Jayadratha had been killed, and the whole Pandava army roared with joy.

Meanwhile Krishna sounded his conchshell on the Rishava note. This was the signal that Daruka should bring Lord Krishna's chariot. Daruka quickly appeared on the scene and waited for instructions from his worshipable Lord. "Take Satyaki on this chariot," Lord Krishna ordered, "and help him in his rivalry against Karna."

Daruka quickly went to the spot where Satyaki was engaged in combat. Satyaki ascended Lord Krishna's chariot and waited as Karna came rushing towards him. Karna was incensed that Jayadratha had been killed, and he wanted revenge. He attacked Satyaki and fought with all his prowess, but in the end his horses and his chariot driver were killed. To save him from death Ashvatthama, Salya and Vrishasena encircled Satyaki and covered him with a curtain of arrows. Karna then quickly ascended Duryodhana's chariot. Satyaki quickly defeated Ashvatthama, Salya and Vrishasena, but refrained from killing Duryodhana's brothers remembering Bhima's vow. Satyaki's expertise in combat was unequalled amongst the Kuru warriors. He had defeated Drona, Karna and killed Jalasandha and Bhurishravas. Everyone on the battlefield considered that after Lord Krishna and Arjuna there was only one great Bowman and that was Satyaki. Together on that single day, Arjuna, Satyaki and Bhima had destroyed eight akshauhini division of troops.

Dhritarastra said: After Jayadratha's death what did the second son of Kunti, Bhima do, his chariot having been destroyed?

Sanjaya replied: O King, after Bhimasena had been made careless, Arjuna came to him. Bhimasena then related everything that Karna had said to him calling him a fool, glutton, etc. Enraged Arjuna went near Karna and spoke to him in a loud voice, "O wicked son of a Suta, you are puffed up with false pride. You have been defeated many times by Bhima, and now by Satyaki, and still you think yourself great. You have uttered harsh words against Bhima, and you cut the string of my son's bow while he wasn't looking. My son Abhimanyu was killed unfairly in battle by cowards like yourself. For these offences you will die in battle along with your relatives and friends. I take a vow that I will kill your son Vrishasena even while you are looking

on. After his death, I will kill you, and I will watch as Duryodhana sheds tears of lamentation."

After Arjuna had vowed the death of Karna and his son, the sun completed its descent into the western horizon. At that time Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna, "By good luck, O Phalguna, you have fulfilled your vow. Many great chariot fighters have been slain, and Jayadratha has met his end according to his destiny. No other warrior could have completed this vow."

Replying to Lord Krishna, Arjuna said, "Through Your grace, O Janardana, have I completed this vow. O my Lord, when the Pandavas have You for their master, then victory does not seem wonderful. Through Your grace, Yudhisthira will obtain victory over Dhritarastra's sons and obtain sovereignty of the entire earth. This is Your victory, my Lord, and all our prosperity is due to You. O Slayer of Madhu, please accept us as Your surrendered servants and maintain us as You see fit."

Sanjaya continued: After the two Krishnas had spoken to each other, they then made their way to Yudhisthira. Coming to the King's presence, Lord Krishna said, "O King, by good luck your younger brother has kept his vow. The Sindhu King has been slain and victory is now within your grasp."

Thus informed of Arjuna's victory by Lord Krishna, the King descended from his chariot with tearful eyes. He affectionately embraced Arjuna and Krishna and spoke to them, "By God's grace, I can behold you today, O Arjuna. By good luck, the sinful Jayadratha has been slain and your vow fulfilled." Turning to Lord Krishna, Yudhisthira said, "O Vasudeva, You are the master of the three worlds, and they who have You for their preceptor will never meet with defeat in their struggle for life. O Govinda, You are the Lord of the three worlds and the master of Indra. O mighty armed one, You are the creator of this cosmic manifestation, and You are the Supersoul in everyone's heart. The Vedic mantras sing Your glories. O Hrishiksha, those who take shelter in You will obtain the highest prosperity in this material world."

"My dear King Yudhisthira," Lord Krishna replied, "I regard the Kauravas and their kinsmen to be already dead. O Slayer of the enemy, one who has offended My devotees can never have happiness in this world. Kingdom, family and wealth will be lost to those who have done harm to My pure devotees." As Lord Krishna was speaking, Satyaki and Bhima also appeared, and the King out of affection embraced both of them and congratulated them on their victory. All the warriors on the Pandava's side became joyful, and once more set their heart on battle.

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, after the King of the Sindhus had been killed, what did my sons do having failed to keep their vow?

Sanjaya replied: O king, upon the fall of Jayadratha, Duryodhana went to the preceptor Drona and said, "Behold, my teacher, the immense slaughter of Kings who have supported me in battle. The mighty Bowman Jalasandha has been killed by Satyaki. Also Sudakshina and Alambusha lay on this Kurukshetra plain killed by the

enemy's arrows. Alas, Somadatta's son has been killed as well as Jayadratha to whom you have promised protection. Seven akshauhini divisions of troops were slain by Arjuna alone on this fourteenth day. In the absence of so many of my friends and relatives, I have no need for life. Today, I should enter those regions where these renowned warriors have gone for my sake. O preceptor of Pandu's sons, grant your permission in this matter."

"O sinful wretch," Drona replied, "why do you pierce my ears with you shaft like words! I have repeatedly told you that Arjuna cannot be slain. Shikhandi, backed by Phalgunas, has killed Bhishma. When this happened, I knew that the Bharata host was doomed to death. It is only a matter of time for all of us. This frightful carnage of men has come about because you did not listen to Vidura's wisdom. In the presence of six great maharathis, why was Jayadratha slain? It is more that just physical strength that will win this war; it is righteousness and devotion to God. The Pandavas have Lord Krishna, who is none other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Arjuna has Him for his chariot driver, and this being the case, Arjuna alone is sufficient to reduce this whole army to ashes. What hope, then, do you have for success? Coming towards me now are the Shrinjayas and the Panchalas. I will not rest from battle until they are slain. My son will help me. You should now go and protect the troops. Both the Kurus and the Pandavas are extremely angry and will fight into the night. Go and prepare for battle." While the two were talking, the Pandava divisions appeared for combat.

Thus Ends the Ninth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Death of Jayadratha.

## Chapter Ten

### The Death of Ghatotkacha

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after Jayadratha's demise, what did the Kaurava army do, being headed by the invincible Drona? Certainly Drona could not tolerate the fact that his vow had been violated. Please relate everything that happened during the night battle at Kurukshetra.

Sanjaya said: O King, the Kaurava army headed by Dronacharya could not accept their defeat at the hands of Partha. Reforming their divisions, they marched against the Pandavas. Even though darkness had set in, they fought fiercely slaying each others ranks and causing a great carnage. The Somakas assaulted Drona in the darkness of night with a desire to end his life. King Shivi was leading a division of troops, and he came upon the preceptor with the might of a tempest. King Shivi pierced Drona in the chest with thirty arrows, and also killed his chariot driver. Seeing the situation, King Duryodhana sent to the preceptor another chariot driver. Rushing against King Shivi, Drona killed his four horses and then severed his head.

Highly enraged, Drona then began to consume the Somaka's ranks with his celestial weapons.

The son of the Kalinga King supported by Kalinga warriors rushed at Bhimasena. Bhima had earlier killed his father, and the son, overcome with anger, sought Bhima's death. However, not tolerating this impudence, Bhima ran to his chariot and leaped into it. He raised the King's son with his hands and killed him with one blow of his fist. Kalinga's son fell to the earth, having all of his bones broken. After this Bhima proceeded to the chariot of Druva, the brother of the slain prince. He dragged him from his chariot, roaring all the while. He killed him with the repeated blows from his fist. Bhima then rushed at the chariot of Jayarata, and with one slap from his palm, he killed that mighty Kalinga hero. This was all done within Karna's sight. The son of Radha, not tolerating Bhima's prowess, took up a dart and threw it with all his might. Bhima caught the dart in his hand and threw it back at Karna, blazing like a meteor. However, Shakuni shattered it to pieces with his arrows.

Ascending his chariot, Bhima challenged the Kaurava warriors thirsting for battle. He came upon Duryodhana's brother, Durmada and killed his horses and charioteer. Durmada then ascended the chariot of his brother Dushkarna, and together they assaulted Bhima. In the very sight of Karna, Duryodhana, Somadatta, Bahlika and Ashvatthama, Bhima stomped on their chariot and smashed it into the ground. He then crushed those two brothers with his powerful fists. Indeed, there was no bone in their body that was not broken. Seeing Bhima's gruesome appearance, all Kuru warriors fled that spot.

The battle became fierce on both sides. It was as if Kurukshetra had become the domain of Yamaraja himself. Ghatotkacha, surrounded by an akshauhini division of Rakshasas, attacked Ashvatthama, imploring the illusions of mystic power. The son of Ghatotkacha was Anjanaparvan, and there arose a fierce duel between him and Drona's son. In the end Ashvatthama made him careless, and descending from his chariot, Anjanaparvan took up a scimitar and threw it at Ashvatthama. The son of Drona shattered it in mid air. Furious, the son of Ghatotkacha released a mace with full potency. Ashvatthama also cut up that weapon to pieces. Anjanaparvan then ascended into the sky, and by his Rakshasa illusion began to rain trees upon Drona's son. However, Ashvatthama killed him with his arrows as he fell to the earth.

Intensely angry, Ghatotkacha assaulted Ashvatthama surrounded by his akshauhini division of soldiers. All those distinguished warriors released their weapons at Ashvatthama's chariot. The sky was filled with arrows, javelins, darts, maces, battle axes and swords. Seeing that mass of weapons coming toward him, Drona's son invoked his celestial weapons, decimating them all. Ghatotkacha then released a celestial mace at Ashvatthama. Drona's son descended from his chariot and caught the weapon as it came upon him. Ashvatthama then released that weapon with full force, and coursing through the air it smashed Ghatotkacha's chariot. Bhima's son, unscathed, ascended Dhristadyumna's chariot and continued fighting with Drona's son. Taking out one of his celestial weapons, Ashvatthama slew one hundred thousand Rakshasa warriors as they assaulted him. With hundreds and thousands of arrows blazing through the sky, Ashvatthama reduced the size of that akshauhini

division to nothing. With the massacre of that Rakshasa division, Ghatotkacha became enraged and fought with greater intensity.

Ashvatthama then killed one of King Drupada's sons, Suratha, as well as his brother Satrunjaya. He then killed the ten sons of King Kuntibhoja. Taking from his quiver an arrow that resembled the rod of death, Drona's son released it at the Ghatotkacha's chest. Passing through his chest, that arrow entered into the earth. Bhima's son then fell to the floor of Dhristadyumna's chariot, and fearing him dead, Dhristadyumna took him from the battlefield.

Sanjaya continued: O King, after Bhurishravas's death, his father Somadatta was looking for the opportunity to kill Satyaki. He came upon him in the dead of night, and they began to harass each other with their deadly weapons. Somadatta spoke to Satyaki, "Why, O Satyaki, have you taken to the practice of thieves. Why have you taken the life of my son who had given up his weapons. You are reputed to be a great chariot fighter, but today I shall cut off your head with my winged arrows."

"Stay in battle for a while" Satyaki replied, "and feel the pain caused by my weapons. I have already killed two of your sons and today, I will also kill you along with all of your kinsmen." The two mighty warriors then fought on releasing their lethal weapons. Bhima joined in the fight and released a wooden mallet at the Somadatta's head. Satyaki also released an arrow that blazed through the sky like lightning. Both weapons hit Somadatta at the same time, causing him to fall into a deadly swoon.

Beholding his son fallen in battle, Bahluka, the son of Pratipa and brother of Maharaja Shantanu, challenged Satyaki releasing his mighty weapons. Bahluka also released a dart at Bhima, causing him to fall unconscious to the floor of his chariot. Coming to his senses, Bhima took up a mace and hurled it at his grand uncle. That mace snatched off Bahluka's head and then entered the earth. The great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty then fell to the ground like a tree struck by lightning.

Sanjaya continued speaking to King Dhritarastra: Overcome with anger at this action, ten of your sons, O King, rushed at Bhima to kill him. Their names were Nagadatta, Dridharatha, Viravahu, Ayobhuja, Dridha, Suhasta, Viragas, Pramatha, and Ugrayayin. They challenged Bhima and surrounded him with their chariots. With ten arrows, Bhima quickly dispatched them to Yamaraja's abode. Bhima then killed a brother of Karna named Vrikaratha and five brothers of Shakuni named Gavaksha, Sarabha, Bibhu, Subhaga and Bhanudatta.

Seeing the Pandavas slaughtering the Kaurava host, Duryodhana requested Karna, "O Karna, our warriors are encircled on all sides by the Pandavas. O my friend, go now and save them from certain annihilation. The Pandavas are roaring with victory and penetrating our ranks. Smash their pride with your forceful arrows."

"Be cheerful, O descendent of Bharata." Karna replied. "Even if the great Indra were to come himself, still I would slay the Pandavas. I will kill Arjuna with Indra's shakti

weapon and give you world sovereignty. While I am alive, O Kaurava, you will not have to indulge in any kind of lamentation."

Sanjaya continued: While Karna was uttering these boastful words, Kripacharya addressed the Suta's son, "If words alone, O Karna, could lead to victory, then certainly this army would be well protected. You are always boasting your glories, but we have not yet seen an exhibition of your prowess. Many times have we seen you encounter the sons of Pandu, and each time you have been defeated. While Duryodhana was being taken away by the Gandharvas in the Dvaitavana forest, who was the first to run away? Outside of Virata's city, the Kauravas united together and took away the cows. However, we were all vanquished by the mighty armed son of Kunti. I do not think that you are a fit match for any one of the Pandavas. Brave men never indulge in boasting, but prove their prowess on the field of battle. You are always building palaces in the air that are torn to pieces by the divine sons of Kunti."

"I will vanquish Arjuna," Karna replied, "with the dart given to me by Indra, the king of heaven. Upon Arjuna's death, the other Pandavas will be easily defeated. This earth will then become the sole property of the Kuru dynasty. Knowing all this, I speak with confidence about my prowess. As for yourself, you are a brahmana by birth and have now grown old. You are unskilled in battle, and your main fault is that you seek the Pandava's protection. O son of Saradwat, if you speak to me again in these words, I will cut out your tongue. Many great warriors headed by Bhishma have fallen in this battle, but all of these are greater than the Pandavas. It is, therefore, destiny that is defeating us and not the Pandavas. O lowest of men, I will continue to fight to my best ability, and in the end you will see Kunti's sons slain by my arrows."

Sanjaya continued: O Monarch, after hearing Karna's harsh words, Ashvatthama drew his scimitar and rushed at Karna to kill him. Duryodhana quickly seized Drona's son before he could harm Karna. Duryodhana then said, "O Ashvatthama, anger is never the sign of a brahmana. O sinless one, do not be angry with Karna who is trying to enliven us. Forgive him, and together let us engage in battle with the Pandava force." Suppressing their anger, both Kripa and Ashvatthama forgave Karna, but in their hearts they knew that the pride of the Suta's son would be vanquished when he met Arjuna face to face.

Thus forgiving each other and uniting in combat, those great maharathis began to grind the ranks of the Pandava host. When Karna came upon Arjuna, he assaulted him with full force. Those two warriors, who were actually brothers, began to cover each other with their mighty weapons. In the end, however, Arjuna smashed his chariot and horses and also killed his chariot driver. Karna was then taken upon the chariot of Kripa, and thus the vanity of that boastful person was smashed by Arjuna's weapons.

Satyaki then came upon Bahlika's son, Somadatta. Those two great heroes again fought desiring each others death. With the death of Somadatta's sons, Sala and Bhurishravas, Somadatta was always looking for the opportunity to fight with

Satyaki. He pierced Satyaki with ten arrows and sent up a loud roar. Satyaki quickly cut off his bow and killed his horses. He then released an arrow of fiery effulgence that was as sharp as a razor. Falling upon the chest of the Kuru general, it deprived him of life. He fell from his chariot like a demigod falls to earth after the exhaustion of his pious activities. With this action the troops that were supporting him fled out of fear. The last son of Somadatta named Bhuri rushed at Satyaki intending to avenge his father's death. He fought with Satyaki for some time but in the end he was killed by a dart that pierced his chest.

In the darkness of night, the two armies ground each other in a war of attrition. When the darkness was so dense that no one could tell which side the other was on, Duryodhana ordered that the soldiers carry torches. Very soon the whole Kaurava army was seen under the light of these torches and lamps. The Pandava army also took up torches and lamps, and the fighting continued on. The celestial demigods using their mystic power created light in the heavens, and indeed, the battlefield of Kurukshetra looked wonderful.

Sahadeva encountered Karna and a fierce battle took place. Karna remembered his promise to his real mother Kunti, and for some time he played with Sahadeva as a cat plays with a mouse. The valiant son of Madri pierced Karna with twenty arrows. However, Karna quickly killed Sahadeva horses and charioteer. Descending from his chariot, Sahadeva took up a sword and shield and ran at Karna. The son of Radha shattered the effulgent sword and shield that were protecting the powerful son of Madri. Sahadeva then released a mace, but it was cut into fragments by Karna's arrows. Sahadeva then released with full force an effulgent golden dart. When that weapon was also baffled, Sahadeva hurled at his elder brother chariot wheels, limbs of elephants, dead horses and dead human bodies. All these, however, were cut to pieces by Karna's arrows. Having no weapons, Sahadeva retreated from battle. He was followed by Karna who touched him with the horn of his bow saying, "Do not fight in battle those who are superior to you. O son of Madri, fight with those who are your equals." Laughing all the while, Karna proceeded against the Panchalas, granting life to Sahadeva whom he could have killed if he desired.

Karna then began to consume the Pandava divisions with his celestial weapons. Men, slaughtered in thousands, littered the battle field creating a river of blood. Seeing the destruction of his troops, Yudhisthira went to Arjuna and informed him, "Just see the mighty bowman, Karna, stationed in the distance like Rudra himself. I cannot tolerate the wails of our troops. Go, O Phalgun, and do what is necessary for slaying the Suta's son, thus fulfilling your vow."

Hearing this order, Arjuna spoke to Hrishikesha, "Yudhisthira is afraid for the safety of the army. Karna appears like Yamaraja, who engages in the destruction of all living beings. O tiger of the Vrishni race, proceed, therefore, to the place where Karna is releasing his arrows. O slayer of Madhu, I will either slay him, or he will slay me."

"O son of Kunti," Lord Krishna replied, "I can see Karna covering the battlefield like a heavenly warrior. I do not think that the time is right for you to engage in a mighty duel. As long as he has Indra's Shakti weapon, it will be difficult to defeat him. Let Ghatotkacha challenge Karna. He is endowed with mystic powers and is a suitable combatant to fight against Radha's son."

Arjuna then called for Ghatotkacha and soon Bhima's son appeared. Lord Krishna requested him in these words, "Listen, O Ghatotkacha, to my order. You must now become the boat to save the Pandavas from the wrathful storms of Karna. Just near here the Suta's son is killing our troops in thousands. Go and quickly stop him from devouring our men."

"I am as much a match for Karna as I am for Drona," Ghatotkacha replied. "I will fight with Karna in such a way that the subject of this battle will be spoken of until the end of creation. Tonight I will spare none, even those that ask for mercy will receive none." Saying this much, Ghatotkacha headed into battle.

The son of Bhima had a copper face and a huge form. His belly was sunken and the hair on his body pointed upwards. The top of his head was green, and his ears were like arrows. His tongue was very long, and his mouth extended from ear to ear. His teeth were long and sharp, and his nose was thick. On his head he wore a beautiful crown arching over the top of his forehead. His earrings were bright, and he wore garlands of flowers mixed with gold. Opening his mouth wide and roaring loudly, he proceeded against Karna.

When both warriors met a fierce duel ensued. Both were expert in weapons, and both were highly provoked. They fought like two angry elephants over a she elephant in heat. Karna had to resort to his celestial weapons, and Ghatotkacha had to resort to his Rakshasa illusions. Ghatotkacha was surrounded by man eating Rakshasas of fierce proportions. There were thousands of them, and because it was night time, they became more powerful. They all rushed at Karna releasing a thick shower of stones and rocks. The supporting soldiers of Karna fled out of fear, and only Karna stood releasing his celestial weapons trying to destroy that illusion. Beholding the illusion destroyed by Karna, Ghatotkacha took up an effulgent chakra and released it with great force. That weapon, blazing through the sky, was then shattered by Karna's arrows. Greatly angered, Karna killed Ghatotkacha's horses and smashed his chariot. He then pierced Bhima's son with so many arrows that there was not two fingers breadth of space where there was not an arrow.

Roaring loudly, Ghatotkacha caused thousands upon thousands of arrows to fall from the sky. He himself then produced many heads that began to devour Karna's celestial weapons. At one point Bhima's son was seen lying on the battlefield as if dead, and at another time, he was seen assuming many hideous forms the size of mountains. He was then seen assuming a small form and piercing the earth. In the next moment, he was seen riding on a golden chariot wandering through the earth and sky. He came near Karna and said, "Stand before me for a while, O Suta's son. I will satisfy your desire for battle, and I will today feast on your flesh." Saying this much, the fierce Rakshasa rose up into the sky roaring with laughter. By his mystic

power he produced a mountain, and from that mountain fell swords, lances, stones and boulders. Upon seeing that mountain in the heavens, Karna was not agitated in the least, but invoked a celestial weapon that destroyed the mystic illusion. Ghatotkacha then produced a huge rain cloud, and from that cloud fell stones, trees and lightning bolts. Karna invoked the Vayavya weapon that dispersed the huge cloud. By the mystic power of Bhima's son, Rakshasas were seen everywhere. Some were riding on elephants, some on chariots and some on horses. They filled the earth as well as the sky, and to any ordinary person, they would have caused great fear. Ghatotkacha then released an Anjalika weapon that shattered the strong bow of Karna. Taking up another bow, Karna destroyed the mystic illusion that was surrounding him. Ghatotkacha then took up an Asani weapon that was given to him by Rudra. The celestial weapon had eight chakras revolving on it and was the deadliest weapon. Descending from his chariot, the son of Bhima released it at Karna. However, Karna descended from his chariot and caught the weapon as it came to him. He then hurled it back at Ghatotkacha destroying his chariot and mules. Karna then pierced Ghatotkacha upon which the son of Bhima disappeared from sight like smoke rising into the sky. There then appeared on the battlefield lions, tigers, hyenas, snakes with fiery tongues, and birds with iron beaks. Wolves, leopards and many other animals endowed with hideous faces also appeared. They all screamed fiercely and approached Karna to devour him. However, the Suta's son pierced those animals, and then destroyed the mystic illusion with his mantra weapons.

At this time a Rakshasa named Alayudha came to the side of the Kauravas. His kinsmen had been Baka, Kirmira and Hidimva. He came to Kaurava's side hoping to engage Bhima in single combat and kill him. He was accompanied by numerous fierce Rakshasas, and they were all eager for battle. Duryodhana welcomed the Rakshasa Alayudha and requested him, "Just near here, Radha's son is engaged with the son of Bhima, Ghatotkacha. Go there and assist Karna so that the mighty Rakshasa will not kill him."

Abiding by Duryodhana's orders, the Rakshasa went into battle with Bhima's son. Suddenly Bhima appeared on the scene and supported his son in the fight against Alayudha. Alayudha, seeing Bhima present before him, left his fight with Ghatotkacha and rushed at Bhima releasing his mighty arrows. Bhima, stretching his bow to full length, released arrows that were as forceful as lightning. Alayudha cut up some of those arrows with his own, and others he caught in his hand. Bhima then threw a mace at the Rakshasa, but Alayudha released his own, and the two collided causing a great sound that made the very earth tremble. The Rakshasa Alayudha then killed Bhima's horses and caused him to descend from his chariot. Upon seeing this, Lord Krishna told Arjuna, "Let us go immediately to where these Rakshasas are harassing our army. It is night time, and they are fighting fiercely. Just see, Alayudha has made Bhima careless, and now Bhima is fighting on foot. Immediately send Ghatotkacha to fight with him." Following the instructions of his Lord and master, Arjuna ordered Ghatotkacha to engage Alayudha in battle.

Bhima's son then gave up his fight with Karna and attacked the brother of Baka. They fought with each other using mystic illusions and other weapons. They

assaulted each other with arrows, swords, maces and lances, roaring all the while. They struck each other with their strong fists and pulled each other by the hair. Blood was flowing from both Rakshasas, and when they hit each other, blood splattered in all directions. Finally Ghatotkacha picked up Alayudha and dashed him on the ground. Taking out a large sword, he severed his head from his body. Rushing to the place where Duryodhana was, Bhima's son placed the severed head on his chariot saying, "No one should visit the King without bringing some present." Laughing loudly and opening his mouth from ear to ear, the mighty Rakshasa returned to his own chariot. Overcome with fear, the Kaurava army ran in all directions.

Ghatotkacha then engaged Karna in battle and began to shower him with his mystical powers. When Bhima's son found that he could not conquer Karna, he invoked into existence a highly powerful weapon. With that weapon, he killed the horses and charioteer of Karna. He then disappeared from sight. All thought that Karna would now be slain. To protect his life, Karna began to cover the sky with his celestial weapons. For a moment there was nothing but silence. Looking in all directions, Karna could not perceive where Ghatotkacha was. Suddenly in the sky appeared a huge red cloud spitting fire and blazing meteors. The huge cloud began to thunder shaking the whole earth. Fiery weapons were pouring out of the cloud heading in Karna's direction. Karna released his heavenly astras, but none could destroy the illusion produced by Ghatotkacha. Those blazing weapons fell upon the Kaurava army killing them in thousands. Screams of horror were heard from the troops as those blazing weapons descended from the sky upon the foremost Kaurava leaders. Rakshasas with horrendous forms, as well as man eating animals, came out of that cloud and began to devour the Kaurava troops. Indeed, from that cloud fell axes, lances, stones, boulders, maces and fiery chakras. All the weapons were blazing with fire and fell upon the Kaurava warriors piercing their bodies and severing their limbs. Suddenly the troops were overcome with panic and fled the battlefield screaming, "Run away! run away! All is lost! The demigods are slaying us for the Pandava's sake!"

Only Karna stood his ground contending with the mystic illusion. Then, with a huge mace equipped with chakras, Ghatotkacha killed Karna's four horses. Jumping down from his chariot and looking into the sky, Karna did not know what to do. The Kaurava warriors pleaded with the Suta's son, "O Karna, kill the Rakshasa soon before he destroys the whole army. Use your Shakti weapon given to you by Indra, the King of Heaven. This mystic illusion is not sparing even those running away from battle, or those who have no weapons. Without Arjuna this whole army is about to be destroyed."

Reflecting for a moment on the circumstances at hand, Karna decided to use his Shakti weapon. Picking it up from his chariot, he glanced upon it and remembered how it was given to him by Indra years before. He had exchanged it for his natural golden armor and earrings. It was meant to kill Arjuna. Not finding any other way to save the army from extermination, Karna picked up that dart and readied himself to release it. It could only be used once, and after being released, it would again return to Indra. Karna then released the mighty weapon in the direction of the mystic

illusion. Fierce winds began to blow, and all creatures in the sky were overcome with intense fear. That dart soared through the sky, and piercing the mystic illusion, it struck Ghatotkacha in the chest depriving him of his life. While dying from the force of that weapon, Ghatotkacha wanted to do one last good deed for the Pandavas. By his mystic power, he increased his size to a gigantic form, and falling from the sky, he crushed a complete akshauhini division of troops.

The Kaurava army became joyous and approached the Suta's son to worship him. The Pandavas were overwhelmed with grief to see the gigantic dead form of Ghatotkacha. Bhima lamented the death of his son. Only Lord Krishna was joyous on the occasion. He uttered loud sounds of happiness and embraced Arjuna with great affection. Seeing this manifestation of happiness on the death of one of their distinguished heroes, Arjuna curiously inquired, "O Achyuta, you are showing signs of joy when the time is not appropriate. It is a time for lamentation over the death of one of our dearest nephews. Please tell me why you have lost your gravity on the death of a mighty hero."

"Listen to Me, O Dhananjaya!" Lord Vasudeva replied. "I know that Karna can now be killed, because he no longer has possession of that celestial dart. There is not a man on earth that could stand before Karna with that dart in his possession. Even with My Sudarshana discus, I could not defeat Karna with his Shakti weapon. Now that he is deprived of that dart, you, and only you, can kill him. When you approach him in battle and his chariot wheels become stuck in the mud, overcome by the brahmana's curse, then you will be able to slay him. I have, before this battle, caused the annihilation of many demoniac rulers. I have caused the death of Jarasandha, Shishupala, and Ekalavya, the ruler of the Nishadas. These Kings would have certainly joined the Kauravas and would have been difficult to conquer. Jarasandha was killed by Bhima, and I severed Shishupala's head in the Rajasuya sacrifice at Indraprastha. I have also killed Ekalavya who could not be slain by the demigods and asuras combined. I have also caused the death of Ghatotkacha by means of Karna's Shakti weapon. Out of affection for you, I did not slay him before. Being a Rakshasa, he was inimical to the brahmanas and Vaishnavas. If Karna had not slain him, then I would have killed him with My own weapons. Those who destroy religious principles will be killed, either by Myself or through My different energies. Do not be anxious about Karna's death; it will take place. Bhima will also fulfill his vow to kill Duryodhana."

After Ghatotkacha's death, Yudhisthira sat down on his chariot overcome with grief. In that condition, Lord Krishna consoled him, "O son of Kunti, do not grieve in this way. Such lamentation does not become one of high birth. Rise up, O King and fight. If the enemy sees you in this condition, then they will surely attain victory."

Yudhisthira replied, "O son of Devaki, when we were living in the forest Ghatotkacha came to us and rendered many services. While Arjuna was away in the heavenly planets, Ghatotkacha stayed with us for our protection. When we traveled great distances, he used to carry Draupadi upon his back and relieve her from fatigue. My affection for Ghatotkacha is twice what I feel for Sahadeva. I was dear to him, and

he was dear to me. For offending Arjuna, the Sindhu King was slain, and for offending me, I will slay that sinful Karna. This act alone will console my grief."

Having spoken these words, Yudhishthira rushed against Karna with an anger like Yamaraja himself. While Yudhishthira was rushing into battle, Vyasadeva appeared and stopped him from any further action. He spoke to him affectionately, "By good luck, O Yudhishthira, Karna has used his Shakti weapon in battle. If this had not happened, then Arjuna would have been surely killed. How then would you have grieved? It is for your benefit that the Rakshasa has been slain. Do not lament, O son of Kunti. Death is the end to all creatures in this world. Ghatotkacha has attained the spiritual world and, and he has attained great fame in battle. On the fifth day from today, this entire earth will be yours. With a cheerful heart, unite with your brothers and defeat your enemies." Saying this much, Vyasadeva disappeared from sight.

Thus Ends the Tenth Chapter of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Death of Ghatotkacha.

## Chapter Ten

The Fifteenth Day at Kurukshetra;

The Fall of the Preceptor, Drona

After Ghatotkacha's death in the middle of the night, the warriors on both sides fought on desiring victory. When the battle approached midnight, many warriors fell asleep where they were fighting. Some fell asleep while riding their elephants, while others fell asleep in their chariots. The horsemen fell asleep on their horses, and the infantry men fell asleep on the ground. Other warriors who were still awake began to slay those who had fallen unconscious due to fatigue. Seeing the situation, Vibatsu (Arjuna) ordered the troops on both sides, "All the heroic soldiers are exhausted and overcome with sleep. Therefore, take rest. When the moon appears toward the end of night, you may again rise and fight." Hearing these pleasing words, the Kauravas and Pandavas laid down for a few hours rest. Indeed, they all praised Arjuna for his compassion. Laying aside their weapons, they fell into the slumber of sleep. Complete silence overcame the battlefield as those brave soldiers forgot the fatigue of battle. A sweet breeze blew giving solace to those gallant heroes who had fought for so long.

Sanjaya continued: O King, After a couple of hours had passed, the moon appeared on the horizon casting its rays in all directions. Illuminating the battlefield, that lunar disc revealed the sleeping soldiers overcome with battle fatigue. The darkness that had protected the soldiers for some time was now dissipated by the effulgence of the full moon. The soldiers awoke and again readied themselves for battle. Desiring to enter the spiritual world, they faced each other with upraised weapons.

At this time the wicked King Duryodhana approached Drona and rebuked him, "No mercy should be shown to those who are still resting from the fatigue of battle. The rested Pandavas have now become stronger due to the energy received from sleep. You, O preceptor, are protecting the Pandavas and want them to prosper. All the celestial weapons including the Brahmastra are known to you. I request you to use these weapons to destroy the Pandava army. Indeed, even the heavenly gods will not be able to defeat you as you invoke your superhuman astras. The Pandavas are certainly afraid of you. However, your affection for them prevents you from fighting to your best ability."

Sanjaya continued: Thus chastised by his student, Drona felt anger in his heart. He spoke to Duryodhana, "Although I am old, O Duryodhana, I am fighting to my utmost ability. These soldiers do not know how to defend themselves against celestial weapons. If I use them to slay large numbers of men, where will be the merit? If, from a desire to gain sovereignty, I slaughter defenseless soldiers, where will be my peace of mind? However, I am forced to follow your orders, but after slaying the host of Panchalas, I will throw down my armor and give up this mortal body. Do you really think Arjuna has been overcome with battle fatigue? Do not be so stupid as to think that his energy is limited. That third son of Kunti has defeated Indra in battle as well as the Gandharvas in the Dvaitavana forest. He has killed sixty thousand Nivatakavachas who could not be slain by the devas united. How then can human beings overcome him? O monarch, you have already seen how Arjuna has destroyed half your army. Where is your intelligence?"

To these words of wisdom, Duryodhana replied, "Myself, Karna, Duhshasana and Shakuni shall take half the army and assaulting Krishna and Arjuna, we will slay them in battle. You may head up the other half and achieve your vow by slaughtering the Panchala warriors." Laughing at Duryodhana's immaturity, Drona said, "Blessings to you, O foremost of the fools! What kshatriya is there who would face one who is invincible in battle. Arjuna cannot be defeated, and even the heavenly gods have not been able to impede his progress. Only persons, who are destined to die, speak as you are speaking. You are sinful, arrogant, cruel, conceited and possess little wisdom. Just before you stands Arjuna. Go, now, along with Karna, Duhshasana and Shakuni. Being scorched by Phalguna's arrows, you will come running to me for assistance. Do not flee the battlefield, but fight to your best ability. Since I am not pleasing to you, you make take the task into your own hands."

With these words, the battle commenced and those brave warriors fought on desiring to enter the spiritual kingdom. When the end of the night came, the solar orb appeared on the horizon diminishing the splendor of the moon. All the soldiers

descended from their chariots, horses and elephants and offered obeisances and prayers to the sun god as he made his appearance on the eastern horizon.

With the appearance of the sun, the warriors on both sides began to engage in combat. Taking half of the army, Drona began to grind the enemy ranks with his celestial weapons. The Preceptor then came upon Drupada and Virata. Those two Pandava generals began to release their selected weapons against their arch enemy, the son of Bharadvaja. Causing their weapons to be ineffectual, Drona cut off the bows of both Drupada and Virata. Enraged, Virata threw ten lances at Drona and sent up a loud roar. Drupada also released a terrible dart that flew through the sky like a meteor. Drona shattered those lances and the dart by means of his own arrows. The preceptor then took out a couple of broad headed shafts and pierced the chests of both heroes, depriving them of their lives. Witnessing the death of his father, Dhristadyumna took a vow to kill Dronacharya before the day had ended. He then went forward accompanied by a division of troops for keeping good his promise.

Meanwhile, Arjuna was engaged in battle with the mighty Preceptor. Beholding the encounter between teacher and student, all on the battlefield were struck with wonder. Drona could not find an opportunity to gain the upper hand over his disciple. He invoked the Aindra, the Pashupati, the Tvashtara, the Vayavya, and the Yama weapons. As soon as these weapons were released from Drona's bow, they were destroyed by the mantra weapons of Arjuna. Drona was very pleased with his disciple's abilities, and within his heart he cheered Arjuna. The heavenly denizens were witnessing the duel with intense curiosity. The firmament was filled with the praises of both teacher and student. Drona then invoked the Brahmastra weapon which caused fierce winds to blow and the earth to tremble. Partha countered that weapon with a Brahma weapon of his own. When the two weapons met, they were withdrawn by Arjuna causing the agitation in nature to abate.

Drona then left Arjuna and began to exterminate the Panchalas and the Shrinjayas. With his superhuman weapons, he was destroying great numbers of men. It was obvious that Drona had given up all knowledge of morality for he was slaughtering troops who did not know how to defend themselves from the power of his weapons. Arjuna was reluctant to fight with his preceptor, and as a result there was no one who could oppose that mighty hero. Seeing the situation, Lord Krishna advised the Pandavas, "This esteemed bowman cannot be defeated even by the devatas. However, when he lays aside his weapons, he can be killed by any great hero. Let us tell him that his son Ashvatthama has been slain. Out of affection for his son, he will no longer fight, and thus this army will be saved."

Hearing this plan, Arjuna did not appreciate it nor did Yudhisthira. However, others approved of it, and Bhima immediately went and killed a huge elephant named Ashvatthama that belonged to a king on their side. He then approached Drona and exclaimed aloud, "Ashvatthama has been slain." He said it repeatedly and spoke of his son's death. Drona's arms weakened, and his weapons fell from his hands. Recollecting, however, his son's strength, Drona picked up his weapons thinking Bhima to be lying. He again attacked the Panchalas and began to carve away at

their front line. Drona then invoked the Brahma weapon, causing the slaughter of tens of thousands of men at a time. With this weapon, he killed five hundred Matsya warriors, six thousand elephants, and ten thousand horsemen. Seeing Drona on the field of battle like Yamaraja himself, the demigods and sages who were witnessing the battle desired to take him to the heavenly planets. They then ordered him, "O great brahmana, you are fighting unrighteously. You are versed in all the Vedas and should know not to kill innocent men needlessly. Such acts do not become you. With the Brahmastra weapon, you are burning men who do not know how to counter such weapons. Your predestined time on earth has now come to an end. O Drona, lay aside your weapons and fix your mind on the Supreme Godhead, Narayana. Do not continue to engage in such cruel acts."

Hearing the sages advice, and seeing Dhristadyumna before him, Drona no longer desired to engage in battle. When Yudhisthira came near him, Drona inquired whether his son had been slain or not. Drona believed that Yudhisthira would never tell a lie even for the sake for the sovereignty of the universe. Previously Lord Krishna had advised the King in these words, "If Drona continues to fight using these celestial weapons, the whole army is destined for annihilation. You can save this needless slaughter of men by telling a lie. In this case falsehood is better than truth. There will be no sin incurred if you do so on My behalf. You should follow my instructions with firm faith."

Bhima then said to Yudhisthira, "I have killed a mighty elephant belonging to the King of the Malavas, Indravarman. The elephant's name was Ashvatthama. I then went to Drona and said that his son had been slain. However, the Preceptor did not believe my words. If you say that his son is dead, then he will lay aside his weapons. Because we are desiring victory, you should accept Krishna's advice."

Reflecting on the good counsel given by Lord Krishna and Bhima, Yudhisthira told Drona that his son had been killed, indistinctly adding the word elephant after the name. Before this Yudhisthira's chariot used to ride at a height of four fingers above the ground. However, since he hesitated to act on Lord Krishna's order, his chariot and horses touched the earth. Hearing that his son was dead, Drona's strength diminished and his celestial weapons would no longer come at his command. Remembering the great sage's advice, he cast aside his weapons and sat down in meditation. He fixed his mind on the Supreme Person, Lord Krishna and turned his thoughts completely away from battle. Perfecting his practice of yoga, he left his body in the presence of all. Only those endowed with spiritual vision were able to understand what was taking place.

Taking the opportunity given by providence, Dhristadyumna descended from his chariot with sword in hand. Arjuna called out loudly, "O son of Drupada, do not kill him, but bring him alive. A teacher should never be killed by his student." Paying little attention to Arjuna's advice, Dhristadyumna rushed at Drona's chariot, and raising his sword, he severed the Preceptor's head. No one appreciated this act against a defenseless person, and all rebuked Drupada's son for his cruelty. Arjuna melted with pity for his teacher and almost fell unconscious. Dhristadyumna,

covered with Drona's blood, then took the head by the hair and showed it to all warriors. Overcome with great fear, the Kauravas ran away in all directions.

Beholding the troops retreating, Ashvatthama went to Duryodhana and inquired, "O descendent of Bharata, why are the troops flying away in fear, and why are you not trying to rally them? All the great warriors including Karna are fleeing. Has some great calamity overcome the army?"

Duryodhana, unable to answer the question of Drona's son, said to Kripa, "Please tell him why the army is running away." Then Saradwat's son told Ashvatthama that his father had been slain by Dhristadyumna. Kripa told him in detail how his father had been killed. He told him of the deception and lie by Yudhisthira which caused Drona to throw away his weapons. He told him how Bhima had killed an elephant named Ashvatthama, and using this as a deception, lied to his father. Kripa also told Ashvatthama how Dhristadyumna had cut off his father's head as he was sitting in meditation. He also spoke of how Arjuna had tried to stop the sinful act.

Hearing of his father's slaughter, Ashvatthama became like a cobra someone stepped on. He blazed up like a red hot fire and began to grind his teeth and squeeze his hands. He thought of annihilating the whole Pandava army.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, when Drona's son heard of his father's death, what did he say and what did he do? He lived only to please his father, and the father lived only to please the son. What action did that bull among men take to avenge the unfair killing of the Preceptor?

Sanjaya replied: O King, after his father's death, Ashvatthama appeared like Yamaraja himself, capable of destroying the three worlds. In that angry mood, he spoke to Duryodhana, "I have now heard how my father has been cruelly slain. Without doubt my father has attained a destination meant for renowned heroes. I do not lament this. However, I cannot tolerate the fact that Dhristadyumna has seized his locks of hair and has displayed my father's head. Today, the earth shall drink the blood of Drupada's son as well as the wicked King Yudhisthira. Today I shall exterminate the whole Pandava army. Previously my father received a weapon from Lord Vishnu known as the Narayana astra. This weapon has the power to destroy even those that are considered unslayable. That weapon will destroy all who oppose it. No one shall escape with life today, having released that invincible weapon." With this resolution, Ashvatthama rallied the retreating troops.

Meanwhile the Pandavas witnessed with wonder the Kaurava army again assembled for battle. Arjuna informed his brothers and all present that that Ashvatthama had rallied the troops with the intention of killing Dhristadyumna. Arjuna did not approve of the way Dhristadyumna had killed his preceptor. However, both Bhima and Dhristadyumna defended themselves saying that Drona had turned away from the path of righteousness. Hearing Dhristadyumna's criticism of Drona, Satyaki trembled with anger and took up a mace to kill Dhristadyumna. However, he was stopped by Bhima who pacified him with affectionate words. Sahadeva also spoke to him, and

thus his anger was quelled. Together they again prepared themselves to meet the oncoming enemy.

Drona's son then began a colossal carnage on the front line of battle. He piled up a mountain of heads from the Pandava army. Then touching water and invoking the Narayana astra, Ashvatthama aimed that invincible weapon at the Pandava army. The earth began to tremble and a great wind storm appeared on the Kurukshetra plain. In the heavens hundreds of thousands of celestial arrows appeared with flaming mouths. Maces, battle axes, Sataghnis, javelins and discs, effulgent as the sun, appeared in the sky, numbering tens of thousands. Coming down upon the Pandava army, those weapons began to destroy countless men. That divine weapon, owned by Lord Narayana, began to consume the Pandava army like a wild fire consumes dry grass.

Witnessing the slaughter of troops, all the Pandavas fell into anxiety, not knowing what to do. Lord Krishna, the protector of His devotees, then ordered the troops, "Lay down your weapons and descend from your chariots, horses and elephants. If you lay weaponless on the earth, this astra will not harm you. If you even think of battle within your mind, this weapon will kill you. Give up all thoughts of war and fix your minds in a peaceful state."

Hearing this advice, all the soldiers threw down their weapons and laid on the ground. However, Bhimasena, refused to surrender to the weapon. He yelled to all present, "None of the warriors should lay down their weapons. I shall oppose this astra. With my heavy mace, I shall stop the force of this weapon. O Arjuna, you should not lay down the Gandiva bow for a stain will come upon your glory."

Thus addressed by Bhima, Arjuna replied, "My vow is that this Gandiva bow shall not be used against women, cows, brahmanas and or any weapon owned by Lord Narayana." Bhima did not heed Lord Krishna's advice or the action of Arjuna. He rushed forward on his chariot to challenge Ashvatthama. Drona's son, smiling all the while, then began to direct the astra at Bhima. Indeed, that great weapon passed over all the soldiers and concentrated on Bhima's head. Suddenly Bhima appeared like a fiery mountain. Quickly Arjuna covered him with the Varuna weapon that cooled the blazing heat. He released that weapon so quickly that no one knew of it, not even Ashvatthama. The Narayana astra built up in strength, and the chariot of Bhima was blazing with fire. Seeing the certain death of Bhima, both Arjuna and Krishna rushed to save him. They jumped in his chariot, which was protected by the Varuna weapon and forced Bhima to the ground. Bhima was sighing like a snake and refused to part with his weapons. Then Lord Krishna pacified him, "O son of Pandu, although I have forbidden you, you have not thrown down your weapons. If Arjuna could have countered this weapon, then I would have never recommended the army stop fighting. Just see, all the warriors have given up their weapons. If you do not do the same, this weapon will destroy you." Bhima then reluctantly threw aside his weapons and laid down upon the ground. Thus pacified, the Narayana astra refrained from killing the Pandava troops.

When the heat of that weapon had cooled, sweet breezes began to blow and a fragrant aroma appeared in the wind. Beholding the pacification of the Narayana astra, the Pandavas again stood ready for battle. Duryodhana rushed to Ashvatthama and requested, "O foremost brahmana, release this weapon again for the Pandavas are forming their troops for victory."

"O King," Ashvatthama replied, "that weapon cannot be invoked again. If it is, it will undoubtedly slay the person who releases it. Vasudeva has baffled this weapon. I will, however, use my other weapons for slaughtering the Pandava host."

Making this resolution and seeing Lord Krishna and Arjuna present before him, Ashvatthama invoked the Agneya weapon which caused intense fire to appear. Arrows with intense flames fell upon the Pandava soldiers scorching their bodies. Ashvatthama then directed that weapon toward the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna. The Agneya weapon killed thousands upon thousands of chariot fighters, elephants and horsemen like a forest fire destroys trees. To save the Army, Arjuna invoked the Brahmastra weapon which countered the weapon released by Ashvatthama. When both weapons were withdrawn, the Pandavas saw that a full akshauhini division had been burnt by the weapon. So scorched were the soldiers that they could not be distinguished. Both armies thought that Krishna and Arjuna had been killed by the weapon, but upon seeing them in their chariot, the Pandava warriors cheered loudly and blew their conchshells.

When his astra had been baffled, Ashvatthama did not know what to do. He descended from his chariot and ran away from the fight. As he was leaving the battlefield, he came upon Vyasadeva. He offered his obeisances unto him and spoke to him with tearful eyes, "O great sage, why has my Narayana astra born no fruit? This fiery weapon has the power to destroy the whole Pandava army. Why then has it been pacified after the slaughter of only one akshauhini division of troops? O great muni, I desire to hear of this in detail."

"O son of Drona," Vyasa replied, "as you have been told before, Krishna is the Supreme Godhead, who is to be worshiped by all persons. Even the heavenly Lords, Brahma and Shiva, worship and meditate upon that Supreme Person. He is the cause of all cosmic manifestation, and therefore, He can never be slain, for His body is not material. He makes possible the birth of all creatures in this world, and He is, therefore, the father of all living beings. He has appeared in this world to reestablish the principles of religion, and He is appearing like an ordinary human being bewildering everyone by his internal potency. Arjuna is his eternal associate and can never be slain. There is no warrior on this battlefield that can equal him. The eternal Lord Krishna should be worshiped by all beings."

Hearing Vyasadeva's words of wisdom, Ashvatthama was pacified and ordered that the troops be withdrawn for the day. After the preceptor Drona had fallen, the Kaurava warriors became morose and entered their tents for nightly rest.

Thus Ends Chapter Eleven of the Drona Parva, Entitled, The Fifteenth Day at Kurukshetra; The Fall of the Preceptor Drona.

Thus Ends the Drona Parva.

## Chapter Commentary

One may question the morality of Lord Krishna's instruction for Yudhisthira to tell a lie. Most persons are attached to mundane moral codes and laws put down for human society to follow. However, if God's order opposes morality, the highest morality is to follow the order of the Lord, even if it means breaking worldly laws. Yudhisthira had never told a lie in his life, but the Lord tested Yudhisthira's understanding of real surrender. One should not kill one's grandfather, but Lord Krishna ordered Arjuna to do it, because Bhishma had taken the wrong side. We must be attached to the order of the Lord or his representative and not to mundane laws.

Of course, this does not mean that one can ignore the laws of the government or the laws set down for man in such law books as the Manu samhita, the Torah, the Koran or the Bible. One should not act whimsically. One must follow these, but the Lord's order is supreme, and supercedes any law or rule in any scripture or passed by any government.

Karna Parva

Chapter One

The Sixteenth Day of Hostilities

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, hearing of Drona's death, my heart trembles. One by one all the renowned maharathis are being drowned in the Pandava ocean. Due to the deceitful nature of my son, I don't think any of the great kings will survive. Please tell me, O Suta, who took charge of the Kaurava divisions after the fall of the mighty preceptor.

Sanjaya said: O King, after the fall of the preceptor Drona and after the forces were withdrawn on the fifteenth day of the battle, Duryodhana held consultation with his generals concerning the next commander of the army. They all gave their opinions on what should be done, and finally Ashvatthama spoke, "We should not be discouraged at the loss of so many of our men. After all, destiny shall decide who will be the victor in this war. As for our commander, I think Karna should lead our army to victory over the Pandavas. He is the most competent among us in the use of weapons and cannot be slain. As powerful as Yamaraja himself, he will certainly vanquish our enemy." Agreeing with Ashvatthama's proposal, Duryodhana chose Karna as commander in chief of the Kaurava army.

When the dawn of the sixteenth day arrived, both armies arrayed their troops in battle formation. Both were eager for combat and both blew on their conches, beat drums and sounded trumpets. The Kaurava army was headed by Karna, and the Pandava army was headed by Arjuna and King Yudhishthira. When the two armies met, there was a tremendous clash of weapons. Bhima was riding on a beautiful elephant and began to afflict the enemy forces with iron lances. He came upon the King of the Kulutas, who was also riding on an elephant. They began to afflict each other with their weapons, and Bhima was soon seen with six lances piercing his body. Not minding those weapons, he jumped down from his elephant and smashed the head of his opponent's elephant. The king of the Kulutas, jumping down from the dead beast, rushed at Bhima with an upraised sword. Bhima, however, with one blow from his mace sent that King to the other world.

Arjuna encountered the angry son of Drona, and after a fierce battle, he killed his charioteer and sent him running from the battlefield. When Ashvatthama finally stopped his horses, he no longer desired to fight with Partha, having been stung by his forceful arrows. Arjuna then engaged in battle with the remnants of the Samsaptakas headed by King Susharman.

After his defeat by Arjuna, Ashvatthama came upon King Pandya, who was raining arrows from his chariot and killing the Kaurava host in great numbers. King Pandya had brought to the Pandava's cause a full akshauhini division of troops. He was regarded by both sides to be a great fighter. Ashvatthama challenged him to battle and covered him with hundreds of arrows. King Pandya was conversant with many celestial weapons, and invoking the Vayavya weapon, he blew away the mass of arrows released from the bow of Drona's son. Greatly angered, Ashvatthama killed his four horses and charioteer and then shattered his chariot to pieces. To escape death, King Pandya jumped to the ground. At that time there happened to be a wild elephant running amongst the warriors with no rider. King Pandya quickly ascended that elephant and continued his fight with Ashvatthama. He took up a golden lance and with all his strength threw it at Ashvatthama, shouting, "You are slain! You are slain!" That forceful lance shattered Ashvatthama's radiant crown which was bedecked with all kinds of precious jewels. Seeing his valuable crown shattered, Ashvatthama could not tolerate the King's success. With three crescent shaped arrows, he cut off the two arms and the head of that great warrior. Falling from the elephant, King Pandya lay on the ground, having been severed into four pieces.

On the sixteenth day of the battle, Sahadeva encountered Duhshasana and defeated him soundly. He then began to crush the innumerable troops that were assisting the sinful brother of Duryodhana.

While Nakula was engaged in destroying the Kaurava divisions, Karna came up to challenge him. Smiling all the while, Nakula taunted him, "O sinful person, by good luck I am able to see you standing before me today. You are the root cause of this terrible war. Slaying you today, I will regard myself as one who has achieved his objective."

"Strike me, O hero and prove your prowess," Karna replied. "Having achieved some meager feats in battle, you think yourself powerful. Today I will vanquish your pride with my powerful shafts."

Having said this much, Karna released seventy arrows, but the son of Madri, Nakula, baffled those arrows and released eighty at the Suta's son. Karna shattered Nakula's bow and also killed his charioteer with a broad-headed shaft. With four more arrows, he killed his four horses, and Nakula then jumped down to the ground with a spiked bludgeon in hand. He released that weapon with all his might, but it was diverted by Karna's arrows. Nakula then ran away to another part of the battlefield. Karna pursued him, and when he came upon him, he touched him with the horn of his bow and said, "Your boastful words have now proved futile. Can you repeat them once more? Do not, O son of Pandu, fight with those who are superior to you. Only fight with those who are your equals. Go and take shelter of Krishna and Arjuna." Karna did not kill Nakula remembering his promise to Kunti before the battle had begun. After having been freed from the jaws of death, Nakula went in the direction of King Yudhisthira's chariot, his head lowered in shame.

King Yudhisthira encountered King Duryodhana and a fierce duel took place between those two great heroes. In the end Yudhisthira deprived Duryodhana of his chariot and all his weapons. Standing on the battlefield under the fear of death, King Duryodhana did not know what to do. Coming up to save him were Kripa, Karna and Ashvatthama. They surrounded the King and fully protected him.

Duryodhana then ascended another chariot and again challenged Yudhisthira. Another battle then ensued in which both combatants exhibited extreme animosity. Duryodhana threw a golden dart at Yudhisthira that sped through the air like a meteor. However, Yudhisthira shattered that weapon, and then pierced Duryodhana with many arrows. Duryodhana countered and covered Yudhisthira with hundreds of arrows sending up a loud roar. Yudhisthira could not tolerate his victory and released a golden shafted arrow that pierced Gandhari's son and entered into the earth. Falling unconscious for a few moments, Duryodhana sat down in his chariot. When he regained his senses, he picked up his mace and ran at Yudhisthira to end his life. Seeing him coming Yudhisthira hurled a mighty dart blazing like a meteor. That dart hit Duryodhana in the chest, causing him to fall into a swoon. Then Bhima, recollecting his vow he had taken at the gambling match, reminded Yudhisthira, "This one should not be slain by you, O King." With these words, Yudhisthira

refrained from killing that sinful person who was the cause of destroying the entire kshatriya race.

Then Arjuna began to annihilate the entire Kaurava army. With his mighty weapons, he caused a great carnage of men on the Kurukshetra plain. In all directions there were thousands of slain warriors, elephants, and horses. Broken axes, scimitars, maces, javelins and darts were scattered all over the battlefield. Severed heads, arms and legs were seen everywhere and the whole battlefield appeared like Yamaraja's abode where the sinful are punished. For those who were weak hearted, the battlefield appeared like a ghastly scene, and for those who were heroes and took delight in battle, the battlefield appeared like an entrance into the spiritual world. Thus those two armies fought on until the sun set on the horizon. With this, the sixteenth day of the great war ended and thus the two armies withdrew to their camps.

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Karna Parva, Entitled, The Fifteenth Day of Hostilities.

## Chapter Two

Salya Becomes Karna's Charioteer

King Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, at the dawn of the seventeenth day of battle what did Duryodhana do, relying on the strength of Karna? How, also, did Arjuna encounter Karna now that he had lost his Shakti weapon? Without doubt destiny is supreme, for now my sons are reaping the terrible fruit of their activities in the form of annihilation of their nearest of kinsmen and friends. Please relate to me in detail all that happened on that eventful day.

Sanjaya said: When the sun appeared on the horizon dissipating the darkness of night, Karna went to King Duryodhana and spoke the following words, "Today, O King, I shall engage in battle with Arjuna. Either I will slay him, or he will slay me. Without killing him, I will not come back from the field of battle. Partha will definitely seek battle with me especially since I am deprived of the Shakti weapon. Please listen to my request that will assist me in victory. My celestial weapons are equal to the effectiveness of Arjuna's. As far as countering the feats of powerful enemies, I am superior to Arjuna. In lightness of hand and range of arrows, in hitting the mark and in skill, I am superior to Arjuna. In physical strength, in courage, in knowledge of weapons, and in prowess, I am superior to Arjuna. My bow called Vijaya, which was made for Indra by Vishvakarma, is superior to the Gandiva. That foremost bow was given to my preceptor, Parashurama. He has previously used this bow to kill all the kshatriyas twenty one times. With this bow given by Parashurama I will fight with Arjuna. Today, I will achieve my objective. Arjuna will never be able to stand in front of me as I release my selected weapons.

"Listen, however, to the points in which Arjuna is superior to me. The chariot driver of Arjuna is the divine son of Devaki, Krishna. He is worshiped in all the three worlds. His celestial chariot given by Agni cannot be penetrated by any weapon. His horses can travel at the speed of mind and cannot be slain. Arjuna also possesses an inexhaustible quiver of arrows and the string on his bow is also celestial. The ape on Arjuna's banner is, indeed, wonderful. Although I am inferior to Arjuna in these respects, I will still fight with him. If it were possible for me to obtain a chariot driver that was equal to Krishna then I would certainly obtain victory. I think that Salya, the King of Madras, is equal to Krishna as a chariot driver. As Krishna is acquainted with horse lore, so also is Salya. Salya is superior to Krishna, and I am superior to Arjuna. I request that many carts filled with weapons be close to me, ready for use at my disposal. In this way I will become superior to Arjuna. If you can promise all that I have asked for, then I will give you victory."

"I will certainly supply you with the necessary weapons," Duryodhana replied. "I will personally accompany you and protect you on all sides as you fight with Arjuna. Now, I will go to Salya and request that he take the reins of your chariot and guide you to victory."

Sanjaya continued: Your son, O Monarch, went to the ruler of the Madras and spoke as follows, "O foremost of rulers, I have come to solicit your help. To assist Karna in slaying Arjuna, I request you to become the chariot driver of Karna and guide him to victory. O great warrior, you are equal to Vasudeva as a warrior. Just as the Divine Krishna protects Arjuna, so you must protect Karna. The Pandavas have slain my soldiers in great numbers, and my army is at the point of annihilation. Karna desires to challenge Arjuna to combat, but he needs someone who is equal to Krishna as a charioteer. If you, who are greater than Krishna, take the reins of Karna's chariot, then victory will go to Karna. With the death of Arjuna, the whole Pandava army will be destroyed easily. O invincible monarch, if you combine with the son of Radha, I am sure that the demigods united will not be able to harm you. I am now taking shelter of you as the demigods take shelter of Lord Vishnu. Please assist the Suta's son, and help me gain complete sovereignty of this earth."

"O son of Gandhari," Salya replied, "you are insulting me by asking me to drive the chariot of someone who you think is superior to me. I do not consider the son of Radha to be my equal. Just behold these two massive arms which are as strong as thunderbolts. Also, behold my bow by which I can conquer all men on the field of battle. Behold my chariot and horses which can travel at the speed of wind. Do you not see my mace covered in gold? With this weapon I can split the earth or shatter mountains to pieces. The Supreme Being created the kshatriyas from His arms, and the sutas have been created from the castes that are servants of the shudras. Karna comes from such a caste, and therefore, why should he not drive my chariot? I have undergone the ceremonies befitting a king. I deserve the praises and worship that is due to a king. I will, therefore, never fight in such humiliating circumstances. I ask your permission to return to my kingdom."

Sanjaya continued: Having spoken his heart, Salya, a lion among men, endeavored to leave the assembly of kings. However, Duryodhana caught him and affectionately

spoke to him again, "Without doubt, Salya, what you have said is true. Karna is not superior to you, nor am I trying to humiliate you in an assembly of warriors. I have a certain purpose in mind. Karna is superior to Arjuna in the use of weapons, and you are superior to Krishna in caring for horses. It is known that Vasudeva is the foremost of warriors, yet still He is driving the chariot of Arjuna. You are twice superior to Krishna and a mighty adhiratha. There is no doubt about this. There is not the slightest humiliation in driving Karna's chariot. There is only glory for you and victory."

"Since you have described me as being superior to Krishna," Salya replied, "I am pleased with you. I will take the reigns of Karna's chariot under the condition that he must tolerate whatever I say."

Agreeing with Salya's conditions, Karna then set his heart on battle. He ascended his chariot along with Salya, and all present praised those two bulls among men. To the beating of drums and cymbals and to the blowing of conchshells, Karna and Salya arrived at the front line of the battle. While the Kaurava soldiers were joyous over the mighty combination, they failed to notice the evil omens that surrounded them. A shower of meteors fell from the sky. Thunder and lightning were seen and heard in a cloudless sky. Bones fell from the firmament and fierce winds began to blow. Overcome by the influence of time, they did not know that those evil portents spelled death.

Feeling that victory was in his grasp, Karna began to boast, "While stationed on my chariot, I can challenge even Indra, the king of heaven. Beholding Bhishma and Drona lying on the field of battle, I do not feel the least fear. I know that it is I who must face Arjuna and slay him in battle. Bhishma and Drona were too affectionate to Arjuna, and therefore, they did not feel it in their hearts to kill him. However, I do not feel such affection towards Partha. Therefore, destiny has left it up to me to slay Arjuna in battle. Behold, Salya, this chariot covered in tiger skins and ornamented in gold. It is guided by the finest horses which were personally given to me by my preceptor Parashurama. It is filled with the foremost weapons for slaying the enemy in combat. Even if the demigods unite with Partha, they will not stop me from fulfilling my oath to kill Arjuna."

Sanjaya continued: Hearing the boastful words of Karna, Salya gave the following reply, "O Karna, do not pierce my ears with these conceited words of vanity. Arjuna is the foremost warrior, and you are the lowest of kshatriyas. Who else but Arjuna could have kidnapped Subhadra in the presence of all the Yadu princes and kings? Who, save Arjuna, could have satisfied the great Lord Shiva in battle? To protect the Khandava forest and assist Agni, who, save Arjuna, could have fought with all the heavenly gods, headed by Indra, and defeated them in battle? Was it not Phalguna who released Duryodhana from the hands of the Gandharvas after you had run away from the battlefield? When the cows were stolen away from the kingdom of Virata, wasn't it Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Ashvatthama, Duryodhana and yourself who were defeated by Arjuna? Why did you not endeavor to defeat him then? Now on this occasion, you will get another chance to fight with the son of Kunti, and I think that if you do not flee from battle, you will be slain by Arjuna."

"You are certainly an enemy wearing the guise of a friend," Karna said. "Why are you trying to discourage me before facing Arjuna in battle? No one, not even Indra what to speak of a mere mortal, will deter me from my determination to kill Arjuna in battle."

"When you come face to face with Arjuna," Salya replied, "and feel the force of his arrows, you will retract your boastful statements. You are like a croaking frog inviting the black snake of Krishna to devour you. You are like a dog in the forest barking at the forest roaming tiger. You are like a jackal and Dhananjaya is like a mighty lion. You can boast these words as long as Arjuna has not cut off your head with his golden shafted arrows."

Becoming agitated by Salya's words, Karna replied, "You are ignorant of my merits because you have not seen my prowess in battle. You, obviously, cannot judge between the powerful and the weak. In my quiver I have a special arrow in the form of a snake. I worship it with sandalwood and garlands. That arrow has the power to kill large numbers of soldiers and elephants. It has the power to penetrate Mount Meru. I will not use that weapon against anyone except Arjuna and Krishna. O Salya, you will behold today both Krishna and Arjuna slain by this arrow as two pearls are pierced by a needle and thread. You are a fool because you have allowed fear of battle to enter your heart. After killing Krishna and Arjuna, I will kill you along with all your kinsmen. I do not harbor any fear of Krishna and Arjuna. I am prepared to fight with a hundred Krishna and Arjunas and slay them in battle. You are born in a sinful country, and therefore, I do not take your words seriously. It is known that the inhabitants of Madras are the lowest of men, and whatever they speak is like dirt. It is well known that women in Madras are like camels and asses, and will have intercourse with anyone. Because you rule over such a low class of people, if I kill you, I will cast your carcass to the carnivorous animals who will devour it. To save yourself from such a fate, do not speak such words again. If you speak to me again like this, I will crush your head with my mace which is hard as thunder."

While taunting each other, Duryodhana suddenly appeared and pacified them both. He urged them to fight the enemy and not each other. Salya then guided the horses to the front part of the formation.

Dhritarastra inquired: How, O Suta, did Karna arrange the vast forces of my son's army? How also did Dhristadyumna arrange the forces of the Pandavas for battle? Please tell me everything in detail for I am eager to hear of it.

Sanjaya replied: Hear from me how, on this seventeenth day, the armies of both sides arrayed their troops. In your son's divisions, Kripa and Kritavarman took up the right wing of that formation. Beyond them were the divisions of the Gandharas headed by Shakuni and Uluka. On the left wing of the formation were the Samsaptakas led by King Susharman. Also your sons took up their positions amongst that formidable host. At the rear of the army was your son Duhshasana, riding on a huge elephant supported by thousands of troops. Behind him was Duryodhana surrounded by the foremost warriors of the Kaurava army. Behind the King and taking up the tail of that division was Ashvatthama. The body of the formation was

led by Karna, supported by tens of thousands of warriors. Behind Karna was his son Vrishasena and his other sons Banasena and Shusena. They were all prepared to lay down their lives for their father.

Dhristadyumna, in consultation with Arjuna, then arrayed their troops in a counter formation to assure their safety. Beholding the Samsaptakas standing before him, Arjuna challenged them, desiring to finish the remnants of those unretreating heroes. When the two armies met there was a loud sound of warriors desiring victory. The two armies had diminished considerably since the first day of the battle.

When Karna came upon the Panchalas he killed five of their foremost warriors whose names were Banadeva, Chitrasena, Senavindhu, Tapan and Surasena. The two protectors of Karna's chariot wheels were two of his sons, named Satyasena and Sushena. The oldest son of Karna, Vrishasena, was protecting him from behind.

Coming up to challenge the Suta's son was Dhristadyumna, Satyaki, the five sons of Draupadi, Bhima and Shikhandi. There was also Nakula and Sahadeva surrounded by the Panchalas, the Chedis and the Matsyas. Shusena quickly cut Bhima's bow as Bhima came rushing toward Karna. Vrikodara picked up another bow and quickly pierced Shusena with ten arrows and Karna with seventy. Bhima then cut off Banasena's head with a razor sharp arrow even in the presence of his father. Having slain one of Karna's sons, Bhima began to afflict Karna's supporting troops.

Penetrating the Pandava host, Karna came upon Yudhishthira and pierced him with ten arrows. Yudhishthira then set on his bow a golden shafted arrow capable of taking the life of the Suta's son. Releasing the arrow with full force, it pierced Karna's side forcing him to fall to the floor of the chariot. Seeing the precarious situation, Karna's division thought that he was slain. Salya was about to take him from the battlefield when he regained consciousness. Karna then set his heart on killing Yudhishthira. With a couple of razor headed arrows, Karna killed the two warriors that were protecting Yudhishthira's chariot. He then cut Yudhishthira's bow in two and with his arrows stripped his armor from his body. Yudhishthira picked up a golden dart and released it at Karna with full force. Karna, however, shattered it with his own weapons. King Yudhishthira then pierced Karna with four lances. Two lances pierced his arms, one his chest and one his head. Blood poured from his wounds, and Karna became furious. He destroyed Yudhishthira's chariot forcing him to ascend another. King Yudhishthira, not feeling capable of further fighting, fled the battlefield. However, Karna would not allow him to escape. He came near Yudhishthira and seized him by force. Karna then remembered his promise to Kunti and did not harm him.

Laughing and making fun of him, Karna said, "How is it that you are born of such a noble race, and you are running from the battlefield desiring to save your life. You are inclined toward the life of a brahmana, and therefore not inclined to the life of a kshatriya. Do not, O son of Kunti, fight with brave warriors and use harsh language. Go to your tent or take shelter of Krishna and Arjuna. I will grant you life and not slay you." Karna then left Yudhishthira and returned to the thick of the fighting.

King Yudhisthira was angered by Karna's words, but as he looked around he saw that he had no weapons to challenge him. Bhima then came upon Karna, and a fierce battle ensued. Karna managed to shatter Bhimasena's bow, but Bhima strung another bow and pierced Karna with many arrows. Karna countered with twenty arrows, but Bhima pierced Karna in the chest with a broad headed shaft released with the force of lightning. The arrow hit Karna with the sound of thunder, and Karna fell to the floor of the chariot in a deadly swoon. Salya then took Karna from the battlefield to save his life.

Witnessing Karna's defeat, Duryodhana sent twenty of his brothers to fight with Bhima. They were like flies about to enter fire. Bhima was red hot like fire and could not be stopped. Duryodhana's brothers surrounded him, and began to afflict him with deadly arrows. Furious, Bhima struck off the head of Vivitsu, whose head resembled the full moon. With his forceful arrows Bhima then killed Vikata and Saha, who fell to the ground like a couple of trees uprooted by the wind. Bhima then killed Krata, Nanda and Upananda. Seeing their brothers killed, the others fled from the sight of Bhima.

Descending from his chariot, Bhima then began to annihilate the enemy troops as the wind destroys clouds. Seven hundred elephants then assaulted Bhima intending to trample him to death. However, Bhima prostrated all seven hundred with his unrelenting mace. Scorching the Kaurava army, Bhima then crushed one hundred chariots and two hundred infantry. Then five hundred chariot warriors inspired by Duryodhana rushed against Bhima to kill him. They roared fiercely and came upon him with great speed. None the less, Bhima made a mountain out of those five hundred warriors, and licking his lips, prepared to receive three thousand attacking horsemen sent by Shakuni. With his mace covered in flesh and blood, Bhima made a separate mountain of those oncoming horsemen. Not satiated with battle, Bhima entered the ranks of the Kauravas completely devoid of any kind of fear. His mace, which whirled about him constantly, was like a discus which was meant for the destruction of the whole world. No one could stop Bhima as he toured the battlefield mace in hand. The whole battlefield became a ghastly scene as Bhima pummeled chariots, horses and elephants into shapeless masses. Rivers of blood flowed in all directions. Infantrymen were slipping in pools of blood as they tried to make their way toward the angry Bhima. With one swing of his mace, Bhima was killing thirty soldiers at a time. Soldiers crushed by Bhima's mace were forcibly smashed into the soldiers behind them, forcing a merge in the bodies of men. The heads of elephants were either struck off or torn open, causing the brain of the beast to fall on the ground. Chariots, along with their warrior and horses, were reduced to unrecognizable shapes laying here and there on the battlefield. The Kurukshetra plain was ghastly, and the whole Kaurava army fled from the presence of the mighty armed Bhima, seeking Karna as their refuge. Bhima stood on the battlefield like Yamaraja himself. His mace and body were covered in flesh and blood. His anger was so intense that no one could recognize him. Thus Bhima released his wrath on the sinners for having touched the sanctified hair of his wife Draupadi.

Thus ends the Second Chapter of the Karna Parva, entitled, Salya becomes Karna's Charioteer.

### Chapter Three

#### Lord Krishna Saves Yudhisthira from Death

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, the feats that Bhima accomplished were exceedingly wonderful. The field of battle could not tolerate the forceful play of his powerful mace. Now, O Suta, please tell me what happened between the two foremost chariot fighters, the son of Kunti, Arjuna and the son of Radha, Karna. Their encounter must have been wonderful for they are both considered the best among adhirathas. Please relate to me all that happened on that seventeenth day of battle.

Sanjaya said: O King, during the progress of the Kurukshetra war, the sound of the Gandiva bow was heard above all else. Arjuna was engaged in slaughtering the Samsaptaka headed by King Susharman. Greatly angered, the Samsaptakas surrounded Arjuna's chariot and began to cover it with a deluge of weapons. King Susharman pierced Arjuna with ten arrows and Krishna with three. He then pierced the monkey Hanuman who was emitting earth trembling screams from Arjuna's banner. Not tolerating that shaft, Hanuman began to roar with a thunderous voice, and the Samsaptaka warriors stood petrified out of intense fear. Indeed, they all stood like trees in a forest. However, inspiring his troops, King Susharman rushed at the chariot of Krishna and Arjuna releasing his mighty weapons. The Samsaptakas overcome with intense anger began to strike Arjuna's divine chariot. They hacked at the wheels, the shaft, the horses and every other part. Some of the soldiers tried to seize Lord Krishna as He was driving the chariot through the mass of soldiers. Others were trying to grab Arjuna or hit him with their weapons. The lotus eyed Lord Krishna pushed away the warriors who were trying desperately to kill Him, and Arjuna began to mangle the soldiers around the chariot with short arrows meant for close encounters. Cutting off their arms, legs and heads, he drove away the large force from the chariot.

Addressing Lord Krishna, Arjuna said, "Behold the mighty Samsaptakas fighting fiercely in battle. Without doubt, there is none on earth that could bear such an attack on his chariot except myself." Arjuna then blew his conchshell the Devadatta, and Lord Krishna blew His the Panchajanya. Then that subduer of hostile armies invoked the Naga (snake) weapon which paralyzed the legs of the Samsaptaka army. While in that helpless condition, Arjuna cut them down like a great wind storm cuts down trees. When the chariot had been freed from the mass of soldiers, Arjuna began slaying the Samsaptakas in thousands. Seeing all his troops tied up in with the snake weapon, King Susharman invoked the Sauparna astra which created countless birds to devour those snakes. Freed from their bonds, the Samsaptakas released their arrows and hurled their weapons at Lord Krishna and Arjuna. King

Susharman released a deadly arrow that pierced Arjuna's chest, causing him to fall to the floor of his chariot. All the Samsaptakas loudly cried, "Arjuna is slain!, Arjuna is slain!" To the beating of drums and the blowing of conchshells, they rushed against the chariot of Lord Krishna and Arjuna. Recovering his senses and seeing the Samsaptakas nearing, Arjuna invoked the Aindra weapon, and from that single arrow thousands upon thousands of arrows issued from the Gandiva bow. Striking down the troops like lightning bolts strike down trees, that deadly weapon created a slaughter of men, horses, and elephants. Within a short period of time seventeen thousands warriors, and three thousands elephants littered the battlefield. Those Samsaptaka warriors who were unretreating in battle continued their attack on Arjuna making death or victory their goal.

Sanjaya continued: While Arjuna was engaged in battle with the Samsaptakas, Yudhisthira was fighting with Duryodhana. Sahadeva and Nakula were protecting Yudhisthira's chariot wheels, and also aiding Yudhisthira in his battle with the Kaurava King. Sahadeva invoked a celestial weapon and pierced Duryodhana with many arrows. The King was deeply lacerated and in great danger released many arrows which afflicted the sons of Pandu. Not tolerating the situation, Karna appeared on the scene. He began to destroy the troops supporting Yudhisthira and then pierced him with many arrows. Yudhisthira countered and pierced Karna with fifty arrows. Yudhisthira then began to afflict the Kaurava army with his mighty weapons and cause it to retreat from the field of battle. Wherever Yudhisthira cast his eyes, the Kaurava army broke and fled. Inflamed with rage, Karna assaulted Yudhisthira and lacerated him with many weapons. Karna released three broad headed shafts that caused the King to sit down on the chariot. The Kaurava army, seeing Yudhisthira weakened, called out, "Seize him! Seize him!" To protect the King, seventeen hundred Kekaya soldiers came forward and pushed back the enemy front line.

Karna would not allow Yudhisthira to escape. Yudhisthira had been mangled by Karna's arrows and was returning to his tent to receive attention to his wounds and rest for a while. He was being protected by Nakula and Sahadeva. Karna followed closely behind and pierced Yudhisthira with three arrows. Sahadeva and Nakula turned on Karna and attacked him. They covered him with many arrows, but the son of Radha managed to kill the horses that were drawing Yudhisthira's chariot. Smiling all the while, Karna, with a single arrow, knocked the crown from Yudhisthira's head. He then killed Nakula's horses and shattered his bow. Nakula then ascended Sahadeva's chariot and continued fighting with the cruel Karna.

Wanting to save Yudhisthira's life, Salya said to Karna, "Why are we engaged in this useless battle with Yudhisthira? It is Phalguna that you are to fight with. What will you gain by killing Yudhisthira. Just now you can hear the sound of the Gandiva bow. Certainly, Arjuna is killing the foremost Kaurava warriors. Bhima is also fighting with Duryodhana, and we must act in such a way that the King may not be harmed."

Upon hearing Salya's advice and seeing Duryodhana faring badly in battle with Bhima, Karna ordered the chariot to be taken to the front line. After Karna had left, Yudhisthira ascended Sahadeva's chariot and returned to his camp completely

humiliated. He entered his tent, and Nakula and Sahadeva pulled out Karna's arrows. He then laid down on his bed to rest for some time. He ordered Nakula and Sahadeva to go and assist Bhima.

Meanwhile, on the front lines Arjuna engaged in a fierce duel with Ashvatthama and drove him from the battlefield. The mighty armed son of Kunti then looked in all directions, but nowhere could he see Yudhisthira's royal banner. He went to Bhima and inquired about the King's whereabouts. Bhima said, "King Yudhisthira has left the battlefield. His limbs were scorched by Karna's arrows. I am doubtful whether he still lives." Hearing this news, Arjuna ordered Lord Krishna to drive his chariot to the camp.

Upon entering Yudhisthira's tent and seeing that he was still alive, both Krishna and Arjuna were joyful. They worshiped the feet of the King and inquired of his welfare. Yudhisthira thought that Arjuna had slain Karna and had, therefore, brought the good news. He greeted them in the following words, "Welcome, O Lord of the Universe, who has Devaki for a mother, and welcome, O Dhananjaya. I am pleased by your presence. I see that without being wounded, you have slain the evil minded Karna. Karna had engaged me in battle and lacerated me with many arrows. He humiliated me and left without a chariot, horses or weapons. That I am still alive is due only to Bhimasena's prowess. Never before, even while fighting with Bhishma or Drona, did I experience such humiliation. Please tell me in detail how the death of that mighty hero took place."

In reply to the illustrious King's inquiry, Jishnu (Arjuna) said, "O King, after defeating Drona's son in battle and defeating the Samsaptakas, I have come here to see you, not knowing whether you were dead or alive. Bhima doubted that after your duel with Karna, you were still living. Karna is presently slaying our troops in great numbers. With the powerful Bhargava weapon, he has slain seventeen hundred of our foremost princes. Come with me now and witness as I kill Karna with all his kinsmen and followers."

Hearing that Karna was still alive, Yudhisthira was agitated and spoke harshly with Arjuna saying, "The army is being devoured by Karna, and you have come here deserting the brave Bhima on the front line of battle. You have promised to kill Karna. Therefore, why have you come here, except out of fear of the enemy? If, in the Dvaitavana forest, you had said to me that you would not fight with Karna, then I would have made other arrangements. You possess all abilities to slay the Suta's son, yet, out of fear you do not use them. If you had given the Gandiva bow to Keshava, and you had driven the chariot, then certainly He would have slain Karna by now. If you are unable to defeat Karna, then you should give the Gandiva bow to a superior king, and allow him to slay Karna. Because of this cowardly act, it would have been better if you were never been born in Kunti's womb."

When scorched by Yudhisthira's words, Arjuna drew his sword and was prepared to kill his brother. Quickly Lord Krishna pacified his friend and appeased his anger. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "Why, O Partha, are you drawing your sword? I do not see, O Dhananjaya, anyone here whom you should fight with. We should

now go to the front line of the battle and fight with Dhritarastra's sons or the mighty Karna, whom you have vowed to slay."

Replying to Krishna and casting an enraged glance at Yudhishthira, Arjuna said, "I have taken a secret vow, O Govinda, that anyone who suggests that I give my Gandiva bow to another king should be slain. To keep my vow, I will now kill this brother who faults me for falling from virtue."

The lotus eyed Lord then spoke to Arjuna these words, "O tiger among men, you have yielded to anger at a time when you should not have done so. No one, who is conversant with truth, would act in this way. You desire to commit a deed that is condemned by the holy scriptures. Everything has to be seen through the eyes of scripture and great saintly persons. To kill one's older brother can never sanctioned by learned personalities. The killing of a person not engaged in battle, or one who has turned his face from battle, or one who seeks protection, or one who is careless, is never authorized by scripture. Why then do you wish to kill this revered superior? Morality is very difficult to understand. Listen to a story illustrating this point. Once there was an ascetic named Kausika, who did not have much scriptural knowledge. He lived a small distance from a village where several rivers met. He made a vow saying, 'I will always speak the truth.' He then became famous as one who never told a lie. One day some innocent persons, who were seeking refuge from some robbers, entered the forest near the sage's dwelling. Soon, the dacoits appeared there searching for these men to rob them. Approaching Kausika, they inquired, 'O holy one, by which path have those men gone who recently came here. Asking in the name of truth, reply to us.' When questioned in this way, Kausika said, 'Those men have entered the woods just near here.' The cruel thieves then slaughtered those innocent persons and took their wealth. For this sin, Kausika fell into hellish life and suffered greatly. There must be some process of distinguishing virtue from sin. Therefore, great sages have indicated that seeing through scriptural eye is the only distinct path to follow. However, the scriptures do not provide for every case. Hearing this from me, you should now decide whether your brother should be slain or not."

"O Krishna," Arjuna said, "Your wisdom always saves us from dangerous situations. You are like a father and are a refuge in all circumstances. You know my vow regarding anyone who says that I should give away my Gandiva bow. Now the King has repeatedly used these words. If I kill him, I will not be able to live in this world for a moment. Having vowed my elder brother's death, I am covered by sin. I now ask You to give me good counsel by which I will not break my vow and at the same time Yudhishthira will still live."

"O hero," the lotus eyed Vasudeva replied, "when the King spoke to you, he had just been humiliated by Karna. He was badly wounded and fatigued. It was for this reason that he spoke such unkind words. He, therefore, does not deserve death. Listen now to My instructions by which Yudhishthira will be thought as dead, but his body not slain. As long as one receives respect, he is considered living within this world. When, however, he is disrespected, he is considered dead although still living in this body. The King has always been respected by all your brothers including

yourself. If at this time of argument, you speak to him disrespectfully, it will be thought that he is dead although still alive. In the past you have addressed him as 'Your Majesty'. If you chastise him disrespectfully, he can thus be thought of as dead. This kind of death King Yudhisthira will never regard as offensive. Having verbally slain him in this way, you may then worship his feet and soothe his wounded honor. You will be freed from breaking your vow, and the sinful act of killing your brother. You will then be able to slay Karna."

Following Lord Krishna's instruction, Arjuna spoke harshly with his older brother, accusing him of casting the whole kshatriya race into hell because of his desire to gamble. He spoke to him in many unkind words, and after speaking in this manner, he fell at his elder brother's feet and begged forgiveness.

At this time Lord Krishna informed Yudhisthira, "O King, I will now explain to you the vow Arjuna has taken. Arjuna has vowed to kill any person who says, 'Give your Gandiva bow to another.' You have uttered these very words to him in chastisement. To make good the vow and at the same time not see you slain, he has spoken apparent words of disrespect."

Hearing the truth of the matter, King Yudhisthira immediately rose from his resting place, raised his brother and embraced him. Yudhisthira then spoke to Hrishikesha, "O Govinda, I have been guilty of a great sin, and now I have been awakened to the real truth. O husband of the goddess of fortune, by Your mercy we have been saved from a great calamity. We have been rescued from a distressful ocean by taking the boat of Your lotus feet. We, along with are relatives and friends, have now passed over the great mountains of sorrow and grief, having obtained You as our master and Lord." King Yudhisthira then embraced Lord Krishna and then again Arjuna. He requested Arjuna to now kill the Suta's son. Assuring the King of success, Arjuna and Lord Krishna mounted their chariot, and Lord Krishna urged the horses toward the front line of the battle.

Thus Ends the Third Chapter of the Karna Parva, Entitled, Lord Krishna Saves Yudhisthira from Death.

## Chapter Commentary

Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has made a point in this chapter that is instructive to all persons trying to make advancement in spiritual life. One must be able to see through the eye of scripture in order to understand certain situations in their proper light. Lord Krishna told Arjuna before the battle, *tasmac chastram pramanam te, karyakarya-vyavasthitau, jnatva sastra-vidhanoktam, karma kartum iharhasi*, "One should understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may be gradually elevated." ( B.g. 16.24) We must learn to see through the eye of the scripture. The holy books have been left for us by the previous acharyas to help see how to get out of this material world. Sufficient hearing of the these holy books, especially, Bhagavad-gita, Shrimad Bhagavatam and Chaitanya Charitamrita will provide the eyesight to find our way out of this material entanglement. One who rejects the holy scriptures and acts whimsically is putting himself in a very dangerous situation. Lord Krishna told Arjuna, *yah sastra-vidham utsrjya, vartate kama-karatah, na sa siddhim avapnoti, na sukham na param gatim*, "But he who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination." (B.g. 16.23) There is a three way check and balance in spiritual life: guru, sadhu and scripture. Of the three, scripture is the central point. The guru and sadhu must be able to quote scripture to support their points. If one doesn't support himself or his ideas using scriptural authority, he may cause a disturbance to people in general. This is confirmed by Rupa Goswami, *sruti smrti-puranadi, pancaratra-vidhim vina, aikantiki harer bhaktir, utpatayaiva kalpate*, "Devotional service to the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upanishads, Puranas, Narada-Pancharatra, etc., is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society." (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.2.101)

In this age of Kali the Shrimad-Bhagavatam will light the pathway to the kingdom of God. *krsne sva-dhamopagate, dharma-jnanadibhih saha, kalau nasta-drsam esa, puranarko 'dhnuditah*, "This Bhagavata Purana is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Krishna to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this Purana. (S.B. 1.3.43) Shrimad-Bhagavatam is the transcendental sound vibration which cleanses our dirty hearts, and help us to fix our minds at the lotus feet of Krishna. This is also confirmed in Shrimad-Bhagavatam, *anarthopasamam saksad, bhakti-yogam adhoksaje, lokasyajanato vidvams, cakre satvata-samhitam*, "The material miseries of the living entity, which are superfluous to him, can be directly mitigated by the linking process of devotional service. But the mass of people do not know this, and therefore the learned Vyasadeva compiled this Vedic literature, which is in relation to the Supreme Truth." (S.B. 1.7.6)

If we neglect or doubt the revealed scriptures, then our future is very dim. Lord Krishna told Arjuna, *ajnas casraddadhanas ca, samsayatma vinasyati, nayam loko 'sti na paro, na sukham samsayatmanah*, "But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt

the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness. For the doubting should there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next." (B.g. 4.40) The conclusion is we must take the time to learn the holy books and see through their eyes. The spiritual master gives us these books to cure the cataract of material vision. om ajnana timaran dasya jnana jnana salakaya chaksur unmilitam yena tasmai shri guruve namah, In this verse the word salakaya means a medical instrument which applies medical ointment to the eye which is afflicted with cataract. Our spiritual eye is afflicted, and therefore the spiritual master applies the ointment of Vedic knowledge to open this eye by which we can see the kingdom of God. For this reason we offer our most humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

## Chapter Four

### The Death of Karna

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, the prowess of Kunti's son, Arjuna, is well known. What happened after Krishna and Arjuna left the tent of the the great King Yudhisthira? Tell me in detail what happened in the encounter between the son of Indra, Arjuna, and the son of Surya, Karna.

Sanjaya continued: O Monarch, when Arjuna reached the front line of battle, he saw Bhima ripping open the Kaurava ranks. Following him were six bullock carts filled with his weapons. Duryodhana had sent Shakuni to challenge Bhima, but Shakuni could do nothing against Bhima's anger and was ultimately forced to retreat. Arjuna made his way toward Bhimasena and informed him that the King was resting after being mangled by Karna's arrows. Hearing of the King's welfare, Bhima became joyful, and descending from his chariot, he attacked the Kaurava army with mace in hand. He began to whirl his mace about his head causing mass destruction of the enemy soldiers. He soon killed ten thousand warriors and hundreds of elephants. His mace was covered in blood and flesh as he scorched the ranks of Duryodhana's army. He then ascended his chariot and proceeded behind Arjuna toward the place where Karna was engaged in combat.

Karna was exhibiting the full qualities of an adhiratha. He was singlehandedly fighting the great warriors of the Pandava army. Dhristadyumna, Satyaki, the five sons of Draupadi, Shikhandi, Uttamaejas, Yudhamanyu, Nakula and Sahadeva were all fighting against Karna. Karna killed Satyaki's four horses, but Satyaki then killed the son of Karna, Prasena. Greatly enraged, Karna released an arrow to encompass Satyaki's death. As the arrow came blazing toward Satyaki, Shikhandi shattered it with his own weapons. Karna then killed the son of Dhristadyumna, even as Dhristadyumna looked on. As Karna was defeating the great Pandava generals one by one, he was also causing a great slaughter of the army. He pushed back the enemy ranks causing a massacre of men. Four thousand chariot fighters lay to his

right and four thousand to his left. Hundreds of elephants were prostrated to the ground along with their riders by the arrows of Surya's son. The Pandava army was sinking in the ocean of Karna, and to save it the boat of Arjuna came forward granting life to those who were sinking.

Meanwhile, Duhshasana came forward to fight with Bhima. He shattered Bhima's bow and pierced him with nine arrows sending up a loud roar on the battlefield. Not tolerating his enemy's victory, Bhima released a dart with all his strength. However, Duhshasana cut it off with his powerful arrows and pierced Bhima once more. Enraged at the sight of Duhshasana, Bhima exclaimed, "O hero, I have been pierced by one who is about to die. Now see if you can bear the force of my mace as I send you to the other world. Today, I shall fulfill my vow and drink your blood on the field of battle!" Duhshasana quickly threw a dart at Bhima, but the second son of Pandu released his club that shattered the dart and struck the son of Gandhari on the head. The mace was thrown with such speed that Duhshasana was knocked ninety feet from his chariot. Duhshasana lay on the ground rolling in pain. His armor, crown, hair and ornaments were displaced, and blood was flowing from his head. Bhima then remembered the offenses this person had committed in the past. He remembered how Duhshasana had grabbed the sanctified hair of his queen, Draupadi, and how he had uttered so many unkind words. His face became red hot, and he descended from his chariot. He then addressed Karna, Duryodhana, Kripa and Drona's son, "Today, I will kill this wretched Duhshasana. Let all of the warriors protect him if you can." Bhima then rushed at Duhshasana and drew his razor sharp sword. He placed his foot on his neck and cut off the arm that had touched Draupadi's beautiful hair. He then opened Duhshasana's chest with his sword, and in the presence of all warriors, he drank the blood of that sinful person. He then severed Duhshasana's head and displayed it for all to see. With blood dripping from his mouth, he announced to the Kaurava warriors, "The taste of this blood I regard as superior to the taste of milk, honey, butter and ghee." Laughing with his mouth wide open, Bhima presented an appearance like Yamaraja himself. Some of the Kaurava warriors fell down in fear, and others dropped their weapons and stood feebly, overcome with disbelief. Some warriors fled away exclaiming, "This one is no human being!" Others said, "This Bhima must be a Rakshasa!"

Bhima then spoke to all present, "All heroes, listen to my words! The vow that I have taken has now been accomplished. I will now fulfill my other vow by killing the sinful Duryodhana." Having said these words, Bhima began to roar with his mouth covered in blood. This sight struck fear into the hearts of all warriors.

Chitrasena, a brother of Karna, fled from the scene speaking harshly of Bhima. Yudhamanyu chased after him and challenged him to battle. With a single arrow, Yudhamanyu cut off the head of the powerful Chitrasena. Witnessing his brother's death, Karna was filled with rage and began to exterminate the Pandava troops. He was filled with simultaneous anger and grief over the death of Duhshasana and his brother. Stretching his bow to full length, he began a massacre of men, horses and elephants.

Sanjaya continued: Overcome with lamentation at the death of their brother, ten of your sons, O King, rushed at Bhima. They were Nishangin, Kavachin, Pasin, Dundahara, Dhanurgraha, Alolupa, Saha, Shanda, Vatavega, and Suvardhasas. These ten assailed Bhima from their chariots, releasing their deadly arrows. The second son of Pandu, however, cut off their heads with ten broad headed shafts. Upon the fall of those ten sons, all the Kaurava soldiers fled away. Witnessing Bhima's prowess, Karna was also overcome with intense fear. Seeing this, Salya spoke to him, "At this time in the battle, do not grieve, O son of Radha. Afflicted by fear of Bhima, all the great generals are flying away from the fight. Duryodhana is completely senseless over his brother's death, and Kripa and others are trying to pacify him. Just now Arjuna is coming to challenge you. Collect all your strength and prowess, for the entire burden of this battle is now placed upon your shoulders."

While this conversation was going on, Vrishasena, angered at the death of Duhshasana and Chitrasena, rushed against Nakula, desiring to fight with his father's enemy. A fierce battle then ensued between those two heroes. Vrishasena managed to kill Nakula's horses and pierce him with many arrows. Descending from his chariot, Nakula took up his sword and shield, and making his way toward Vrishasena, he severed the heads of two thousand horsemen. Vrishasena, seeing Nakula coming towards him whirling that sword like a discus, shattered the sword and shield with four crescent shaped arrows. Nakula then quickly ascended Bhima's chariot. As Arjuna came near, Nakula requested him, "Please slay this sinful person."

Arjuna then ordered Lord Krishna, "Proceed toward the son of Karna. I will kill him within his father's sight." Unsupported by anyone, Vrishasena challenged Arjuna releasing many different kinds of arrows. He pierced Arjuna's arm with ten arrows and Krishna also with ten. Arjuna became enraged, and exclaimed loudly to the Kaurava kings including Karna, "Today, O Karna, I will kill your son as you unfairly killed my son, Abhimanyu! Let all the warriors protect him if they can. I will kill him, and then, O fool, I will slay you; and Bhima will slay the wretched Duryodhana, whose evil policies have brought about the great battle."

Having threatened Karna, Arjuna struck Vrishasena with ten arrows that weakened him. With four razor headed arrows, Arjuna cut off his bow, his two arms and his head that was adorned with beautiful earrings. Seeing his son slain by Arjuna's arrows, Karna challenged Arjuna to battle.

Upon seeing Karna rushing with great speed toward the chariot, Lord Krishna encouraged Arjuna, "Behold, O son of Pandu, the furious Karna rushing toward you for combat. The sound of his bow can be heard at all points of the battlefield. You are the only one who can withstand the arrows of this great adhiratha. You have satisfied even the great Shiva by your prowess. Let prosperity, therefore, be with you and obtain victory in battle."

"My victory, O Krishna, is certain" replied Arjuna. "There is no doubt of this, since, You, who are the master of the three worlds, are pleased with me. Urge the horses forward for I will not return from battle without killing Karna. O Govinda, either I will

slay him, or he will slay me. As long as the earth will exist, people will speak of this great encounter."

Beholding Vrishasena killed, Karna wept bitter tears, and his eyes were red in rage. He then proceeded toward Arjuna challenging him to fight. To the sounds of drums, trumpets and conchshells, Karna's chariot proceeded toward Arjuna. The Kaurava soldiers were joyous and sent up loud roars. Similarly, the Pandava soldiers beat their drums and blew their conchshells, encouraging the mighty armed son of Kunti. All the warriors stopped their fighting as the two faced each other in combat. The heavens became filled with demigods, rishis, Gandharvas, Rakshasas, Nagas, Pitris, Apsaras and Vidyadharas. They all came to witness this greatest of battles. Surya, the sun god shone brightly and wished his son victory. Similarly, Indra, appearing in the heavens, prayed for his son's success. All those who appeared in the heavens took one side or the other. The Lord of the universe was driving Arjuna's chariot, and Salya, the ruler of Madras, was driving Karna's chariot. Those two great heroes then began to afflict each other with their weapons. The combatants on both sides then picked up their weapons and supported either Arjuna or Karna. Supporting Karna were Duryodhana, Kritavarman, Kripa, Shakuni and Ashvatthama. They all rushed at Arjuna releasing their selected weapons. Behind them were tens of thousands of Kaurava soldiers. The heavenly denizens began to sing the praises of Krishna and Arjuna. They caused gentle breezes to blow and flowers to fall from the sky.

When the fierce duel began, both warriors set their hearts on victory. Arjuna invoked the Agneya weapon which sped toward Karna, scorching his supporting troops with fire. Karna countered that weapon with the Varuna weapon. That water weapon caused dense dark clouds to appear in the sky and pour torrents of rain. Arjuna then invoked the Vayavya weapon and blew away the clouds with fierce winds. Partha then invoked a weapon given to him by Indra, and when he did, thousands of arrows shot forth from the Gandiva bow piercing Karna in all parts of his body. Karna was furious and invoked the Bhargava weapon which began to kill the Pandava warriors in thousands. That weapon, given to him by Parashurama, began to exterminate the Panchala and the Somaka armies. Encouraged by Krishna and Bhima, Arjuna invoked the Brahmastra weapon which countered the weapon released by the son of Radha. With that weapon Arjuna killed four hundred elephants, eight hundred chariot fighters, one thousand horsemen and eight thousand foot soldiers.

Enraged, Karna took five snakes from his quiver, turned them into arrows and released them at Krishna. Scorching through the air, they pierced the transcendental body of the Lord and entered into the earth. As they came out of the earth and were returning to Karna's quiver, Arjuna cut them into three fragments. Lord Krishna was not hurt in the least by Karna's arrows, and He appeared unaffected. Greatly angered, Arjuna then killed two thousand chariot fighters that were supporting Karna and drove the other great generals to other parts of the battlefield. Karna was then left alone to fight with Arjuna. The fighting continued and was indeed wonderful. All were filled with joy upon seeing the two warriors duel using diverse kinds of weapons.

While the fighting was going on, the snake, Ashvasena, who managed to escape the devouring of the Khandava forest by Agni, was living in the lower regions. He was very envious of Arjuna, and hearing about the battle between Karna and Arjuna, he rose up to watch the wonderful fight. He remembered how Arjuna had killed his mother as she was trying to escape the forest fire set by Agni. Desiring to gain revenge against Arjuna, he entered Karna's quiver. He entered the arrow that was being kept by Karna for Arjuna's death. When Karna saw that he could not defeat Arjuna with all his weapons, he set that arrow on his bow and drew back his bow string to full length. He then said to Arjuna, "Now you are slain!" When the arrow was released, meteors fell from the sky, and the demigods, headed by Indra thought that Arjuna would be killed. Seeing the blazing snake mouthed arrow come toward Arjuna, Lord Krishna pressed down on the terrace of the chariot and caused it to sink into the ground about a foot and a half. When this happened the horses were forced down to the ground. Karna's deadly arrow then swept off Arjuna's crown and smashed it to pieces. Indeed, the beautiful celestial crown, a gift of Indra, was knocked off Arjuna's head and shattered.

Upon witnessing the feat of Lord Krishna, which saved Arjuna's life, the demigods showered flowers and beat on their drums. That snake, having smashed Arjuna's crown, came back to Karna and informed him, "It is I that you have released from you bow. Having failed the mark, you may release me again. This sinful son of Pandu has killed my mother without reason, and I seek his death. Even if Indra protects him, I will cause his death, today." Karna replied, "I will not gain victory by someone else's power. Even if I have to kill a hundred Arjunas, I will not release the same arrow twice."

The snake Ashvasena was not satisfied with Karna's sense of warfare. He proceeded himself for slaying Arjuna. When Krishna saw what was taking place, he ordered Arjuna, "Slay that snake for he has become your enemy!"

"Who is this snake that seeks to kill me?" Arjuna inquired.

"While you were engaged in killing animals in the Khandava forest," Krishna replied, "this Ashvasena was in his mother's body. The mother rose up into the sky, but you killed her with your arrows. However, the son escaped. He has now appeared on the battlefield seeking revenge." Arjuna quickly cut up the snake into six pieces as it came scorching through the sky.

After this, Lord Krishna, the protector of His devotee, personally pulled Arjuna's chariot out of the earth, and again Arjuna proceeded against Karna. Those two great heroes began to pierce each other with their blood sucking arrows and sent up loud roars on the field of battle. Arjuna then shattered the crown, earrings and armor that Karna was wearing. Having deprived Karna of his protection, he then pierced him with many arrows causing him great pain. Karna dropped his bow and sat down on the seat of his chariot. Arjuna, who was conversant with the codes of fighting, did not wish to kill Karna in that condition. However, Krishna said to the mighty armed son of Kunti, "Why, O son of Pandu, have you become so forgetful of the sins this man has committed. Do not spare him. Kill him immediately!"

Desiring to please the Lord of the universe, Arjuna set to his bow an iron arrow and inspired with the force of Indra's thunderbolt. At that time when the hour of Karna's death had come, Kala (time) appeared there and informed Karna that his death was near. Kala told him, "The earth is devouring your chariot wheel!" Suddenly, Karna could not remember the mantras to call his celestial weapons. He suddenly forgot how to call the Brahmastra weapon with which he desired to kill Arjuna. Karna's chariot wheel then sunk into the earth and would not move. When this happened, he thought that destiny was supreme. He became unhappy at the turn of events. Suddenly he remembered the incantation for the Brahma weapon and released it at Arjuna. However, Arjuna countered with the Aindra weapon, and the two powerful weapons were neutralized. Karna then cut Arjuna's bow string, then another, then another until ten strings were severed. Karna did not know that Arjuna had one hundred strings in reserve for fighting on the battlefield. Karna then began to pierce Arjuna in every part of his body. Seeing this, Lord Krishna said, "Release your superior weapons at Karna without fail!" Arjuna then invoked the Raudra weapon and set it to his bow. At this time Karna got down from his chariot and tried to free it from the earth. However, it would not move. Karna was shedding tears, and seeing Arjuna about to release his weapon, he requested him, "O Partha, wait for a moment till I free this chariot from the earth. Do not kill me like a coward, but observe the practices of great warriors. You are the bravest man in the world, and you should know that now is not the time to kill me. Excuse me for a moment till I can free my chariot which is stuck in the earth."

Hearing Karna's plea, Lord Krishna said, "It is by good luck, O son of Radha, that you are now remembering virtue. It was yourself, Duhshasana, Duryodhana, and Shakuni who ordered Draupadi to be brought into the King's assembly with the idea of seeing her naked. Where was virtue then, O sinful person? When Yudhishthira was defeated unfairly at dice by the deceitful Shakuni, why didn't virtue enter your mind then? When Bhimasena was given a poisoned cake by the sinful Duryodhana, why didn't your virtue come out? When the Pandavas were exiled for thirteen years in the forest, where was your virtue? When Draupadi was dragged into the King's assembly, it was you who said, 'The Pandavas, O Draupadi, are lost. They have sunk into hell. Why don't you chose another husband?' You looked on that scene with delight. Where was your virtue at that time? When Abhimanyu was being unfairly defeated by six great warriors, where were your moral word? If at these times, virtue never came to your mouth, why then suddenly are you demanding righteousness? Today, you shall not escape with your life, O sinful person. The Pandavas will defeat Duryodhana's army, and will win lasting fame. The Pandavas are protected by virtue."

Sanjaya continued: O King, thus addressed by the lotus eyed Vasudeva, Karna said nothing and hung his head in shame. With his lips quivering in rage, he took up his bow and continued to fight with Arjuna. He released a deadly weapon with the force of a thunderbolt and hit Partha in the chest, causing him to fall to the floor of the chariot. Karna then took the opportunity and tried to free his chariot. Although he struggled, he could not free the wheel from the ground. Then Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, "Cut off your enemy's head before he ascends his chariot." Agreeing with the words of the lotus eyed Lord, Arjuna quickly cut the standard from Karna's chariot.

That banner which caused great inspiration the Kaurava army then fell to the ground signifying the death of the great hero. Arjuna then took from his quiver an Anjalika weapon that resembled Indra's thunderbolt. This arrow was six feet long and looked like a blazing rod of death. Upon setting the arrow to his bow, the earth began to tremble and the sky filled with wonderful sounds. Stretching his bow to full length, Arjuna released that arrow with the sound of a thunderbolt. Piercing through the sky, it severed the beautiful head of Surya's son. The mighty Anjalika weapon succeeded in slaying that foremost warrior of the earth. When Karna's head fell to the ground, a stream of blood shot out of Karna's trunk and with it came his life force. That spiritual spark then entered the sun planet to be united with his father.

Overjoyed at Karna's death, Lord Krishna and Arjuna blew on their conches and the Pandava warriors did the same. The demigods showered flowers on Arjuna and played on their drums and sounded their trumpets. The Apsaras began to dance and Gandharavas played their instruments. The warriors waved their upper cloths, and jumped up and down in great joy. The time of Karna's death was the late afternoon. Karna was like the sun, and the rays of that sun were his blazing arrows. Now that the Karna sun had set, the army was relieved of those burning rays. After Karna's death, his chariot was freed from the earth, and Salya drove it from the battlefield.

Witnessing Karna's demise, Bhima uttered loud roars and slap his armpits. He danced in different ways and jumped up and down frightening the Kaurava army. Duryodhana was grief stricken and shed tears that covered his body. Furious at the death of so many friends and relatives, he rallied twenty five thousand troops and rushed at Bhima to kill him. Bhima took up his mace and attacked the oncoming enemy. With in a short period of time all those soldiers were smashed into the earth by the forceful mace of Bhimasena. Seeing his troops slaughtered, Duryodhana, outraged, tried to rally the fleeing troops, but Salya pacified him, and thus the army was withdrawn on the seventeenth day of the battle.

Lord Krishna and Arjuna then went and informed King Yudhisthira of Karna's death. Yudhisthira was joyous and requested to be taken to the place where Karna's body lay. His fears for thirteen years were now gone, and he embraced both Lord Krishna and Arjuna in great happiness. Thus the Pandavas celebrated the death of the great hero, ignorant of the fact that he was actually their elder brother. Karna had granted life to four of the Pandavas, knowing well that they were his younger brothers. Not being able to give up his affectionate relationship with Duryodhana, he perished with his brothers and kinsmen.

Thus Ends the Fourth Chapter of the Karna Parva, entitled, The Death of Karna.

Thus Ends the Karna Parva.

## Chapter Commentary

In this chapter there is another point concerning morality. One may criticize Arjuna for killing Karna while he was pulling his chariot from the mud. However, if we remember from the Adi Parva, Karna was cursed by a brahmana to be killed while his chariot wheel was stuck in the earth. Arjuna was the instrument to fulfill that curse. According to the code of warfare, an enemy should not be killed when he is not properly armed, and Karna requested that Arjuna not kill him till his chariot was out of the earth. However, Lord Krishna reminded Karna of his lack of virtue and morality, and asked him why he was now requesting mercy, when he previously gave none. If Lord Krishna requested Arjuna not to show mercy to Karna, then that is the highest morality. Karna surely attained an exalted destination for seeing Lord Krishna and Arjuna at the last moment of his life. Lord Krishna informed Arjuna before the battle, *anta-kale ca mam eva, smaran muktva kalevaram, yah prayati sa mad-bhavam, yati nasty atra samsayah*, "And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt." (B.g. 8.5) Karna was fortunate to be killed while looking at Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

One may also criticize Bhima for drinking the blood from Duhshasana's chest. It will be learned later that Bhima never actually drank the blood, but put his mouth on Duhshasana's chest, giving the apparent scene of drinking Duhshasana's blood. Bhima certainly looked ghastly as he rose from Duhshasana's body, but that is the vow he took at the gambling match, since Duhshasana forcibly grabbed his wife, Draupadi, and tried to strip her naked. The sinful are always punished, eventually, in one way or another.

## Salya Parva

### Chapter One

#### The Death of Salya

Dhritarastra said: O Sanjaya, my limbs are burning upon hearing of Karna's death. Who will give my son protection? Now that Bhishma and Drona have been slain, and Karna lies prostrate on the field of battle, who was made the commander in chief of our great army? I desire, O Suta, to hear everything that happened on the eighteenth day of the great battle.

Sanjaya replied: O descendent of Bharata, hear with attention the great carnage of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. After the death of Karna, there was no warrior capable of rallying the Kaurava troops. When their protector had been slain by the mighty armed Arjuna, the troops became like ship wrecked boats on the stormy

ocean. Indeed after the demise of Karna, the Kaurava soldiers were like deer hunted by a lion. Mangled by Arjuna's arrows, the troops fled here and there. It was with great effort that King Duryodhana was able to gather his valiant soldiers and calm them. They then retired to their tents for the night. After they had rested for some time and refreshed themselves, whatever generals were left in Duryodhana's army gathered together and advised the king as follows, "Now that the invincible Karna has fallen on the field of battle, we should pick another amongst us to be the commander in chief of this heroic army." Duryodhana then approached Drona's son and questioned him, "O Ashvatthama, you are a brahmana and are highest refuge. Therefore, please tell us who should be the commander in chief of our army?"

Ashvatthama replied, "Let Salya become the commander of the army. In fame, descent, prowess and in achievements, he is superior to all of us. He will lead our army, and take us to victory."

Hearing this opinion, Duryodhana went to Salya and requested, "O ruler of Madras, you are devoted to your friends and always seek our welfare. We request you to lead this army of brave soldiers and conquer the Pandavas. There are many generals here whose prowess has lasted these eighteen days. Supporting you on all sides, we will either gain victory or enter the spiritual regions. Please protect us as Kartikeya protects the demigods."

To this request, Salya replied, "I will, O King of the Kurus, accomplish all that you have asked. Everyone regards the two Krishnas to be unconquerable. They are not, however, equal to me in the use of weapons. When angry, I can destroy the demons and devas united. Without doubt, I will become the leader of your troops, and I will form an array that our enemies will not be able to penetrate."

Thus encouraged by King Salya, Duryodhana appointed the ruler of Madras as the commander in chief of the army. All the troops became joyous and beat on their drums and sounded their conchshells. They regarded the Pandavas to be already slain in battle. They then rested for the night.

When the dawn of the eighteenth day arrived, all the troops assembled eager for battle. They were determined either to gain victory or ascend to the heavenly realm. Their numbers were greater than the Pandavas, and thus they felt confident of victory.

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, after seventeen days had passed at Kurukshetra, how many Kuru warriors remained fit for battle, and also, how many men were left to support the Pandavas?

Sanjaya said: O descendent of Kuru, I will now tell you how many brave soldiers were left to fight for the Pandava's and the Kaurava's cause. O monarch, on the side of your son, there still remained eleven thousand chariots, ten thousand seven hundred elephants, two hundred thousand horsemen and three million foot soldiers. On the side of the Pandavas, O King, there were left six thousand chariots, six thousand elephants, ten thousand horses and one million foot soldiers.

Those two armies arrayed before each other at the dawn of the eighteenth day were all eager for combat.

Sanjaya continued: When the two armies met, there was a great dust cloud that appeared due to the clashing of men. The sound of steel and the sounds of the horses and elephants was uproarious. Krishna and Arjuna blew on their transcendental conchshells encouraging the troops in this last day of engagement. Partha and Bhima began a massacre of troops that was so great that before the day had finished, there would be none left to fight for the Kaurava's cause. Yudhisthira rushed at Salya protected by Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi. Nakula encountered Susena and Satyasena, the sons of Karna. In that duel, the mighty Nakula severed the heads of both those heroes. Bhima fought with Kritavarman, and the Bhoja King managed to kill Bhima's horses. Bhima jumped from his chariot taking up his death dealing mace. He smashed the horses, driver and chariot of the King of the Bhojas. Kritavarman jumped down from the chariot and fled for his life.

Salya, the King of Madras, was engaged in fighting with Yudhisthira and at the same time killing large numbers of the Panchalas, the Somakas and the Shrinjayas. To stop his progress, Bhima took up his mace and killed the four horses that were guiding Salya's chariot. Not tolerating that victorious feat, Salya released a lance that pierced Bhima's chest. Becoming enraged, Bhima pulled out that lance and pierced Salya's chariot driver in the chest, depriving him of life. Upon seeing this feat, Salya took up his own mace and rushed at Bhima eager for combat. They began whirling in circles looking for the opportunity to strike each other. They sometimes jumped high or moved to the left or to the right. When the maces of those two heroes collided, sparks and fire shot in all directions. They struck each others limbs and soon their bodies were covered in blood. Although struck repeatedly by Bhima's mace, Salya did not waver like mount Meru when struck by a thunderbolt. They fought each other fiercely and in the end, they both fell to the ground overcome with fatigue. At that time Kripacharya appeared on the scene, and placing the ruler of Madras on his chariot, took him away from the battlefield. Bhima suddenly rose up, reeling like a drunken man and again challenged Salya to combat. However, Salya had already been taken away from the scene.

Duryodhana came forward supported many Kaurava warriors and attacked the Pandavas. The heroic Duryodhana came upon the Vrishni prince Chekitana and challenged him to battle. Red hot with anger after Karna's death, Duryodhana released a powerful javelin that pierced the chest of Chekitana, and that great descendent of the Vrishni house fell to the ground dead.

After Salya had regained strength, he reentered the field of battle. He came to the front line thirsting for victory or death. He fought with Bhima, Satyaki, Nakula and Sahadeva and defeated them all. Yudhisthira then came forward to fight with Salya. Salya cut Yudhisthira's bow in two and wounded him with many arrows. Yudhisthira countered and cut off Salya's bow and pierced him with ten broad headed shafts. The first son of Kunti then killed his four horses and the two protectors of his wheels. When this happened Ashvatthama took Salya onto his chariot and sped away. However, Yudhisthira followed challenging Salya to battle. Salya then

ascended another chariot and proceeded against Yudhisthira. He pierced Bhima with three arrows and Satyaki with ten. He then afflicted both Nakula and Sahadeva with many arrows. Not tolerating the enemy's prowess, Salya killed the King's horses and charioteer. Having accomplished this act, King Salya began to afflict the supporting forces of Yudhisthira. Suddenly Bhimasena appeared on the scene and stopped the King of Madras by killing his four horses. He also killed Salya's chariot driver. Salya then took up a sword and shield and quickly ran against Yudhisthira to kill him. In great rage, Salya cut off the shaft of Nakula's chariot and continued toward Yudhisthira. Bhima then shattered the shield and sword with a number of arrows. With this action the Pandava army roared in joy. With no weapons to fight with, Salya ran at Yudhisthira, whose horses had already been killed. While sitting in his chariot, Yudhisthira took up a golden dart that he had received from Lord Shiva. Aiming it at Salya heart, he released it with all his strength. When Salya saw that dart coming toward him, he endeavored to catch it, but the golden dart pierced his hands and chest and entered into the earth taking with it the life force of the King. Stretching his arms to full length, the King of Madras fell to the earth like a tree that was struck by a thunderbolt.

After Salya had been slain, his younger brother assaulted Yudhisthira with a desire to revenge Salya's death. He covered Yudhisthira with many arrows, but in the end Yudhisthira severed his head with a broad headed shaft. With this action all the Kaurava troops broke and fled the battlefield.

Duryodhana quickly rallied the fleeing troops and urged them on toward victory or the heavenly realm. Duryodhana attacked Dhristadyumna and pierced him with many arrows. The son of Drupada then killed the King's horses and chariot driver. Duryodhana then ascended a horse and went to another part of the battlefield.

At this time three thousand elephants surrounded the five Pandava brothers and tried to trample them. Arjuna was furious and rushed against the elephant army. He began to slay the large elephant division causing those huge beasts to fall to ground. Descending from his chariot, mace in hand, the angered Bhima rushed at the elephant army whirling his club which was like a revolving discus. Huge elephants had their heads split open, gushing forth flesh and blood. So fearful were those elephants at the sight of Bhima that they passed stool and urine. Out of great fear, they tried to flee from the battlefield. Bhima, however, was so quick that not one elephant escaped, and soon three thousand elephants had fallen on the Kurukshetra field, lying there like small mountains. Having been encircled by so many thousands of dead elephants, the Pandavas could not come out. To free themselves, Bhimasena picked up many elephants and threw them out of the way, thus making a path for his brothers to escape.

At another part of the battlefield, Ashvatthama was looking for Duryodhana, but no one could tell him where he had gone. Some of the warriors informed him that Duryodhana had left the battlefield on horse to rest for a while. The Kaurava army was just at the point of annihilation. Bhima was destroying the remnant of the army when he came upon some of Duryodhana's brothers. Their names were Durmarshana, Srutanta, Jaitra, Bhurivala, Ravi, Jayatsena, Sujata, Durvishaha,

Durvimochana, Dushpradharsha and the mighty armed Srutavan. Thirsting to fulfill his vow, Bhima killed all of those cousins like a lion kills a flock of deer. Upon the fall of those brothers, the remnant of the Kaurava army rushed at Bhimasena to kill him. They surrounded him and began to cover him with their weapons. The powerful Bhima, who could not tolerate their attack, assaulted the huge force. He quickly destroyed five hundred chariots, seven hundred elephants, eight hundred horsemen and ten thousand foot soldiers. Having routed the huge phalanx, Bhima slapped his armpits and sent up a loud roar striking fear in the enemy's hearts. With only a small amount of warriors left, the leaders of Duryodhana's army once again proceeded against the Pandavas making the next world their goal.

Sanjaya continued: O King, after Bhimasena had killed ninety eight of your sons, only two remained. They were Duryodhana and Sudarshana. At this time there was only five hundred horsemen, two hundred chariots, one hundred chariot warriors and three thousand foot soldiers left in your son's army. All these gathered together and rushed against the Pandavas. Shakuni and the ruler of the Trigartas, Susharman, challenged Arjuna. Your son Sudarshana attacked Bhima, and Duryodhana rushed against Sahadeva. Duryodhana released a lance that pierced Sahadeva in the forehead. Sahadeva fell down to the floor of his chariot senseless. Regaining his consciousness, he covered Duryodhana with many arrows.

Meanwhile Arjuna encountered the remnant of the Trigarta army headed by Susharman. Arjuna covered the Trigarta king with a hundred arrows and then killed his four horses. Remembering his former anger against this King, Arjuna took out a single arrow, and fixing it to his bow released it at Susharman's heart. That arrow found its mark and the ruler of the Trigartas fell to the earth deprived of life. After this Arjuna killed the thirty five sons of Susharman and completely destroyed to the man, the Trigarta army. While this action was going on, Bhima cut off Sudarshana's head with a razor sharp arrow, thus bringing the death toll of cousins up to ninety nine. Now only Duryodhana was left alive.

At this time Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva assaulted the remnant of Shakuni's division. Shakuni and his son Uluka fought fiercely with the Pandavas. Sahadeva cut Shakuni's bow in two, but Shakuni took up a lance and pierced Sahadeva in the forehead causing blood to cover his body. Shakuni then pierced Nakula and Bhima with many arrows. When Sahadeva regained his consciousness, he was furious. Attaching to his bow a broad headed shaft, he severed Uluka's head, thus gladdening the Pandavas.

Witnessing his son's death, Shakuni shed tears and breathed heavily. He then remembered the wisdom of Vidura who had spoken about the annihilation of the kshatriya race. Knowing that his death was at hand, the Gandhara King assailed Sahadeva releasing his weapons. Sahadeva cut off Shakuni's bow, but Shakuni picked up his mace and threw it at the son of Madri. Sahadeva cut off that weapon and pierced Shakuni with many arrows. All the weapons released by Shakuni were shattered by Sahadeva, and when the Gandhara king had no more weapons, he fled the battlefield.

Sahadeva followed him quickly and challenged him to fight, "Remembering the duties of a kshatriya, stand and fight like a man. During the gambling match, O fool, you rejoiced greatly. Receive now, O wicked person, the fruit of this act!" Sahadeva then pierced Shakuni with ten arrows and rushed at him to end his life. Sahadeva quickly killed Shakuni's four horses and charioteer, and sent up a loud roar. Shakuni then took up a golden lance and rushed at Sahadeva to kill him. The son of Madri, however, cut off his two arms before the lance could be released. Then with a razor sharp arrow, he severed the head of that sinful person whose crooked dice had sent them into exile for thirteen years.

Seeing their King lying on the ground dead, the Gandhara warriors rushed at the Pandavas eager for battle. Encouraged by King Duryodhana, whatever troops were left in the army rushed at the Pandavas anxious to enter the other world. Within a matter of minutes all the Kaurava soldiers had been slain to the last man. Out of eleven Akshauhini divisions of soldiers, there was only four men left. They were Duryodhana, Ashvatthama, Kritavarman and Kripacharya. When Duryodhana saw that his whole army had been slaughtered, he retreated from the battlefield. The Pandavas were roaring with joy and blowing on their conchshells. Surviving on the Pandava's side were two thousand chariot warriors, seven hundred elephants, five thousand horsemen and ten thousand foot soldiers.

Sanjaya continued: O King, upon seeing that all his forces had been killed and that he alone was to face the Pandava force, Duryodhana abandoned his dead horse and taking up his mace proceeded eastward. He came upon a lake and desired to rest before again engaging the Pandavas in combat. By his mystic power, he entered the lake and solidified its waters. As he lay in that lake bleeding profusely, he remembered Vidura's prophecy which foretold this annihilation.

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Salya Parva, Entitled, The Death of Salya.

## Chapter Two

### The Fall of Duryodhana

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, After the eleven akshauhinis gathered by my son were destroyed, what troops remained with the Pandavas? Tell me also what happened to my wicked son after that lord of the earth saw that his army had been exterminated.

Sanjaya replied: O King, the Pandava army consisted of two thousand chariot warriors, seven hundred elephants, five thousand horsemen, and ten thousand foot soldiers, left out of a vast seven Akshauhinis. As you know I also fought on the battlefield while at the same time I have narrated to you this great war. This all took place by the mercy of Vyasa. While I was leaving the battlefield, I was caught by Satyaki. He brought me to Dhristadyumna who laughed saying, "What is the use of keeping this one alive. Kill him immediately!" When Satyaki was about to kill me with his sword, Vyasadeva appeared on the scene and ordered, "Sanjaya should not be killed. By no means should he be slain!" Hearing Vyasa's command, Satyaki released me and offered his obeisances unto the great sage. After leaving that place, I started to walk toward Hastinapura. I came upon Duryodhana standing near the battlefield staring at the host of dead men. His eyes were full of tears, and his body was badly mangled with arrows. I spoke to him about my own capture, and how by the mercy of Vyasa, I was released. Drawing deep breaths and sighing repeatedly, your son said to me, "Except for you, O Sanjaya, there are none who are living. Go now to the blind King and tell him that his son has entered a lake and is burning from his wounds. Tell him that I will rest here for some time and then continue the battle."

After giving orders to Sanjaya, Duryodhana entered the lake and rested beneath the waters by his mystic powers. As I stood there, three division leaders appeared with their tired animals. They were Kritavarman, Kripa and Ashvatthama. When they saw me they exclaimed, "By good luck, O Sanjaya, you are still alive! Is King Duryodhana still living?" I then pointed to the lake where the King was resting. At that time, the Pandavas were looking for the remnants of the Kaurava army. Kripa, Kritavarman, and Ashvatthama quickly took me on their chariots and returned to the Kaurava camp to inform the guards and the ladies of the Kaurava annihilation. Upon hearing this most unpalatable news, the ladies fell to the ground greatly afflicted. They cried in grief and repeatedly called out for their husbands. The elderly men in the camp began to make preparations to take the women back to the city.

Sanjaya continued: O King, after the battle was over, Yuyutsu, your only son destined to live and who had assisted the Pandavas, approached Yudhisthira and requested permission to return to the city and comfort the afflicted relatives. Yudhisthira embraced him warmly and gave permission for Yuyutsu to return. Yuyutsu, your son by your vaishya wife, then went to the Kaurava camp and made arrangements for all the women to be taken to Hastinapura.

Dhritarastra inquired: After all the warriors had been slain and the ladies removed to the city, what happened to Kritavarman, Kripa, and Ashvatthama? Also tell me the fate of my wicked son who now bore the fruit of his sinful activities.

Sanjaya replied: O descendent of Bharata, when the Kaurava camp had been deserted, Kritavarman, Kripa and Ashvatthama heard the victorious sounds of the Pandavas. Fearing that they were coming to the camp to engage in battle, they fled away. The Pandavas searched the entire battlefield, but they could not find Duryodhana anywhere. Their horses were tired, and they returned to their camp for a short rest. At that time those three heroes approached the lake where Duryodhana was resting and talked with him, "Arise, O King, and join us in a fight against Yudhisthira. Either we will obtain victory or we will ascend to the next world. The Pandava forces are few in number and are exceedingly mangled from battle. They will not be able to bear your prowess. If you are protected by us, you will regain your kingdom."

Duryodhana replied, "I am overjoyed to hear, O great heroes, that you are still alive. After we have rested awhile, we will again challenge the Pandavas to battle. At the present, I am cut in many places, and feel great fatigue. It is for this reason that I do not want to fight now. The time is not right. After I have rested for the night, I will join you and fight the enemy. There is no doubt of this."

While this conversation was going on, some hunters, who favored the Pandavas, heard the conversation between Duryodhana and the son of Drona. Desiring to please the Pandavas, they went to their camp and informed them of all they had seen and heard. The Pandavas were in great anxiety at not being able to find Duryodhana, and this new information was like a breath of life. They then proceeded to the spot where Duryodhana was hiding. All the warriors that were left in the army came there desiring to witness the battle between the Pandavas and Duryodhana. Those great warriors were Satyaki, Dhristadyumna, Shikhandi, Uttamaujas, Yudhamanyu, and the five sons of Draupadi. They were also many left from the divisions of the Somakas, Shrinjayas and the Panchalas. As the Pandavas and their followers were approaching the lake, Ashvatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman bade farewell to the King and left that spot fearing death.

Sanjaya continued: After Ashvatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman had left the lake, the Pandavas suddenly arrived there. They saw that the waters had been hardened by Duryodhana's mystic powers, and that he was, indeed, laying at the bottom of the lake. At this time Yudhisthira spoke to Lord Krishna, "Behold, the son of Dhritarastra has entered these waters and has applied his mystic powers to hide himself. It is useless, however, for he will not escape with his life."

"With your own mystic powers destroy the illusion created by Duryodhana," Lord Krishna replied. "One who uses mystic power should be slain with mystic power. In order to slay the demons, Indra used his powers of illusion. In the case of Vritrasura, who could not be slain, Indra used the thunderbolt weapon taken from Dadichi's bones. Similarly Bali was captured by Vamanadeva and tied up with ropes of mystic power. The great demon Hiranyakashipu was finally defeated by the Lord Himself

when He assumed the form of Lord Nrisimhadeva. Therefore, take help of the powers available to you, and kill this sinful Duryodhana."

Sanjaya continued: Thus addressed by the lotus eyed Lord, the wise Yudhisthira went to the bank of the lake and challenged your son, "Why, O Duryodhana, have you entered this lake after all the kshatriyas have been annihilated. Having caused the slaughter of the Earth's warriors, why do you now hide in this lake like a coward afraid of battle. You are known in assemblies of princes and kings as a hero. Therefore, arise and fight for you are born of a noble kshatriya race. Either you will defeat us and gain the world, or you will be killed by us and attain the heavenly realm."

Duryodhana replied, "It is not surprising, O King, that fear should enter the hearts of all creatures. As for myself, I have never fled the battlefield out of fear of the enemy. When my chariot was destroyed and there was no one left to stand next to me in battle, I desired to rest awhile. It is not from fear or grief that I have entered these waters, but out of fatigue of the day's battle. If you rest with your followers, then I shall also rest, and after the fatigue of battle is gone, I will certainly rise from these waters and engage in combat."

Yudhisthira said, "All of us have rested sufficiently. We have been looking for you for many hours since the remnant of your army has been annihilated. Rise up now and engage us in battle."

Hearing Yudhisthira's challenge, Duryodhana replied, "All those for whom I have desired sovereignty have now been slain and lie dead on the field of battle. I, therefore, no longer desire to enjoy this world devoid of friends and relatives. There is no longer any need for battle when Drona, Bhishma and Karna have left this world. What king is there who would like to rule a kingdom devoid of relatives and friends? I no longer desire the kingship of this planet, and now I offer it to you as a gift. As for myself, I will retire to the forest and take up the life of a renunciate. I have no desire to enjoy even life itself."

The intelligent Yudhisthira then replied to these cowardly words, "Do not utter such meaningless words, O Duryodhana. I do not feel any compassion for you. You are now offering to me this earth as a gift, but I do not want to accept any gift given from you. It is not the duty of a king to accept gifts. I will, however, take this earth and rule it after killing you in battle. How can you make a gift of this earth when you don't possess it. Formerly, you would not even give me as much land as to drive a needle point. Why then at this time are you offering me the whole earth? What fool is there that would make a gift of the entire earth to his enemies? Although you desire the entire earth, you will not escape today with your life! In the past you have tried to poison us, burn us, drowned us and even mistreated our queen. You have exiled us and spoken cruel words to us. For these reasons, O sinful person, you must die."

Sanjaya continued: Thus chastised, O monarch, your son began to breathe heavily like a snake. He set his heart on battle and spoke the following words, "There are

many great warriors here who are all well armed and possess chariot and horses. However, I am without sufficient weapons and do not have a chariot. How can I, therefore, fight against numerous enemies who are well equipped. Will you not fight with me one at a time? I am not afraid of you, or Vrikodara, or Phalguna, or Vasudeva or any of the other warriors present. Today, I shall fight with all of you and free myself from the debt I owe my relatives and friends."

"By good luck, O Duryodhana, you remember a brave warrior's duty," Yudhisthira replied. "You may fight anyone of us using whatever weapon you like. I also grant you the boon that if you kill any one of us, then you shall become King."

Upon hearing this offer for battle, Duryodhana replied, "You are certainly confident of these warriors since you have chosen that I shall only have to fight with one. I choose my mace as the weapon with which to fight. There have been many wonderful duels on chariots, but today let both parties fight on foot using only the mace. With your permission, I shall then kill you with all your brothers."

"Rise up, O son of Gandhari, and fight me," Yudhisthira said. "Encounter us one at a time and fight with great care. Today, you will come to the end of your life, and we will witness you smashed to the ground with this very mace."

When Duryodhana heard Yudhisthira's challenge, he could not tolerate it. Pierced by these words, that great hero came out of the water and stood there mace in hand. His limbs were bleeding due to many wounds, and his entire body was wet with water. He then spoke to Yudhisthira, "You must now fight with me one at a time. It is not proper that one hero fight with many warriors singlehandedly, especially since I have no armor, chariot or sufficient weapons. Let the gods in the heavens be a witness to this request; this combat should be one against one."

"How is it," Yudhisthira replied, "that you did not remember this request for righteousness when Abhimanyu was under these same circumstances. If it is true that one warrior should not be slain by many, why is it that all of you sinful persons killed Abhimanyu while he was on foot with no armor, weapons or chariot? We grant you armor and whatever else you desire for battle. I also grant you the benediction that if you can slay anyone of us, then you may regain your kingdom. Otherwise, if slain by us, you may proceed to the other world."

Sanjaya continued: Hearing the benedictions offered by Yudhisthira, Duryodhana became cheerful. He then spoke to his cousin, "I am prepared to fight you or any of your brothers using the mace as a weapon. I will fight with anyone of you and gain victory in battle. There is no one who can equal me when it comes to single combat with the mace. Among all of you there is none so competent with the mace as I am. I do not want to boast such words of pride in this respect, and therefore, I shall make these words come true in your presence. Let any of you pick up the mace and fight with me singlehandedly!"

While Duryodhana was repeatedly roaring in this way, the lotus eyed Lord Vasudeva said, "O Yudhisthira, you have acted rashly. For thirteen years this sinful person has been practicing on an iron statue of Bhima, knowing that such a battle would take place. I think that you have again brought about a game of chance, like the one between yourself and Shakuni. Bhima possesses strength, but Duryodhana possesses skill. In this contest, he who possesses skill, will be the victor. Without doubt the sons of Kunti and Pandu are not destined to enjoy sovereignty. They are born to pass their lives in continued exile."

To Lord Krishna's words, Bhima said, "O slayer of Madhu, do not worry about the outcome of this battle. Without doubt, I will slay Duryodhana. We have already passed through many unfavorable circumstances, but by Your grace, my Lord, we are victorious. Because of Your auspicious presence, Yudhisthira's victory is certain. O Janardana, let all warriors stand as spectators, while I fight with this sinful person and fulfill my vow made in the King's assembly."

After Bhima had made his request, Lord Krishna praised him saying, "King Yudhisthira will certainly receive the earth as his kingdom, relying on the might of your arms. After all, it was you who defeated the great Hidimva, who killed Kichaka and who also defeated Jarasandha. In this Kurukshetra war, you have killed ninety nine sons of Dhritarastra. Slaying this vile Duryodhana should not be such a difficult feat. You will surely accomplish your vow by breaking his thighs."

After receiving the blessings of Lord Krishna, Bhima said to Yudhisthira, "Today, O King, I will take great delight killing Duryodhana. Today, I shall vomit forth my wrath that I have been withholding for these thirteen years of exile. O Yudhisthira, today, you will behold this sinful wretch stretched out on the ground pounded by my mace. At the end of this day I will garland you with the wreath of victory."

Taking up his mace and preparing for battle, Bhima reminded Duryodhana, "Do you remember the poison you once gave me? Do you remember what happened at Varanavata? Do you remember how you mistreated Draupadi, and how King Yudhisthira was unfairly defeated at dice? You will now see the reaction to these sinful deeds. It is because of you that our grandfather now lays on a bed of arrows. It is because of you that Drona has been slain, Karna slain, Salya slain, and Shakuni, as well as all your brothers. Only you are left alive. Today, I will slay you with my mace, and of this there is no doubt."

When the battle was about to begin, Lord Balarama, who had been traveling on pilgrimage during the Kurukshetra war, suddenly appeared there. While on pilgrimage he had heard that most of the kshatriyas who fought at Kurukshetra had been killed. He felt relieved that the great burden of the world has been lifted. Lord Balarama heard that although most of the warriors had been killed, the Kurus were still engaged in fighting. He appeared at the holy place of Kurukshetra just at the time when Bhima and Duryodhana were to engage in combat. When the Pandavas saw him, they offered their respectful obeisances, but did not speak to him, knowing his affection toward Duryodhana. Duryodhana and Bhima had learned the art of

fighting with the club from Balarama, but Duryodhana was known to be his favorite pupil.

Lord Balarama, wanting to stop the fighting, advised both parties, "My dear King Duryodhana and Bhimasena, I know that both of you are great fighters and are well known in the world as great heroes. But still I think that Bhima is superior to Duryodhana in bodily strength. On the other hand, Duryodhana is superior in the art of fighting with a club. Taking this into consideration, My opinion is that neither of you is inferior to the other in fighting. Under the circumstances, there is very little chance of one of you being defeated by the other. Therefore I request you not to waste your time in fighting in this way. I wish you to stop this unnecessary fight."

The good instruction given by Lord Balarama was meant to benefit both Duryodhana and Bhima. But they were so enraptured in anger against each other that they could only remember their long-lasting personal enmity. Each thought only of killing the other, and they did not give much importance to the instruction of Lord Balarama. Both of them became like madmen in remembering the strong accusations and ill behavior they had exchanged with one another. Lord Balarama, being able to understand the destiny which was awaiting them, was not eager to go further in the matter. Therefore, instead of staying, He decided to return to the city of Dvaraka.

After Lord Balarama left, those two mighty heroes engaged in battle casting fierce glances at one another. They each longed for combat, and each took up various positions trying to gain an advantage over the other. Bhima tried to circumambulate his enemy, sometimes attacking and sometimes retreating. He delivered attacks and also warded off those of his enemy. He stood immovable, prepared for attacking his foe as soon as the latter exposed himself at the proper time. He circumambulated his foe and prevented his foe from circumambulating him. He avoided the blows of Duryodhana by jumping into the air or ducking down. Both Duryodhana and Bhima encircled each other and struck each other repeatedly. Blood poured from their wounds as they pounded each other with their powerful maces.

While they were fighting in this way, Duryodhana struck a blow to Bhima's side. While Bhima was about to return a blow, Duryodhana struck him again. Bhima, although struck repeatedly, did not waver like mount Meru when struck by the thunderbolt of Indra. Duryodhana then rushed at Bhima and hurled his mace with all his strength. However, Bhima struck the mace down to the ground as it came upon him with the power of a tempest. When those two maces collided, a great cloud of smoke and sparks was created. The Earth trembled and all the warriors were struck with wonder. Not tolerating the defeat of his weapon, Duryodhana picked it up again and ran at Bhima, bringing down the force of that weapon on his head. Although struck powerfully, Bhima did not move nor did he feel any pain. Everyone who saw that incident applauded the bodily strength of Pandu's son. Bhima then rushed at Duryodhana and struck him in the side, causing him to fall to his knees. When Duryodhana fell to his knees, a great roar of approval came from the Kings and princes who were witnessing the fight. Not tolerating the cheers of victory, Duryodhana rushed at Bhimasena and struck him in the forehead. Again Bhima did not move an inch, and taking up his own mace, he struck Duryodhana forcefully,

causing him to fall to the ground. After Duryodhana had regained consciousness, he again engaged in combat with Bhima using various skills to defeat his opponent.

Sanjaya continued: While witnessing the battle between those two bulls among men, Arjuna inquired from Vasudeva, "Between these two, who, in Your opinion will win victory? Tell me the merits of both, and on which side is righteousness."

"The instructions both have received are equal," the lotus eyed Lord replied. "However, Bhima is stronger than Duryodhana. Although possessing greater power, still Bhimasena is inferior to Duryodhana in skill. If he were to fight fairly, I don't think that Bhima would gain victory. At the time of the gambling match, Bhima vowed to break Duryodhana's thighs, because he had shown them to Draupadi. Let him now fulfill his vow and kill Duryodhana in this way."

Having said these words, Lord Krishna slapped his thighs within the Bhima's sight. Understanding Lord Krishna's intentions, Bhima began to maneuver himself for making good his vow. They struck each other, roaring and thirsting for victory. Duryodhana, seeing an opportunity to strike Vrikodara, rushed at him with his upraised mace. Bhima then hurled his mace with full force at the oncoming enemy. Duryodhana, however, moved out of the way of the flying mace, and taking the opportunity, struck Bhima, causing huge amounts of blood to flow from Bhima's side. Bhima was weakened, but this was not seen by Duryodhana. He thought Bhima was again unmovable. After resting for a moment, Bhima again took up his mace and rushed at Duryodhana. Duryodhana then performed a maneuver called Avasthana. He jumped up in the air in a certain way to avoid Bhima's mace. Bhima fully understood the intentions of his enemy, and with a loud roar and with all his strength, he smashed his mace against the two thighs of that deceitful cousin.

Sanjaya continued: O King, after Bhima had broken the two thighs of your son, he fell to the earth like a tree chopped down at the root. Upon seeing the fall of your son, the demigods began to shower flowers, and the Gandharvas and the Vidyadharas began to dance and play on their musical instruments. The Pandavas, the Somakas, the Panchalas and the Shrinjayas all became filled with joy and applauded the prowess of Bhimasena. Bhima then approached the fallen Duryodhana and spoke harshly to him, "O sinful person, you have laughed at Draupadi and later again you laughed at us calling, 'Cow!, Cow!' Bear now the fruit of your sinful activities." Bhima then kicked Duryodhana's head and again placed his foot on the head of that person who was the cause of the various hostilities. After thirteen years of exile, Bhima felt satisfied in heart.

After Duryodhana's fall, Yudhisthira spoke to his brother as follows, "Cease now, O Bhima, and do not crush his head with your foot. After all he is a King, and in this situation, he deserves to be pitied in every respect. All his warriors have been slain. All his brothers, friends, uncles and well wishers have been killed on the field of battle. Do not, therefore, insult him any further."

After saying these words, Yudhisthira spoke to the dying son of Gandhari, "You should not lament at this time of your death. Through your own fault, this great

calamity has come to you. In consequence of your sinful activities, all of your friends and relatives have been killed. I think all of this to be the work of destiny."

After saying these words to the dying Duryodhana, the Pandavas, along with Lord Krishna and their followers, went to their chariots and ascended them. They then went to the Kaurava's camp as was the custom at the time of victory. They inspected the camp of Duryodhana and then proceeded to their chariots. At that time, Lord Krishna, who was always engaged in the welfare of the Pandavas, spoke to Arjuna, "Take down your Gandiva bow as well as your two quivers. I tell you this for your own good." Following Lord Krishna's instructions, Arjuna took his bow and quivers, and backed away from the chariot. At that time Hanuman, who was riding on the standard, disappeared from view. The chariot which had been repeatedly burnt by the celestial weapons of Bhishma, Drona and Karna then burst into flames, and within a matter of moments, the whole chariot as well as the horses was reduced to ashes.

Upon seeing the wonderful incident, Arjuna inquired from Lord Krishna, "O master of the universe, for what reason has this chariot been burnt to ashes."

"This chariot should have been reduced to ashes long ago," Lord Krishna replied. "It is only because I have been sitting in it that it did not fall into pieces. After our victory, it is now reacting to the force of those weapons."

All of the Pandavas wondered at the incident, not being able to understand the inconceivable powers of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Due to the influence of Yogamaya, the Pandavas accepted the Lord of the universe as their friend and protector. Thus the Pandavas, accompanied by their well wisher Lord Krishna and the mighty Satyaki, went out of the camp and spent that night on the bank of the sacred river Oghavati. It was a custom that the victors of battle spend the night in some place other than their camp. Due to the influence of destiny, the rest of the warriors returned to their tents.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Salya Parva, Entitled, The Fall of Duryodhana.

Thus Ends the Salya Parva.

## Chapter Commentary

Duryodhana has now eaten the bitter fruit of Vaishnava aparadha. Lord Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has warned us about offending Vaishnavas. He instructed Rupa Goswami that there is a seed of devotional service which is planted in the heart, and it is watered by the process of hearing and chanting about Krishna. That seed sprouts into a creeper which must be protected. The greatest offense and annihilator of the devotional creeper is Vaishnava aparadha which is compared to a mad elephant. An elephant can destroy a small creeper very easily, and offending a Vaishnava is compared to letting an elephant loose in a small garden. The result is devastation. Duryodhana planted the seed of Vaishnava aparadha, and that seed grew into a creeper which eventually produced the bitter fruit of his death at the hands of Bhima. One should learn from the events of Mahabharata that one should not offend Vaishnavas.

## Sauptika Parva

### Chapter One

#### Ashvatthama Destroys the Pandava Army

Dhritarastra inquired: O Sanjaya, hearing of Duryodhana's death, my voice trembles and my limbs are weak. Alas, destiny is, after all, supreme. My son had gathered eleven akshauhini divisions of troops, and the Pandavas had gathered seven. Still the Pandavas have won victory. While my son was laying on the ground with his thighs broken, what deeds were performed by Drona's son, Ashvatthama?

Sanjaya replied: O monarch, all this has happened because of too much affection for your cruel son. The reactions to his sinful activities have born fruit in that he now lies on the Kurukshetra field with his thighs broken. If you had followed the advice of Vidura long ago, then this disaster could have been avoided. Listen now, O great King, to the events that took place after the fall of your son. Having heard of Duryodhana's defeat, Ashvatthama, Kripa and Kritavarman came to that place on their chariots drawn by fleet horses. O Monarch, they saw your son lying on the ground, his thighs broken and blood flowing from many wounds. Duryodhana's eyes were full of tears, and he was breathing heavily. Seeing his suffering condition, they descended from their chariots and came to his side. They greatly lamented his fallen state. The son of Drona spoke to him, Behold the irreversible influence of time! Formerly, O King, we used to see you attended by many servants and fanned with the finest Yak tails. You were the lord of eleven akshauhini divisions of troops and proudly stood at their head. Where has your vast army now gone? Where is the white umbrella that used to cover your head from the scorching heat? Once you were the master of the world, and now you have been reduced to this state. Alas, destiny, is after all, very cruel.

Replying to Ashvatthama's words, Duryodhana said, Do not grieve for me. Death comes to all beings in due course of time. It is my good fortune that I have observed the proper conduct of a king and never turned my back in battle. It is my good fortune to die at this time along with all my friends and kinsmen. I am not ignorant of Krishna's glory. It is He, through His invisible potencies, who has caused this annihilation. I have now understood that He is the Supreme God of all that be. With this meditation, I will now ascend to His abode in the spiritual world.

Beholding the King lying on the ground suffering from pain, Ashvatthama flamed up in rage. He then vowed before his master, My father was slain by those vile persons by means of deception. That does not anger me as much as seeing you reduced you to this suffering state. Listen to my vow, O King. I swear by truth itself and by all my acts of piety, all my gifts, my religion and the religious merits I have won. I shall today, in the presence of Krishna, kill all the soldiers left in that army.

Hearing this oath, Duryodhana ordered Kripa to bring a pot of water to anoint Ashvatthama as his commander in chief. He said, Let the son of Drona be appointed commander in chief of my army. Let him conquer those that are left amongst the Pandavas. With these words, Kripacharya obtained the water and bathed Ashvatthama's hair thus installing him as the commander in chief. Ashvatthama then embraced the King and left that spot roaring like a lion.

When those warriors heard the victorious sounds of the Pandavas, they were fearful and entered a forest near the Kaurava encampment. They let loose their horses and took shelter of a nearby banyan tree. The sun had set, and the darkness of night had covered the battlefield. Overcome with sleep, Kripa and Kritavarman laid down on the bare ground. However, Ashvatthama could not sleep. He stayed awake and remembered the injustices that took place on the battlefield. His body burned with grief and anger. As he thought of his plan of action, he noticed that the banyan tree was refuge for crows during the night. While he was looking at the countless crows sleeping on the tree branches, suddenly an owl appeared in the tree and began to kill the sleeping crows. The owl cut off the heads of some and tore at the wings of others. After some time the owl managed to slaughter many birds. As he witnessed this action, he thought, This owl is teaching me a lesson. The Pandavas are victorious in battle, and it will be impossible for me to kill them. However, I have promised the King that I will fight with them on the field of battle and slay them. If I fight with them fairly, then surely I will have to lay down my life. I have vowed myself to a certain death. If, however, I kill them by means of deception, as they killed my father and the King, then I will be victorious.

The wicked son of Drona then made up his mind to kill the Pandavas while they were sleeping. Having made this resolution, he woke up Kripa and Kritavarman. He then told them of his plan for slaying the Pandavas. Not agreeing with the proposal, Kripa spoke to Ashvatthama, A man, who lives his life, rejecting the advice of his elders, certainly falls from righteousness and dies untimely. A man, who builds his life on sinful activities, in due course of time, reaps the results of those sinful activities. On the other hand, one who listens to the advice given by his elders and acts under their instructions certainly achieves his goals and flourishes in every respect. This Duryodhana, obsessed with hatred of the Pandavas, committed many sinful acts not sanctioned by the Kuru elders. Disregarding the wisdom of Bhishma, Vidura, Drona, and myself, this wretched person waged hostilities with the Pandavas who are superior to him in good qualities. From the very beginning he was envious and wicked. He could not restrain himself, and thus he is now bearing the fruits of his sinful activities. Why should we follow in the footsteps of this foolish person and allow another calamity to overcome us? At this time I fail to see what is right and wrong. Therefore, let us go to Dhritarastra and inquire about our duty.

This determination which has appeared in my mind, Ashvatthama replied, is the only thing capable of dispelling my grief. The Supreme Lord has awarded duties to every living being. To the brahmanas he has given study of the Vedas, and to kings he has given protection of the citizens. To the vaishya he has given cow protection, and to the shudra he has given service. I have been born in a high caste brahmana family, but to my misfortune I have taken up the duties of a warrior. Such being the

case, I cannot make a decision according to the duties of a brahmana. I have my bow and arrows, and the duty of a warrior is to fight. If I do not avenge the death of my father and the King, then I will not be able to show my face in the midst of men. Therefore, in the dead of night, I will enter the Pandava camp and slay all the warriors who are left in that army. I shall attack their camp, exerting my full prowess. After butchering the Pandavas and the Panchalas, I will obtain peace of mind. I shall repay the debt I owe my father, the King, Bhishma, and Karna. After I accomplish these goals, I will be able to rest in peace.

Wait here till morning, Kripa advised, then myself and Kritavarman will assist you in your fight with the Pandavas. Angry as you are, surely the Pandavas and the Panchalas will not be able to withstand you. You are a master of celestial weapons, and so am I. Therefore, after we have rested here for some time, we will proceed against the Pandavas and defeat them in battle.

Hearing this advice, which was according to the kshatriya code, the son of Drona became angry. He said, My heart is burning, and I cannot sleep. The way in which my father was slain weighs heavily on my mind. I cannot live another moment without slaying that sinful Dhristadyumna. Who, with proper understanding of what is right and wrong, would not take action against these unscrupulous people. O uncle, I am unable to restrain the rising anger in my heart. The only way I can have peace of mind is to kill these warriors while they are sleeping.

A person whose passions are uncontrolled, Kripa said, lacks intelligence and discrimination, and cannot understand the intricacies of morality. This is my opinion. Well wishers always try to restrain their subordinates from committing sin. He who listens to such well wishers can have peace of mind, and he who does not listen reaps only misery in his life. Follow my instructions, and you will obtain happiness. If you do not, you will have to repent later. According to holy books, the slaughter of persons who are sleeping is never sanctioned. The crooked-minded man, who would commit such an act, would have to suffer eternally in hell. So far in battle you have not committed any sinful acts. It would be intelligent not to start now. Therefore, when the sun rises in the morning, we will challenge the Pandavas and conquer them according to the code of brave warriors.

Without doubt, Ashvatthama replied, it is as you say. However, the Pandavas have broken all bridges of proper conduct, because within the sight of all Kings, Dhristadyumna killed my father unfairly. Karna was killed while trying to pull his chariot from the earth. Bhishma was unfairly slain after he had laid aside his weapons. Bhurishravas was also slain by Satyaki by unfair means. Finally, the King has been killed by Bhima with a mace aimed at the thighs. All these atrocities burn my heart. Why don't you seek to chastise they who have committed these sinful activities? After slaying the Pandavas and the Panchalas in their sleep, I don't care whether I become a worm or an winged insect in my next life. There is no man who will succeed in preventing me from obtaining my goal.

After expressing his determination, Drona's son yoked his horses to the chariot and proceeded toward the Pandava camp. Kripa and Kritavarman followed him, desiring to restrain him from the sinful act. They soon arrived near the gate of the Pandava camp. Suddenly, a gigantic being appeared before Ashvatthama, making the hair on their bodies stand on end. He was as effulgent as the moon and the sun, and he was guarding the entrance. Around his waist was a tiger skin dripping with blood, and he wore a black deer skin for his upper garment. He wore a sacred thread in the form of a huge snake, and his arms were long and massive. He had many different kinds of weapons and fire seemed to blaze from his mouth. There were thousands of eyes adorning his face. He was indescribable by words. Beholding that superhuman being, Ashvatthama was fearful and covered it with his celestial weapons. However, that being devoured those weapons. Ashvatthama then hurled a golden dart that blazed like fire. The dart, however, broke into fragments upon hitting the chest of the monster. The son of Drona then drew his sword and flung it at the strange being, but the sword disappeared into his body. Ashvatthama then threw his mace, but it was devoured by the mouth of that superhuman being. Ashvatthama used all of his weapons, and when they were exhausted, he remembered the words of Kripacharya warning him to take advice from his well wishers. Having no other savior from death, and seeing the Rakshasa of mighty proportions coming toward him, he stepped down from his chariot and fell to the ground offering prayers to Lord Shiva.

While offering prayers to his worshipable deity, a golden sacrificial altar appeared and on it was a burning fire. Many mighty beings suddenly appeared. They had the faces of animals, and they were carrying huge weapons. It was all very wonderful. Understanding that he was to offer himself in sacrifice, Ashvatthama folded his hands, and deeply thinking of Lord Shiva, he proceeded toward the fire. Suddenly, Lord Shiva appeared in person and spoke to Ashvatthama, "Because I am the servant of the lotus eyed Krishna, and because there is no one more dear to me than Him, I have protected the Pandava camp. For His satisfaction, I have displayed various illusions to insure their safety. However, according to the influence of time, their life span has run out. I will now give you protection, and the power to kill all those who dwell in this camp." He then gave the Drona's son a fine sword and entered his body to enliven him with invincible energy.

When Ashvatthama was thus empowered, he shone effulgent as the sun. He posted Kripa and Kritavarman at the gates of the camp and ordered them to kill anyone who tried to escape. He then entered the camp and headed for Dhristadyumna's tent. The Panchalas were asleep and felt confident of their victory. Ashvatthama entered the tent of Drupada's son, and saw him laying on a bed covered with silken sheets. Red hot with fury remembering the death of his father, Ashvatthama kicked Dhristadyumna in the side. The son of Drupada awoke and saw Ashvatthama standing next to him. As he rose from bed, the son of Drona seized him by the hair and threw him down to the ground. By the influence of destiny, the prince was not able to defend himself. He was tired from the day's events and was still half conscious. Ashvatthama mercilessly kicked him again and again in all parts of his body. Dhristadyumna tore at him with his nails and endeavored to get up, but it was no use.

He then pleaded with Ashvatthama, O son of Drona, kill me with a weapon so that I may attain to the regions set aside for brave heroes!

Hearing Dhristadyumna's appeal, Ashvatthama replied, O most fallen of your race, there is no region for those that kill their preceptors. For this sinful act, I will not kill you with any weapon. Ashvatthama then repeatedly kicked him with his heels until his life force left his body.

While Ashvatthama was repeatedly kicking the dead body of Dhristadyumna, the wives and servants of the prince awoke and cried in horror. Ashvatthama ran out of the tent and entered the tents of the other Panchala warriors. He saw Uttamaujas sleeping on his bed. Ashvatthama threw him to the ground and stomped on his throat and chest until he was dead. Yudhamanyu awoke from sleep, and believing that his friend had been slain by a Rakshasa, rushed at the son of Drona with a mace. He repeatedly struck Ashvatthama, but Drona's son seized him and killed him with his sword.

While this fighting was going on, all the warriors awoke from sleep and attacked Ashvatthama. All their attempts were futile, because, being empowered by Lord Shiva, Ashvatthama could not be harmed. With his death dealing sword, Ashvatthama killed all who came before him. The sons of Draupadi came out of their tents and began to pierce Drona's son with their mighty weapons. Warding off their arrows with his shield, the mighty Ashvatthama struck Yudhishthira's son, Prativindhya, in the abdomen, at which the latter fell down dead. The son of Bhima, Sutasoma, pierced Ashvatthama with a lance, and then ran at him with a sword. The wicked Ashvatthama cut off Sutasoma's arm and then struck him in the side depriving him of life. The valiant Satanika, the son of Nakula, took up a chariot wheel and struck Drona's son. Not minding the force of the weapon, the preceptor's son cut off the head of that great warrior. The son of Sahadeva, Srutakarman, then attacked Ashvatthama with a spiked bludgeon. However, Ashvatthama struck him in the face with his sword, and that heroic prince fell down dead. Srutakirti, the son of Arjuna, then showered arrows upon the sinful son of Drona. Countering those arrows with his sword, Ashvatthama cut off the head of Arjuna's son.

Shikhandi, the son of Drupada and the slayer of Bhishma, then struck Ashvatthama in the forehead with a golden shafted arrow. Filled with anger, Drona's son severed his body in two. There were thousands upon thousands of warriors left in that camp, and they all awoke in a state of confusion. As they came out of their tents, they were slaughtered by Ashvatthama. The son of Drona set the camp on fire in three places causing greater confusion. The elephants bolted in fear and began trampling servants, soldiers and tents in their attempt to escape from the camp. Some warriors who were bewildered, slew each other in the confusion. Ashvatthama then ascended his chariot and began to slaughter all who approached him. He severed the heads, arms, and legs of the Panchalas, the Somakas, and the Shrinjayas. Anyone who attempted to escape were killed by Kripacharya and Kritavarman, who had now developed the same mentality of Ashvatthama. Stationed at the gates of the camp, they killed all who endeavored to leave. By the time the morning had arrived, the Pandava camp was again quiet. The remnant of the Pandava army had now been

slain. Thousands upon thousands of men, servants, elephants, and horses lay in pools of blood, silenced by the weapons of the merciless son of Drona. The Rakshasas had already appeared in the camp attracted by the stench of blood and flesh. They devoured human bodies one after another in great happiness.

After the slaughter of the Pandava army, Ashvatthama desired to inform Duryodhana of the good news. He severed the heads of the Pandava's sons and took them as a prize to his master. Kripa and Kritavarman greeted him at the gate, and together they went to see the dying Duryodhana. By this time Duryodhana was on the point of death. With great effort, they revived him, and Ashvatthama, wanting to please him before his death, told Duryodhana that he had beheaded the Pandavas and brought their heads as a gift. When Duryodhana felt the heads, he could understand that they were the Pandava's sons and not the Pandavas. He lamented the sinful action and was not pleased in the least for the Kuru dynasty, now, had no heir. He then gave up his life and ascended to the higher regions.

Thus Ends the First Chapter of the Sauptika Parva, Entitled, Ashvatthama Destroys the Pandava Army.

## Chapter Two

### The Son of Drona Punished

Sanjaya said: O King, with the death of your son, my vision, which was given to me by the esteemed sage Vyasa, has been taken away. Now all that is left of your kinsmen is your wife and your son Yuyutsu.

Upon hearing of their son's death, Dhritarastra and Gandhari fell unconscious. They could not understand the turn of events in their life. Overcome with intense grief at the slaughter of their family members, they lamented in various ways.

Meanwhile, the chariot driver of Dhristadyumna, who was the only one to escape the slaughter of the Pandava army, went to Yudhisthira and related to him the news of all that had happened. He informed Yudhisthira how the sons of Draupadi had been killed mercilessly along with Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi. He told him how Ashvatthama had slain all the warriors while waking from sleep. He also told him how Kritavarman and Kripacharya had assisted him. Upon hearing the tragic news, the great King fell to the ground unconscious. When the princess Draupadi heard of the slaughter of her sons and brother, she too fell to the ground senseless. Bhima came to her side and picked her up and embraced her to his chest. That beautiful princess lamented in various ways, and all her husbands tried to console her.

Not being able to endure Draupadi's lamentations, Bhima ascended his chariot, and taking Nakula as his driver, followed the tracks of Ashvatthama's chariot. The lotus eyed Lord Krishna then advised Yudhishthira, O son of Pandu, your brother has set out in great haste to find Ashvatthama. Someone should follow and assist him. It is known to Me that the Brahmastra weapon is in Ashvatthama's possession. After Drona had given that weapon to Arjuna, Ashvatthama also wanted it and begged it from his father. Unwillingly, he imparted knowledge of the weapon to his son. Knowing the restlessness of his son, Drona commanded him, Even if you are overtaken with the greatest danger, never use this weapon, especially against human beings.' After receiving this foremost weapon, Ashvatthama began to wander the earth in search of other weapons. He came to Dvaraka and took up his abode there.

One day when I was alone by the shore of the ocean, he came to Me with joined palms and begged for the possession of My Sudarshana disc. He wanted to give Me his Brahmastra weapon in exchange. I then said to him, I have the Sarnga bow, the Sudarshana discus, and My Kamodaki club. You may take any one of these that you like, and I will not ask anything in return.' He thus chose my discus, and I said to him, You may take it at your leisure.' Joyfully he rose and tried to take the weapon. It was revolving in the air next to Me and was as effulgent as the sun. However, he could not make the weapon move. He tried repeatedly, but still the weapon would not move. He tried to wield it and move it up, but still it would not budge from its position. When he had given up his attempt to take possession of the Sudharshana discus, I questioned him, The mighty armed son of Kunti, Arjuna, who is My dear friend, has never asked Me for this weapon, nor has my son Pradyumna, nor My brother Balarama, nor have any of My other relations. If you had obtained this weapon, with whom would you have fought?'

When questioned in this way, Ashvatthama replied, If, O Krishna, I had obtained this weapon, then I would have fought with You. Having defeated You, I would have become invincible in this world. Having failed to obtain this weapon, however, I now take leave of You.' After leaving Dvaraka, he returned to Hastinapura. Ashvatthama is wicked, cruel, and restless. He knows how to use the Brahmastra weapon, and therefore, Bhima should be protected.

While Yudhishthira and Lord Krishna were speaking, Arjuna was consoling his dear wife. Arjuna pacified her with sweet words saying, O gentle lady, when I present you with the head of that brahmana, severed with the arrows from my Gandiva bow, I shall then wipe the tears from your eyes and pacify you. Then, after burning your son's bodies, you can take your bath standing on his head.

Arjuna, who was guided by the infallible Lord as friend and chariot driver, thus satisfied the dear lady by such statements. Then he dressed in armor and armed himself with celestial weapons, and getting into his chariot, he set out to follow Ashvatthama, the son of his martial teacher. He caught up with Bhima, and together they followed the tracks of Ashvatthama. When Ashvatthama, the murderer of the princes, saw from a distance Arjuna coming at furious pace, he fled in his chariot, panic stricken, just to save his life, as Brahma fled in fear from Shiva. After some

time, when Drona's son saw that his horses were tired, he considered that there was no alternative for protection outside of his using the ultimate weapon, the Brahmastra. Since his life was in danger, he touched water to sanctify himself and uttered the hymns for throwing the powerful weapon, although he did not know how to withdraw it. He then released the weapon in the direction of Krishna and Arjuna. A glaring effulgent light then spread in all directions threatening the life of all creatures in the universe. It was so fierce that Arjuna knew his life to be in danger. He then prayed to and questioned Lord Shri Krishna, O my Lord Shri Krishna, You are the almighty Personality of Godhead. There is no limit to Your different energies. Therefore, only You are competent to instill fearlessness in the hearts of Your devotees. Everyone in the flames of material miseries can find the path of liberation in You only. And yet, though You are beyond the purview of the material energy, You execute the four principles of liberation characterized by religion, and so on for the ultimate good of the conditioned souls. Thus You descend as an incarnation to remove the burden of the world and to benefit Your friends, especially those who are Your exclusive devotees and are rapt in meditation upon You. O Lord of lords, what is this dangerous effulgence is spreading in all directions? Where does it come from?

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied, Know that this is a desperation act of Drona's son. He has released the Brahmastra weapon, and he does not know how to retract the weapon. He has helplessly done this, being afraid of imminent death. O Arjuna, only another Brahmastra can counter this weapon. Since you are expert in the military science, subdue this weapon's glare with the power of your own weapon.

Hearing this from the Personality of Godhead, Arjuna touched water for purification, and after circumambulating Lord Shri Krishna, he cast his Brahmastra weapon to counteract the other one. When the rays of the two Brahmastras combined, a great circle of fire, like the disc of the sun, covered all outer space and the whole firmament of planets. All the population of the three worlds was scorched by the combined heat of the weapons. Everyone was reminded of the samvartaka fire which takes place at the time of annihilation. Thus seeing the disturbance of the general populace and the imminent destruction of the planets, Arjuna at once retracted both Brahmastra weapons, as Lord Shri Krishna desired. Arjuna's eyes were blazing like two red balls of copper. He immediately arrested the son of Kripa and bound him with ropes like an animal.

After binding Ashvatthama, Arjuna wanted to take him to their military encampment. The Personality of Godhead Shri Krishna, looking on with His lotus petal eyes, advised the angry Arjuna., O Arjuna, you should not show mercy by releasing this fallen brahmana, for he has killed innocent boys who were unprepared for battle. A person who knows the principles of religion does not kill an enemy who is careless, intoxicated, insane, asleep, afraid or devoid of his chariot. Nor does he kill a boy, a woman, a foolish creature or a surrendered soul. A cruel and wretched person who maintains his existence at the cost of others' lives deserves to be killed for his own well-being, otherwise he will go down by his own actions. Furthermore, I have heard you promise Draupadi that you would bring forth the head of her sons' killer. This

man is a murderer of your family members. Not only that, but he has also dissatisfied his master. He is but the burnt remnants of his family. Kill him immediately.

Although Lord Krishna, who was examining Arjuna in religion, encouraged Arjuna to kill the son of Dronacharya, Arjuna, a great soul, did not like the idea of killing him, although Ashvatthama was a heinous murderer of Arjuna's family members. After reaching his own camp, Arjuna, along with his dear friend and charioteer [Shri Krishna], entrusted the murderer to his dear wife, who was lamenting for her dead sons. Draupadi then saw Ashvatthama, who was bound with ropes like an animal and silent for having enacted the most inglorious murder. Due to her female nature, and due to her being naturally good and well-behaved, she showed him due respects as a brahmana. She could not tolerate Ashvatthama's being bound by ropes, and being a devoted lady, she requested, Release him, for he is a brahmana and our spiritual master. It was by Dronacharya's mercy that you learned the military art of throwing arrows and the confidential art of controlling weapons. Dronacharya is certainly still existing, being represented by his son. His wife Kripa did not undergo a sati rite with him because she had a son. O most fortunate one who knows the principles of religion, it is not good for you to cause grief to glorious family members who are always respectable and worshipful. My lord, do not make the wife of Dronacharya cry like me. I am aggrieved for the death of my sons. She need not cry constantly like me. If the kingly administrative order, being unrestricted in sense control, offends the brahmana order and enrages them, then the fire of that rage burns up the whole body of the royal family and brings grief upon all.

Hearing his Queen's desire, King Yudhishthira fully supported her statements, which were in accordance with the principles of religion and were justified, glorious, full of mercy and equity, and without duplicity. Nakula and Sahadeva as well as Satyaki and Arjuna agreed with the King's decision. The Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna and the other ladies present also agreed. It was Bhima, however, who disagreed with them and recommended killing this culprit who, in an angry mood, had murdered Draupadi's sons for no purpose and for neither his nor his master's interest. Lord Shri Krishna had to step between Bhima and Ashvatthama for Bhima was about to kill him. The Personality of Godhead then said to Arjuna, A fallen brahmana is not to be killed, but if he is an aggressor he must be killed. All these rulings are in the scriptures, and you should act accordingly. You have to fulfill your promise to your wife, and you must also satisfy Bhimasena and Myself.

Understanding the motive of the Lord, Arjuna took up his sword and severed both the hair and the jewel from Ashvatthama's head. The son of Drona had already lost his bodily luster due to killing young boys who were awaking from sleep. Now, having lost his jewel, he lost even more of his strength. Lord Krishna then cursed the son of Drona, You have engaged in the sinful act of killing children. For this reason you must bear the fruits of these sins. For three thousand years you will have to roam the Earth without a companion. You will not even be able to talk to anyone. O wretched person, you will have no place in the midst of men. The stench of pus and blood shall emanate from your body, and dark and dreary forests shall be your abode. You shall wander over the earth covered with different kinds of diseases. The

son of Abhimanyu, although burnt by your weapon, shall not die. He will be named Parikshit, and he will rule this world before your very eyes. O lowest of men, behold My mystic power. After speaking this curse, Ashvatthama was unbound and driven out of the camp. Thereafter, the Pandavas along with their beautiful wife Draupadi performed the proper funeral rituals for the dead bodies of their children.

Thus Ends the Second Chapter of the Sauptika Parva, Entitled, The Son of Drona Punished.

Thus Ends the Sauptika Parva.

## Stree Parva

### Lamentation Over the Dead Relatives

After the Kurukshetra war was over, King Dhritarastra, accompanied by Gandhari and the other wives of the dead warriors, proceeded toward the Kurukshetra battlefield. When they arrived there, they met the Pandavas and Lord Shri Krishna. The Pandavas offered obeisances unto the King, and the King in turn embraced each one of them reluctantly. Having embraced Yudhisthira and spoken words of comfort for the loss of his sons, the blind King sought to embrace Bhima. Knowing the intentions of Dhritarastra, Lord Krishna took Bhima to the side and put an iron statue of Bhima in his place. That statue had been kept in the Kaurava camp, and Duryodhana had daily practiced on it with his mace. When Dhritarastra had seized the iron statue of Bhima, he squeezed it with all his strength and thus crushed it into dust. The King's chest was bruised, and he began to vomit blood. Sanjaya came to his side, and lifted him up saying, Do not act in this way.

Understanding what had happened, Dhritarastra thought that he had killed Bhima, and tears of lamentation came to his eyes. Seeing that the blind King was truly repenting for his attempted murder, the lotus eyed Lord Vasudeva said, Do not grieve, O King, for Bhima has not been slain. It was an iron statue that you embraced. Through grief for your sons' death, you are acting in this way, but Bhima's death would not have brought you any happiness. Why do you cherish such wrath when all that has happened to you is a result of your own foolishness? I had spoken to you before the battle, and you had been advised by Bhishma, Drona and Vidura. You did not, however, take our advice. Overcome by affection for your cruel son, you allowed him to control you. Your wicked son has reaped the sinful reaction of dragging Draupadi into the king's assembly. The sons of Pandu are innocent of any fault, yet, still, they were mistreated by you and your sons.

Knowing Lord Krishna's words to be truth, Dhritarastra called for Bhima and embraced him out of affection. He also embraced Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva and pronounced blessings upon them. He then told them to offer their respects to Gandhari. Thus being ordered by the King, the Pandavas, headed by Yudhisthira, proceeded toward the chaste lady. Gandhari, on account of grief for her one hundred children, wanted to curse the Pandavas. Understanding her evil intentions, Vyasadeva appeared on the scene. He then instructed his daughter-in-law as follows, Do not curse the faultless Pandavas! You should not be angry, but forgiving. Restrain the words that are about to fall from your lips. Everyday, before the battle, your son would come to you requesting, Mother, bless me in my fight with the enemy.' Your answer everyday was, There will be victory where there is righteousness.' These blessings were not uttered in vain for those who are righteous have won this great battle. You have always been one to forgive others. Now is the time to use this virtue, and show affection towards the sons of Pandu.

O holy one, Gandhari replied, I do not cherish any ill feelings toward the Pandavas. By the fault of Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Shakuni and Karna, the annihilation of these warriors has taken place. However, there is one act that Bhima committed in the presence of Vasudeva that I cannot tolerate. While Bhima was fighting with my son, and finding it difficult to defeat him, he struck Duryodhana below the waist and thus killed him unfairly. It is this action that has kindled my wrath.

Hearing Gandhari's words, Bhima replied, Your mighty son was incapable of being slain by fair means. Certainly there is no warrior who could compete with Duryodhana in the use of the mace. Formerly, Duryodhana cheated Yudhishthira unfairly at a game of dice. He also caused Draupadi to be dragged into a King's assembly and ordered that she be undressed. He then showed her his thigh. For that immoral behavior, I vowed to break those thighs. Your son has reaped the fruits of his sinful activities. When we were exiled in the forest, your son was always planning some crooked scheme to put us into difficulty. Remembering all these atrocities, I have slain him and thus ended the deadly hostilities between us.

All that you have said about Duryodhana is true, Gandhari replied, and most certainly he has met with a death that he deserves. There was, however, another act that you have performed that was most heinous. After you killed my son Duhshasana, you drank the blood from his chest. Such an act is most wicked and resembles the behavior of Rakshasas and not of great heroes. Such a abominable act is never sanctioned by the codes of fighting and is condemned by all.

When the unfair gambling match took place in Hastinapura, Bhima replied, Duhshasana seized Draupadi's sanctified hair. At that time I took a vow that I would drink his blood for that sinful act. The fact is, however, that the blood never passed my lips. I never actually drank the blood of Duhshasana. Karna knew this well. For fulfilling the vow I had taken after the gambling match, I apparently drank his blood. You should not, O Gandhari, find any fault in me. Without having restrained your sons in former days from their sinful acts, you should not grieve when the reaction accrues to those sinful deeds.

Gandhari tearfully said, You have killed the hundred sons of this elderly man without leaving even one to act as a crutch to this old blind couple. Alas, why did you not spare just one child?

Lamenting greatly the loss of her sons, Gandhari inquired, Where is Yudhishthira? At that time Yudhishthira went to Gandhari and offered his obeisances. Yudhishthira said, I am here, O venerable mother. It is I who have slain your sons. I deserve all your curses for I am the cause of this mass slaughter. Gandhari said nothing but lifted her blindfold slightly and burnt the tips of Yudhishthira's fingers. Seeing this action, Arjuna moved behind Lord Krishna, and the other Pandavas moved some distance away. After casting off her anger in the form of burning Yudhishthira's finger nails, she became compassionate upon them and began to treat them with motherly affection.

Taking leave of Gandhari, the Pandavas proceeded to their mother, Kunti, whom they had not seen in a long time. They offered her obeisances, and out of maternal love, Kunti embraced each of them and shed incessant tears. She then comforted Draupadi who was still lamenting the loss of her five sons.

At this time Gandhari was given the vision, by dint of her penances and austerities, to see the slain warriors on the Kurukshetra plain. While Lord Krishna was standing next to her, she saw the great maharathis and adhirathas laying on the field of battle. She saw their wives lamenting over their bodies. She could see her son Duryodhana as well as her other sons. She saw Karna, Bhishma, Drona, Salya, Jayadratha, Bhurishravas, as well as the Pandava generals, all slain in battle. As she saw the wives of those great warriors lamenting over the dead bodies, she felt great compassion. Within her heart she blamed Krishna for the mass slaughter. She then cursed Lord Krishna, The Pandava warriors and the Kauravas have been slain on this field of Kurukshetra. While they were being killed, why were You indifferent? You were competent to prevent the slaughter of this vast force of men. Since You have deliberately neglected this massacre, You will reap the fruit of this act. By what little merit I have acquired through being chaste to my husband, I will curse You. O wielder of the discus and mace, since You have looked indifferently upon the death of all these men, I curse You that Your family will die by fratricide, and just as the Kuru women are lamenting the death of these great warriors, so also the Yadu and Vrishni women will lament the death of their husbands.

After Gandhari had cursed His family, the lotus eyed Lord smiled and calmly replied, There are none in this world who could cause the death of the Yadu heroes except Myself. I have been contemplating how their demise would take place. In uttering this curse, you have aided Me in accomplishing this task. The Vrishnis are incapable of being slain by any other warriors including the heavenly gods and demons. The Yadavas shall therefore, die by the weapons of one another. O foremost of all chaste women, I approve of this curse.

Lord Krishna continued speaking, O Gandhari, do not set your heart on revenge. Through your fault this vast carnage has taken place. Your son, Duryodhana, was wicked, envious, and arrogant. Encouraging him, either by words or by silence, you have given him support. You knew the wickedness of your brother Shakuni. Why did you allow him to make friendship with Duryodhana. You were negligent and not I. Why did you look indifferently on the gambling match and not speak up when the Pandavas were mistreated. By your silence, you encouraged the sinful activities of your son. You are responsible for the deaths of all these men. I endeavored to stop this war. I came to Hastinapura to make peace, but your vicious son would not listen. It was in your power to have him arrested and thrown in prison, but out of affection you did not follow My advice. You also knew about the burning of the house of lac before it happened. Your husband also knew, but both of you looked in another direction. This massacre of men is the fruit of your indifference toward your son's nefarious activities. Do not blame Me for all that has happened. Hearing these truthful words from Lord Shri Krishna, Gandhari said nothing.

Dhritarastra then spoke to Yudhishthira, It is now necessary to see to the last funeral rites of all these dead warriors. Yudhishthira then took the necessary steps to see that all the warriors on the battlefield, numbering six hundred and forty million, be given a proper funeral. Their bodies, as well as their weapons and chariots, were piled in great mountains with wood and burned.

After this, the Pandavas and the Kauravas went to the banks of the Ganges to offer oblations to the dead relatives. The wives and relatives of the dead warriors were numerous. When it was time for Karna's relatives to offer water, Kunti stepped forward and offered her oblation. Everyone looked on with curiosity at her actions. Ashamed and tearful, Kunti gathered her sons together and confessed to them, This great hero, the leader of an akshauhini division, who has been killed by Arjuna and who you took to be Radha's son, who appeared like Surya himself among Duryodhana's forces, who was unretreating in battle, and who knew no fatigue or exhaustion, was actually your elder brother. You must offer oblations to Karna, who was born from the union of the Sun god and myself. That great hero, who was born with natural golden armor and earrings, was undefeatable in battle. Because I was unmarried and still living with my father, I was forced to cast him into the Ganges to save myself from shame. The child was picked up by Adhiratha and Radha and raised by them, but in actuality, he was my son.

Hearing these shocking words from their mother, the Pandavas were speechless. For some time they meditated on the thought that Karna was their brother, and upon doing so, their lamentation increased. Yudhishthira said, Alas, mother, you have burdened our hearts with yet another sorrow. Why did you neglect to tell us before? The grief I feel now is a hundred times greater than the grief I felt upon the death of Abhimanyu or Draupadi's sons. The thought that Karna was my elder brother is burning my limbs. Yudhishthira could not speak another word and his brothers were standing next to him with tearful eyes, remembering how Karna had neglected to kill them in battle. They suddenly felt great affection in their hearts, but could say nothing in reply to their mother's confession.

Yudhishthira then called for Karna's wives and other relatives to come forward. He informed them of Karna's relation with Kunti, and together they offered water to the great son of Surya. Yudhishthira then bathed in the Ganges, but after rising from the waters, he could not shake the grief he felt for the mass annihilation of warriors at Kurukshetra.

Thus Ends the Stree Parva, Entitled, Lamentation Over the Dead Relatives.

## Shanti Parva

### The Lamentation of Maharaja Yudhisthira

Having offered water unto all the deceased friends and relatives, the Pandavas continued to live on the banks of the Ganges for the period of one month. Many great sages and rishis came to see King Yudhisthira and offer him some consolation. Thousands of brahmanas came to comfort the King who was mourning the death of so many kinsmen. At that time the great sage Narada visited the King and spoke to him, O Yudhisthira, by the prowess of your arms and by the grace of the Supreme Lord Krishna, you have conquered the earth. By good luck, you have escaped this great slaughter of men. O son of Pandu, after defeating the sinful Duryodhana, are you not happy? I hope that grief and lamentation are not afflicting you.

O Narada, Yudhisthira replied, indeed, I have conquered the whole earth relying on the grace of Krishna, the blessings of the brahmanas and the strength of Bhima and Arjuna. There is, however, a heavy grief that is still sitting in my heart. I feel that my own greed has caused this great slaughter of kinsmen. Lamenting the death of Abhimanyu and the sons of Draupadi, I feel victory to be defeat. What will Subhadra say to me? The lamentation of Draupadi is more than I can bear. It was after the slaughter of all these men that I came to know that Karna was my brother. He was born of the union of the Sun god and my mother Kunti. He was regarded by the whole world to be the son of Radha, but in actuality, he was my mother's eldest son. I have, unknowingly, caused him to be slain. This is burning my limbs like fire burns a heap of cotton. Neither Arjuna nor Bhima nor the twins knew him to be our eldest brother. However, he knew that we were his younger brothers. He was informed of this by Lord Krishna and my mother. Because of his close ties with Duryodhana, he could not come to our side. He did, however, agree not to take our lives. If I could have had both Arjuna and Karna, I could have conquered over any of the great maharathis. During the gambling match, even though provoked by Karna's words, I became pacified by his sight. He always seemed to resemble our mother in many ways. I tried to find out the reason for the likeness, but I never came to any conclusion. O Narada, why has the earth swallowed up his chariot wheels? Why was my elder brother cursed? I desire to hear all that you know regarding this subject matter.

O great King, Narada said, I will tell you the history of this son of Kunti as you have asked. After he was raised by Radha and Athiratha, he came to Hastinapura to learn the science of arms. When he saw the strength of Bhimasena, the quickness of Arjuna, the intelligence of yourself, and the humility of the twins, he burned with envy. He could not tolerate the friendship between Krishna and Arjuna, nor the affection the people in general had for you. He then made friends with Duryodhana, led by his nature and his hate towards all of you. Upon seeing Arjuna's superiority in weaponry, he one day approached the great Drona and requested him, Please teach

me the mantras for releasing and withdrawing the Brahmastra weapon. The affection you feel towards your disciples is the same as you feel towards your own son. Therefore, please bestow your blessings upon me so that I may become a master of arms.' Knowing the wickedness of Karna and feeling partiality towards Arjuna, Drona replied, Only a brahmana who has observed vows or a kshatriya who has practiced austere penances, should be acquainted with this weapon.'

After being rejected by Drona, Karna traveled to mount Mahendra where the great sage Parashurama lived. He bowed before the great rishi and with folded hands, he pleaded, I am a brahmana descending in the line of Bhrigu. Please instruct me in the science of arms.' Hearing that the youth was a brahmana, Parashurama replied, Indeed, you are welcome here.' Karna then took up his abode in the great sage's hermitage and became his disciple. While residing on Mount Mahendra, he met many Gandharvas, Yakshas and Rakshasas. He made friends with them, and they instructed him in how to use many weapons. He became a great favorite of the demigods. One day as he was roaming the area around the hermitage, he happen to kill a cow by accident. When he informed the brahmana who owned the cow, the brahmana became enraged and cursed Karna saying, O wretched person, you shall bear the fruit of this sinful act. While fighting with you worst enemy, the earth shall devour your chariot wheel. In that state of confusion, your enemy will cut off your head. Just as you have killed my cow when she was inattentive, so your enemy will kill you in the same way!' Karna tried to pacify the brahmana, but the brahmana would not withdraw the curse. Thus Karna returned to his preceptor greatly unhappy.

Narada continued, Parashurama was very pleased with the prowess of Karna, as well as his affection, sense control and the services he rendered toward toward him. Parashurama happily gave to Karna the mantras for releasing and withdrawing the Brahma weapon. Having acquired knowledge of this weapon, he continued to reside happily in the ashrama of Parashurama. One day while roaming the forests with Karna, Parashurama became fatigued due to his continued fasts. He lay down on his disciple's lap and fell fast asleep. While he was sleeping, a worm that lived on flesh and blood began to eat away at Karna's leg. Karna was unable to throw away or kill the worm. The worm gradually bored through Karna's leg, and Karna, not wanting to disturb his preceptor, tolerated the pain. When blood touched Parashurama's face, the great sage awoke and saw the blood. He inquired, How have I been made impure? Cast off all fear and tell me what has happened.' Karna then informed him that a worm had bitten his leg. Parashurama then saw that worm which resembled a small boar. It had eight legs and very sharp teeth. It was covered with bristles that were like needles. As soon as the rishi cast his glance upon the worm, it gave up its life force. A Rakshasa then suddenly appeared in the heavens. He addressed the rishi in the following words, O best of the ascetics, you have kindly rescued me from this hellish condition. Formerly, I was a great asura of the name Dansa. During the Satya Yuga, I took away the wife of the great sage Bhrigu. He cursed me saying, You shall become a worm and live on flesh and blood.' I then humbly requested him that there be an end to the curse. He replied, This curse shall end when you are killed by the great sage Parashurama.' O righteous one, by your grace I have been

released from this hellish existence. I now take leave of you.' Having revealed his past, the Rakshasa went his own way.

Narada Muni continued, Parashurama angrily addressed Karna, O fool, no brahmana could endure such pain. Your patience is like that of a warrior. You must tell me truthfully what caste you were born in.' Fearfully Karna replied, O descendent of Bhrigu, I am the son of a carpenter. My mother's name is Radha. Do not be displeased with me. It was for obtaining the science of arms that I presented myself in the way that I did. You are my preceptor and are like a father. Please do not take seriously the faults of your son.' Karna then prostrated himself before his martial guru and asked that he be merciful. Parashurama was enraged that this person had lied to him. He cursed Karna in the following words, Since you have lied to me and approached me under false pretenses, I say that you will not be able to remember the hymns of the brahmastra weapon when you are fighting with your foremost enemy. You must now leave my ashrama for this is no place for such false behavior.' Although cursed in this way, Parashurama blessed Karna as he was leaving, On earth there shall be no kshatriya who will be your equal in battle.' Karna then returned to Hastinapura and to the presence of his friend Duryodhana.

Having obtained the science of weapons from Parashurama, Karna began to pass his days in Duryodhana's company. Once upon a time, many kings went to the country of the Kalingas, ruled by a king named Chitrangada. The city was named Rajapura. Hearing that many kings had assembled in this city hoping to gain the King's daughter, Duryodhana accompanied by Karna, also attended the ceremony. Some of the prominent Kings were Shishupala, Jarasandha, Bhishmaka, Vakra, Nila and Rukmi. When these kings had taken their proper seats, the King's daughter entered the arena accompanied by her guards. She was, indeed, beautiful, and all the Kings were attracted to her. While she was being informed of the princes and Kings present, the beautiful maiden passed by Duryodhana, thus rejecting him. Not tolerating her rejection and relying on Karna's prowess, Duryodhana took the maiden by force and put her on his chariot. There was a great uproar from all the kings present, and they all immediately put on their coats of armor to fight with Duryodhana. As they pursued the fleeing King, Karna stood to challenge them. Singlehandedly, he fought with them and defeated them. He shattered their bows, lances, darts, maces and clubs. He killed their horses and charioteers, but left them with their lives. Thus Duryodhana obtained his queen by the grace of the powerful Karna.

Narada continued, Hearing of Karna's fame and his superior strength, Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha, challenged him to single combat. Both warriors were masters of celestial weapons, and both were very powerful. As their battle progressed, they soon exhausted their arrows and other weapons, and then fought with bare arms. Karna knew the secret of Jarasandha's birth and was about to sever him in two. Jarasandha, understanding his antagonists motives and feeling himself defeated, cast off his desire to fight and said, I am pleased with you.' Out of a desire to win his friendship, he gave Karna a town called Malini. Thus Karna became famous on earth as a great fighter. However, due to his being cursed by his preceptor and the brahmana, as well as his being belittled by Bhishma and Salya, Karna has been killed

by the wielder of the Gandiva bow. Even though he has fallen in battle, you should not lament for this was his destiny.

After Narada had revealed Karna's history, the royal King Yudhisthira could not control his emotions and began to shed tears. Kunti then came forward and spoke to her son, O my mighty armed Yudhisthira, do not grieve in this way. I tried previously to inform Karna of his relationship with you. I tried to persuade him to give up his enmity. The Sun god also spoke to him. However, because of his intimate friendship with Duryodhana, he would not change his position. I tried to persuade him otherwise, but he would not agree. I then gave up the attempt.

When King Yudhisthira heard his mother's words of consolation, he could not contain his anger and grief. He said to her, Because you have concealed this knowledge from me, I will be subdued, not by war, but by sinful reactions. I curse all womanhood that henceforward no woman shall succeed in keeping a secret. Reflecting over the death of so many kinsmen, the King could not be pacified.

While engaging in various lamentations, King Yudhisthira looked up at Arjuna and spoke to him, O Partha, if we had led a mendicant's life in the cities of the Vrishnis and the Andakas, then this unnecessary slaughter of so many men would have never taken place. Shame on the duties of a kshatriya! Shame on strength and prowess! It is because of these duties that this terrible massacre of men has taken place. Blessed are the qualities of forgiveness, sense control, purity, renunciation, non violence, and humility. Because we have desired sovereignty of the earth, we have committed many sinful acts. We were like a pack of dogs fighting for a piece of meat. We no longer desire that piece of meat, and it will be thrown aside. For Duryodhana's sinful determination, this whole kshatriya race has been exterminated. We never showed any hatred or envy for the sons of Dhritarastra. On the other hand, they always hated us though we tried to avoid them in all circumstances. Now, having slain them, our wrath has been pacified. The only atonement as prescribed in the scriptures is to lead a renounced life. I shall therefore abandon this kingdom and enter the forest to lead a mendicant's life. Now that peace has been restored on earth, I hand this kingdom over to you. Rule it according to your desire.

Upon hearing his elder brother's determination, Arjuna said, I grieve to see the great agitation of your heart. You have achieved a superhuman feat, and now you are bent on destroying it. Having slain your enemy and acquired the sovereignty of the earth, why should you abandon everything through fickleness of heart? Why have you killed all the kings of the earth? You are born in a race of great monarchs. Now, having won the conquest of the earth, why are you desiring to abandon virtue and profit from folly? If you retire to the forest, dishonest men will become prominent and destroy the sacrificial fires of the brahmanas. This sin will surely accrue due to your lack of responsibility. The wealth that kings take from others becomes the means of their prosperity. We have never seen that wealth has been won without doing harm to others. The royal sages have declared that this is the duty of the kshatriyas. This earth formerly belonged to Dilipa, Nahusha, Ambarisha, and Mandhatri. She now belongs to you. It is now your duty to perform a horse sacrifice

so that the sins of killing so many men will not accrue to you, and your citizens will prosper.

O King, Bhima added, your intelligence has become covered to the truth. If, renouncing the duties of a King, you would lead a life of idleness, then this massacre of Dhritarastra's sons was uncalled for. Are forgiveness, compassion, and non violence not to be found among those of the kshatriya race? If we had known that after this great battle, you would have renounced the kingdom, then we would have never slain a single creature. We would have lived in the forest till the demise of this body. Wise men, acquainted with the duties of a kshatriya, say that those, who unrighteously steal another's property or unlawfully usurp the throne, should be slain. Duryodhana and his followers were guilty of this fault and thus they have been killed. O Yudhisthira, govern this world righteously. It has been laid down that a life of renunciation should be adopted only in times of distress. A king should only lead a life of renunciation when he is decrepit or devoid of his kingdom. Men of wisdom, therefore, do not sanction renunciation as the duty of a kshatriya. You are, O Monarch, conversant with all duties. There is nothing that is not known to you. We always wish to imitate your conduct, but we cannot do so.

Hearing Bhima's advice, Nakula then spoke to his elder brother, O Yudhisthira, real renunciation for a kshatriya is to protect the citizens. One who gives in charity to the brahmanas, who are conversant with Vedic knowledge, leads a life of true renunciation. That king, who neglects his citizens and does not give them protection, is the very embodiment of Kali. If you do not give protection to the citizens, then you will incur sin. As the ancient kings before you have performed their duties, so should you also perform your duty.

Sahadeva then added, O King, it is not by casting off external objects that one attains success. One who renounces all material possessions, but still internally covets them, only deludes himself and makes no spiritual progress. O King, such a person lives in the jaws of death. Behold, O descendent of Bharata, the forms of all creatures to be manifestations of your own self. Please protect them as they are in great need.

Arjuna then turned to Lord Krishna and requested Him, This great King, O Krishna, is grieving for the loss of so many kinsmen. O Madhava, please comfort him. Once again, O descendent of Vrishni, we have fallen into a great danger. It behooves You to dispel his grief.

Thus addressed by Arjuna, the lotus eyed Lord turned his face toward Yudhisthira. Whatever was spoken by Lord Govinda could not be rejected by the King. From the very beginning Lord Krishna was dearer to him than Arjuna. Taking up the hand of the King with His Own, Lord Krishna, whose hands and eyes resembled lotus flowers said, Do not, O tiger among men, grieve for those who are already dead. No amount of lamentation will bring them back to life. Those great warriors who fell in this battle are like objects seen in dreams. They only temporarily exist. All the warriors in this great battle attained a higher destination that is the pride of a fallen warrior. Death is the destination for all who take birth in this world. One may die today or

tomorrow, according to one's predestined activities. Therefore, O King, cast off this lamentation and act according to the duties suited for the King of this world.

Seeing the King still plunged in grief, Vyasadeva, the grandfather of the Pandavas, then spoke words for the King's benefit. He said, O Ajatashatru, protection of the citizens is the duty of a King. You should follow in the footsteps of those greatly pious monarchs who proceeded you. The first and foremost duty of a kshatriya is to protect those who take shelter under him. A person who transgresses the laws of justice and morality must be punished. The Kauravas were offenders in every sense of the word. Therefore, they deserved to die at Kurukshetra.

I do not doubt your advice, Yudhisthira said. Everything about justice and morality is known to you. I have, however, for the sake of a kingdom caused many persons to be slain. This is burning my heart like a forest fire.

Vyasadeva then questioned Maharaja Yudhisthira, O descendent of Bharata, is the Supreme Lord the cause of all action, or is man the ultimate cause? Is everything the result of chance, or are the fruits we enjoy the result of previous actions? If man acts according to the desires of the Supreme Lord, then the fruits of those acts should be awarded to that Supreme Being. If a person cuts down a tree in the forest with the use of an axe, then it is the person that incurs the sin and not the axe. O Yudhisthira, you have been but an instrument in this great battle desired by the Supreme Lord Himself. No one, O King, can turn away from that which has been predestined by the Supreme Lord. If it is necessary to ascertain what is good and what is bad, then one should consult the scriptures. In those scriptures it has been laid down that kings should stand with the rod of chastisement uplifted in their hands. Actually, these kings have died through the influence of time. Neither you nor Bhima nor Arjuna nor the twins have killed anyone. The Supreme Lord Himself has said, 'Time I am the destroyer of all things, and I have come to engage all people.' You have simply been an instrument in the hands of that Supreme Being. Therefore, O Yudhisthira, do not fall under the sway of lamentation. Act according to the duties of a King. Protect the citizens and engage them according to their prescribed activities.

O holy one, Yudhisthira said, I desire to hear in detail the duties of the four Varnas and four Ashramas. I desire to hear how one can subjugate the world by treading the path of morality.

If, O King, you wish to hear about the science of morality and the duties for all men, Vyasadeva replied, then approach Bhishma, the grandsire of the Kurus.

After causing the slaughter of so many men, Yudhisthira said, I have become an offender to all persons. I have caused our grandsire to be slain on the field of battle by means of deceit. How then can I ask him the science of morality?

In your grief do not be impertinent, Lord Krishna said. You should follow the advice given by the great sage Vyasa. We shall enter the city of Hastinapura, and after being greeted by the citizens, we will see to your coronation. Then we will approach the great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty and receive his final instructions.

King Yudhisthira then cast off all lamentation and ascended the royal chariot which was drawn by sixteen spotlessly white oxen. To the sounds of musical instruments and to glorification by the bards and minstrels, King Yudhisthira started for Hastinapura. Bhima took the reins of the beautiful chariot, and Arjuna held the royal umbrella over his elder brother's head. Nakula and Sahadeva fanned the King with chamara wisks that were as white as the rays of the moon. Behind the royal chariot rode Yuyutsu and behind him rode the Lord of the universe, Lord Krishna, accompanied by Satyaki. At the head of the procession rode King Dhritarastra and his chaste wife Gandhari. They were riding on a special royal palanquin. Also in that procession were the ladies such as Kunti and Draupadi. Behind the procession were a large number of chariots, elephants, horsemen and foot soldiers.

While the procession was proceeding towards the city of the elephants, the jubilant citizens were busy decorating the city to greet their King. The citizens were joyous and quickly saw to it that the streets were dampened with perfumed water, and that flowers and festoons were hung from the beautifully decorated houses. After all was made ready, they anxiously awaited the arrival of the King.

At the time when the Pandavas entered the city, thousands upon thousands of citizens came out to behold the sight. The well adorned streets and squares were indeed beautiful. As the King passed in his procession, the ladies threw flowers and praised him accordingly. They exclaimed, All glories to the pious King Yudhisthira. All glories to the son of Vayu, Bhima. All glories to the son of Indra, Arjuna, and all glories to Nakula and Sahadeva. There was an uproar of drums, kettledrums, conchshells and trumpets. The cheers of the citizens and the showers of flowers combined to present a wondrous scene. After thirteen years of exile, the Pandavas were greeted by the pious citizens of Hastinapura. Having passed through the streets of the city, Yudhisthira entered the palace of Kurus which was decorated with every conceivable ornament. The people, belonging to the city as well as other provinces, approached the palace uttering auspicious words. By good luck, O foremost of Kings, you have vanquished your enemies and recovered the kingdom. Be our monarch for a hundred years and protect us as Indra protects the denizens of heaven. The King then descended from his chariot and entered the beautifully decorated palace. He offered obeisances to the deities of the demigods and worshiped them accordingly. He then came out of the palace again and saw a large number of brahmanas desiring to bless him with benedictions. When they surrounded him, it appeared as if the moon was present with its many luminaries. The King then worshiped those brahmanas and bestowed upon them all kinds of wealth. Then loud shouts of This is a blessed day filled the sky. The King heard those sounds as well as the sounds of drums and conchshells. This was all indicative of his triumph.

It so happened that among the brahmanas was a Rakshasa named Charvaka. He disguised himself as a brahmana, and he happened to be a friend of Duryodhana. When the brahmanas had become silent, this sinful Rakshasa stood fearlessly as if he were a representative of all the brahmanas and exclaimed, Having made Myself as their spokesman, these brahmanas have said, Shame upon you, O King! You are certainly wicked and a slayer of your kinsmen. What have you gained by exterminating your race? Having slain your superiors as well as your preceptor, you should give up your life.'

Hearing the bogus statements of the Rakshasa, the brahmanas were deeply agitated. They could not tolerate that speech. King Yudhisthira then replied to the false brahmana, I bow down to you, O brahmana, and ask that you be pleased with me. It does not befit you to address me like this. I shall soon lay down my life.

The brahmanas then loudly exclaimed, These are not our words, O King. We wish you all prosperity. This is a Rakshasa named Charvaka and a friend of Duryodhana. He has taken the garb of a brahmana, seeking to cast you into further lamentation. We have not, O righteous soul, made any statements of this kind. Those brahmanas, enraged by Charvaka's statements, sounded hymns from the Vedas, and the Rakshasa suddenly fell to the ground dead. He fell down like a tree hit by the thunderbolt of Indra. Then the brahmanas, uttering benedictions upon the King, made the necessary arrangements for the coronation of the king.

The royal son of Kunti, the mighty King Yudhisthira, then took his seat facing eastwards. He sat on a throne made of solid gold. On another seat facing him sat Lord Krishna and Satyaki. On either side of Yudhisthira were Bhima and Arjuna, also seated on beautiful thrones. Upon a throne made of ivory and bedecked with gold sat Nakula and Sahadeva and their mother Kunti. Also seated for the coronation were Dhritarastra, Gandhari, Dhaumya, Yuyutsu and others. The priests then came before Yudhisthira carrying the necessary paraphernalia needed for the coronation. The Lord of the Universe, the Supreme Person, Lord Krishna personally took the sanctified waters in a pure white conch and bathed the head of King Yudhisthira as well as the heads of Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. This was all done while the pious brahmanas poured clarified butter into the sacrificial fire and chanted the Vedic mantras.

After the coronation, King Yudhisthira appointed Bhima as the Yuvaraja. He appointed Sanjaya to look after the finances of the state, and he ordered Nakula to see to the welfare of the army. He appointed Arjuna to repel all enemy forces and to chastise the wicked. He appointed Dhaumya to look after the brahmanas, and he appointed Sahadeva to stay always by his side. King Yudhisthira then caused the Shraddha ceremony to be performed for all of his kinsmen slain in battle. He gave wealth away in the name of Drona, Karna, Dhristadyumna, Abhimanyu, Ghatotkacha, Virata, Drupada and the five sons of Draupadi. For the sake of these and many more, King Yudhisthira gave gold, jewels, cloth and cows to thousands of brahmanas. He thus paid off his debt that he owed to them and began to protect the citizens of the world as a righteous king should. He showed due honor to Dhritarastra, Gandhari, and the other Kuru elders. The affectionate King Yudhisthira

extended his favors to the destitute, the blind and the helpless. He gave them food, clothes and shelter. He caused all the citizens to increase their devotion to God and the pious brahmanas. Thus he resided happily in his kingdom having conquered the whole earth.

Thus Ends the Shanti Parva, Entitled, The Lamentation of Maharaja Yudhisthira.

## Anushasana Parva

### The Final Instructions of Grandfather Bhishma

Maharaja Yudhisthira then began to rule the kingdom under the direction of the twice born brahmanas. After the coronation ceremony had been completed, King Yudhisthira approached Lord Krishna and offered the following prayers, Through Your grace, O Krishna, I have received this ancestral kingdom. O foremost of the Yadus, O lotus-eyed Lord, I repeatedly offer my humble obeisances unto you. You have been glorified as the Supreme Lord, one without a second. The great sages and brahmanas know You by many names. Obeisances unto You, O Creator of the world. You are the soul of all universes, and You are the support of this manifest creation. You are Vishnu, Hari and Krishna. You are the Lord of Vaikuntha and the foremost of all beings. Previously You have taken Your birth as Prishnigarbha, the son of Prishni and Sutapa. Another of Your names, O Lord, is Triyuga. You are the Lord of the senses and are, therefore, known as Hrishikesha. You are the great swan, Hamsa Avatara; the boar, Varaha; and the half man, half lion, Nrisimhadeva. You are the sun, the moon and the firmament. You are the chief of the celestials, Indra, and You are the beginning, the middle and the end of all creation. You are Dhruva, You are Garuda and You are the great sage Kapila. You are the Supersoul in the heart of every living being. Obeisances unto You, O Lord, who wield the Sarnga bow, the Sudarshana discus and the Kamodaki club. Hearing the pure glorification by King Yudhisthira, Lord Krishna smiled. That smile captivated the hearts of all present. The lotus eyed Lord then conversed with His pure devotee, gladdening the pious King's heart.

Emperor Yudhisthira then instructed his brothers, Your bodies have been scorched by the weapons of the enemy. You are greatly fatigued and need sufficient rest. Go to the palaces assigned to each of you and begin to enjoy this opulent kingdom. With the permission of the King, Maharaja Bhima then entered the palace that was once the home of Duryodhana. It was very opulent and was filled with male and female servants. Arjuna then entered the palace that formerly belonged to Duhshasana. This palace had a gateway that was made of solid gold. Lord Krishna and Satyaki also took up their residence in that opulent palace. Nakula and Sahadeva then entered the palaces that formerly belonged to Durmashana and Durmukha. These palaces vied in opulence with the abodes of Kuvera.

After resting the night, King Yudhisthira came to Arjuna's palace and greeted Lord Krishna and his brother. In King Yudhisthira's presence, Lord Krishna began to glorify Grandfather Bhishma, That foremost descendent of the Kuru race, Bhishma, is lying on a bed of arrows about to pass away. He is always thinking of Me. Because of this, My mind is also fixed on him. The sound of his bowstring and the slap of his palms, even Indra was unable to bear. I can remember how he vanquished all the great Kings at the svayamvara ceremony of the princesses of Kashi. I am thinking of

him who fought with his martial guru for twenty three days continuously. Parashurama was unable to subdue him. I am thinking of him who took his birth as the son of Ganga. He became the intimate student of Vashistha Muni, and because of this, he is the veritable abode of the four Vedas and their branches. There is nothing that is not known to him. O Yudhisthira, I think that at this time you should approach him and inquire about anything that you wish to know. Time is short. When the sun set its course in the northern regions, the son of Ganga will leave his body and attain to the higher regions. Before that happens, you should approach him and question him concerning the rulership of this kingdom.

Agreeing to the proposal of Lord Krishna, King Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva ascended their chariots and made their way in procession to Kurukshetra. At that time Maharaja Bhishma was surrounded by the foremost of the sages and rishis. By his side was Vyasadeva and Narada Muni. There were other great sages present such as Devala, Asita, Sumantu, Jaimini, Maitreya, Chyavana, Vashistha, Sanat Kumara, Kapila, Valmiki and Lomasa. There was also Parashurama, Pulaha, Kashyapa, Pulastya, Parasara, Gautama and the great sage Markandeya. Stretched out on a bed of arrows, that tiger among men was in rapt concentration on the transcendental form of the Lord. He was glorifying the Lord with a cheerful and strong voice.

O Krishna, Maharaja Bhishma prayed, O foremost of all beings, be pleased with my words praising Your glories. My Lord You are the only transcendent reality. You are the Supreme Lord, and I seek Your refuge with all my heart. O Lord of all creatures, You are without beginning and without end. Your glories cannot be enumerated. Not even the great sages and rishis can know You fully. All the worlds and all created beings have their abode in You. Like jewels strung together on a thread, all things that have attributes reside in thee. You are called Hari, having a thousand hands, a thousand feet, a thousand eyes and a thousand crowns. Thou art called Narayana because You are the resting place of all living beings. In all the Vedas, You are referred to as the Supreme Being of irresistible force. You are the Lord of those that are bound to You in faith and devotion. You have been born from Devaki and Vasudeva as fire is generated from two sticks. For one's eternal salvation, the devout worshipper, with mind withdrawn from all material objects, beholds You, O Govinda, in the core of the heart. O Lord of all creatures, I place myself in Your hands. In the Puranas You have been spoken of as the Purusha, as Brahma, and as Sankarshana. You are the greatest of all beings, and therefore, I adore thee. O my Lord, You are the panacea for all sorrow. Assuming the form of a boar, whose limbs were constituted by sacrifice, You raised the earth after it had been submerged in the waters of devastation. Obeisances to You, My Lord, in Your form as all devouring time. The brahmanas are Your mouth, the kshatriyas are Your arms, the vaishyas are your belly and the shudras are Your legs. Fire constitutes Your mouth. The heavens are the crown on Your head. The sky in Your navel, and the earth is Your feet. The sun and moon are Your eyes, and the different directions are Your ears. Although You are without origin, You are the origin of this universe. The two syllables Hari constitute the sum and substance of the sojourn through the wilderness of life. Your holy name is the medicine that cures all worldly attachment. As truth is full of Vishnu, as the universe is full of Vishnu, as everything is full of

Vishnu, so let my soul be full of Vishnu and my sins destroyed. I seek Your protection, O lotus eyed Lord. Bhishma then became silent and the rishis and sages uttered words of praise for the dying Bhishma.

At this time the Pandavas arrived at the field of Kurukshetra. They saw mountains of charred bodies scattered here and there, which were the funeral pyres of the slain warriors. The bones of the horses, elephants and human beings lay piled up like mountains. As they proceeded further, they came upon the grandsire laying on a bed of arrows, like a fallen demigod. He was surrounded by many sages, and because his consciousness was fixed on Lord Krishna, he appeared very effulgent. The Pandavas and Lord Krishna descended from their chariots. They offered obeisances unto the great sages present and unto their fallen grandfather. Lord Krishna stood at the feet of Bhishmadeva.

The sons of Maharaja Pandu were sitting silently, overcome with affection for their dying grandfather. Seeing this, Bhishmadeva congratulated them with feeling. There were tears of ecstasy in his eyes, for he was overwhelmed by love and affection. Grandfather Bhishma exclaimed, Oh, what sufferings and injustices you good souls suffered for being the sons of religion personified. You did not deserve to remain alive under those tribulations, yet you were protected by the brahmanas, Lord Krishna and religion. My daughter-in-law Kunti, upon the great King Pandu's death, became a widow with many children, and therefore she suffered greatly. And when you were grown up she suffered a great deal more because of Duryodhana's actions. In my opinion, this is all due to inevitable time, under whose control everyone in every planet is carried, just as the clouds are carried by the wind. O how wonderful is the influence of inevitable time. It is irreversible-otherwise, how can there be reverses in the presence of King Yudhisthira, the son of the demigod controlling religion; Bhima, the great fighter with the mace; the great bowman Arjuna with his mighty weapon Gandiva; and above all, the Lord, the direct well-wisher of the Pandavas? O King, no one can know the plan of Lord Shri Krishna. Even though great philosophers inquire exhaustively, they are bewildered. O best among the descendants of Bharata, I maintain, therefore, that all this is within the plan of the Lord. Accepting the inconceivable plan of the Lord, you must follow it. You are now the appointed administrative head, and, my lord, you should now take care of those subjects who are rendered helpless.

"This Shri Krishna is no other than the inconceivable, original Personality of Godhead. He is the first Narayana, the Supreme Enjoyer. But He is moving amongst the descendants of King Vrishni just like one of us, and He is bewildering us with His self-created energy. O King, Lord Shiva, Narada, the sage amongst the demigods, and Kapila, the incarnation of Godhead, all know very confidentially about His glories through direct contact. O King, that personality whom, out of ignorance only, you thought to be your maternal cousin, your very dear friend, well-wisher, counselor, messenger, benefactor, etc., is that very Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna. Being the absolute Personality of Godhead, He is present in everyone's heart. He is equally kind to everyone, and He is free from false ego of differentiation. Therefore whatever He does is free from material inebriety. He is equibalanced. Yet, despite His being equally kind to everyone, He has graciously come before me while I am

ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor. The Personality of Godhead, who appears in the mind of the devotee by attentive devotion and meditation and by chanting of the holy name, releases the devotee from the bondage of fruitive activities at the time of his quitting the material body. May my Lord, who is four-handed and whose beautifully decorated lotus face, with eyes as red as the rising sun, is smiling, kindly await me at the moment when I quit this material body.

Upon seeing His devotee about to leave his body, the Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna said, O Bhishma, I hope your mind is not in a clouded state. O best of eloquent men, I hope your limbs are not tortured by the pain from these arrows. Ordinarily, the smallest pin will produce pain for this body, what to speak of hundreds of arrows. Surely, however, pain can not afflict you. You are competent, O Bharata, to instruct the very gods about the origin and dissolution of all created beings. Just now the eldest son of Pandu is overwhelmed with lamentation because of the death of so many kinsmen. All the duties of the four varnas and the four ashramas are well known to you. You are also conversant with the four Vedas and their branches and corollaries. O bull among men, there is no other person who can destroy the doubts that are in the heart of Yudhisthira. With the aid of your vast intelligence, drive away the sorrow that sits in the heart of this first son of Pandu. Your devotion to Me, O son of Ganga, is very great, and for this reason I have appeared before you at these last moments of your life. O foremost of Kings, I never display Myself to those who are not devoted, or who have not conquered their senses. Through your sincere devotion, you are able to behold Me. After leaving this body, you will never take birth again. I assure you that upon entering My own abode in Vaikuntha, you will never come back to this world. When you have left this mortal plane, all your vast knowledge will be lost to mankind. Therefore, O hero, before leaving this body pacify the grieving son of Pandu, who is lamenting on account of the slaughter of his kinsmen.

Hearing the request of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the great grandsire of the Kuru dynasty replied, O master of the worlds, O mighty-armed one, O Narayana, O Lord of unfading glory, hearing the words spoken by You, I am filled with joy. But what instructions can I give in Your presence, especially since all instructions emanate from the Vedas, which come from Your divine mouth? My mind, O slayer of Madhu, is agitated because of the pain of all these arrows. O Govinda, I am so afflicted that I barely have the power to say anything. My strength is waning, and my life breaths will soon be exhausted. How then can I venture to speak? O my Lord, I will not be able to say anything. Pardon me for my unwillingness. I can no longer understand whether it is day or night. It is only through Your mercy that I am still in this body. O Krishna, will You not therefore speak to Yudhisthira to dispel his grief?

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replied, What you have spoken is just worthy of the best members of the Kuru race. O Bhishma, I now grant you a benediction that you will not feel pain, hunger or thirst. O son of Ganga, your memory of the Vedic conclusions shall not fail you. What ever question Yudhisthira will ask, you will be able to answer by My grace. After speaking these words, a celestial shower of flowers fell from the sky. The Gandharvas began to play on their instruments, and

the Apsaras sang sweetly in the heavens. In all directions there were auspicious omens. Lord Krishna then put his transcendental hand on Bhishma, and his pain disappeared. Just at this time the sun began its descent on the western horizon. Agreeing to hear Bhishma's discourse the following day, the Pandavas entered the city of Hastinapura.

The following morning the Pandavas awoke and prepared themselves to travel to Kurukshetra. They once again approached Grandfather Bhishma and offered their obeisances. Lord Krishna then inquired of Grandfather Bhishma, Have you, O best among Kings, passed the night happily? Has your intelligence become clear? I hope that your body no longer feels the pain of all these arrows.

O descendent of Vrishni, Bhishma replied, by Your grace I have been relieved of my suffering and fatigue. I can behold the past, the present and the future like a crystal clear lake. Due to the benediction granted by You, I can behold the duties laid down by the Vedas and the Vedantas. Everything that relates to the four varnas has come within my power of memory. O Janardana, because I have been favored by You, I have become competent to discourse on that which will be beneficial to the world. Why, however, do You not speak to Pandu's son about these matters?

O descendent of Bharata, Vasudeva said, I am the source of fame and everything that is auspicious. All things, good or bad, emanate from Me. If some one says that the moon has cool rays, no one will be struck with wonder. Similarly, if I speak to Yudhisthira about transcendental knowledge, it will not add to My fame. I have resolved to enhance your fame, O best among men. It is for this reason that I have inspired you with intelligence. As long as the earth will last, your fame will be known through the three worlds. Whatever you say to the inquiring son of Pandu will be regarded as authoritative as the Vedas. All the Kings and rishis desire to listen to your discourses on duty and morality. Therefore, you should speak to them for the benefit of the world.

King Yudhisthira then approached the grandsire of the Kuru dynasty. He touched his feet, and Bhishma welcomed him with affectionate words. Bhishma smelled Yudhisthira's head and ask him to sit near him. Ganga's son then addressed him saying, Do not fear, O best of the Kurus! Ask me any question without anxiety.

O grandsire of the Kuru dynasty, Yudhisthira inquired, persons conversant with duty and morality say that kingly duties constitute the highest science. Please, therefore, speak in detail on the duties of Kings and of duties of the other orders of life.

O son of Pandu, Bhishma said, the suppression of anger, truthfulness, justice, forgiveness, begetting children by one's own wife, purity, avoidance of quarrel, simplicity, and maintenance of dependents-these nine duties belong to all the four orders equally. I shall now declare the duties which belong to brahmanas exclusively. Sense control has been declared to be the first and foremost duty of a brahmana. Study of the Vedas and performance of austerities are also other duties of the brahminical order. Worship of the deity and teaching others how to worship

the deity are duties of the brahminical order. Also there is accepting charity and giving in charity.

O Yudhisthira, Bhishma continued, I shall now tell you the duties for the kshatriyas. A kshatriya should never beg, but should acquire wealth by taxing the citizens. He should study the Vedas, but not engage in the profession of teaching. He should offer protection to the citizens and put forward his prowess on the field of battle. There is no higher duty for a kshatriya than to protect the citizens. Gifts of charity, study of the Vedas and performance of sacrifice bring prosperity to a king. A king should engage all the subjects in their occupational duties according to their order of life. If a King does not perform any other act other than protect the citizens, he is regarded as successful in religious performance and has carried out all duties of a kshatriya.

O Yudhisthira, Bhishma continued, a vaishya should give in charity, study the Vedas, perform sacrifices and acquire wealth by fair means. A vaishya should protect all animals especially the cow and the bull. These two are the mother and father of all mankind. By protecting the cow, he will achieve lasting prosperity.

O Bharata, a shudra should perform service to the other three orders according to seniority. By such service he will obtain happiness. He should never amass wealth for if he does he might make the higher orders his servants. Worn out umbrellas, turbans, beds, and seats, shoes and fans should be given to the shudra servants. Torn clothes which are no longer fit to wear should be given to the shudras as their clothing. Men conversant with morality say that if a shudra approaches one of the higher orders for service, then that servant should be immediately engaged in some duty. The weak and old amongst the shudra order should be maintained. A shudra should never give up his master no matter what condition of distress he falls into.

Grandfather Bhishma went on to explain the Varnashrama system in more detail. He also explained in divisions, acts of charity, the practical duties of a king and activities of salvation. Then he briefly described the duties of women and devotees, both briefly and extensively. Then he described the occupational duties of different orders and statuses of life, citing instances from history, for he was himself acquainted with the truth. While Bhishmadeva was describing occupational duties, the sun's course ran into the northern hemisphere. This period is described by mystics who die at their will.

Thereupon that man who spoke on different subjects with thousands of meanings and who fought on thousands of battlefields and protected thousands of men, stopped speaking and, being completely freed from all bondage, withdrew his mind from everything else and fixed his wide-open eyes upon the original Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna, who stood before him, four-handed, dressed in yellow garments that glittered and shined. By pure meditation, looking at Lord Shri Krishna, he at once was freed from all material inauspiciousness and was relieved of all bodily pains caused by the arrow wounds. Thus all the external activities of his senses at once stopped, and he prayed transcendently to the controller of all living beings while quitting his material body. Grandfather Bhishma prayed, Let me invest my

thinking, feeling, and willing, which were so long engaged in different subjects and occupational duties, in the all-powerful Lord Shri Krishna. He is always self-satisfied, but sometimes, being the leader of the devotees, He enjoys transcendental pleasure by descending to the material world, although from Him only the material world is created. Lord Shri Krishna is the intimate friend of Arjuna. He has appeared on this earth in His transcendental body, which resembles the bluish color of the tamala tree. His body attracts everyone in the three planetary systems. May His glittering yellow dress and His lotus face, covered with paintings of sandalwood pulp, be the object of my attraction, and may I not desire fruitive results. On the battlefield, the flowing hair of Lord Krishna turned ashen due to labor, and beads of sweat wetted His face. All these decorations, intensified by the wounds dealt by my sharp arrows, were enjoyed by Him. Let my mind thus go unto Shri Krishna. In obedience to the command of His friend, Lord Shri Krishna entered the arena of the Battlefield of Kurukshetra between the soldiers of Arjuna and Duryodhana, and while there He shortened the life spans of the opposite party by His merciful glance. This was done simply by His looking at the enemy. Let my mind be fixed upon that Lord Krishna.

When Arjuna was seemingly polluted by ignorance upon observing the soldiers and commanders before him on the battlefield, the Lord eradicated his ignorance by delivering transcendental knowledge. May His lotus feet always remain the object of my attraction. Fulfilling my desire and sacrificing His own promise, He got down from the chariot, took up a wheel, and ran towards me hurriedly, just as a lion goes to kill an elephant. He even dropped His outer garment on the way. May He, Lord Shri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who awards salvation, be my ultimate destination. On the battlefield He charged me, as if angry because of the wounds dealt by my sharp arrows. His shield was scattered, and His body was smeared with blood due to the wounds.

At the moment of death, let my ultimate attraction be to Shri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead. I concentrate my mind upon the chariot driver of Arjuna who stood with a whip in His right hand and a bridle rope in His left, who was very careful to give protection to Arjuna's chariot by all means. Those who saw Him on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra attained their original forms after death. Let my mind be fixed upon Lord Shri Krishna, whose motions and smiles of love attracted the damsels of Vrajadhama. The damsels imitated the characteristic movements of the Lord.

At the Rajasuya sacrifice performed by Maharaja Yudhisthira, there was the greatest assembly of all the elite men of the world, the royal and learned orders, and in that great assembly Lord Shri Krishna was worshiped by one and all as the most exalted Personality of Godhead. This happened during my presence, and I remembered the incident in order to keep my mind upon the Lord. Now I can meditate with full concentration upon that one Lord, Shri Krishna, now present before me because now I have transcended the misconceptions of duality in regard to His presence in everyone's heart. The sun may be perceived differently, but the sun is one.

Thus Bhishmadeva deeply merged himself in remembrance of the Supersoul, Lord Shri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, with his mind, speech, sight and actions, and thus he became silent, and his breathing stopped. Knowing that Bhishma had entered into the unlimited eternity of the Supreme Absolute, all present there became silent like birds at the end of the day. Bhishmadeva was a pure devotee of the Lord, and thus in a spiritual body he entered the spiritual realm in one of the Vaikuntha planets where the Lord, in His eternal form of Partha-sarathi, predominates over the unconditioned living beings who are constantly engaged in the service of the Lord. Thereafter, both men and demigods sounded drums in honor, and the honest royal order commenced demonstrations of honor and respect.s And from the sky fell showers of flowers.

After the passing away of his grandfather, King Yudhisthira performed the last funeral rites and was momentarily overwhelmed with grief. It was at this time that all the great sages glorified Lord Shri Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After offering their respectful worship, they returned to their respective hermitages, bearing always Lord Shri Krishna within their hearts.

Thus Ends the Anushasana Parva, entitled, The Final Instructions of Grandfather Bhishma.

Thus Ends the Anushasana Parva.

## Ashvamedha Parva

### The Sacrificial Horse and the Death of Arjuna

After the passing away of grandfather Bhishma, Lord Krishna caused Maharaja Yudhisthira to conduct three well-performed Ashvamedha (horse) sacrifices. These sacrifices required the subordination of all earthly Kings. Maharaja Yudhisthira released the sacrificial horse and ordered Arjuna to follow it wherever it went and to fight with any belligerent rulers, who did not want to accept the King's sovereignty. (The sacrificial horse was freed from the city of Hastinapura and allowed to wander wherever it wished. If the horse entered a kingdom and was taken captive, the warrior following the horse fought with the challengers.) He also ordered Arjuna not to kill any descendants of those who fought at Kurukshetra.

Thus Arjuna followed the sacrificial horse as it roamed from one country to another. When the descendants of the Trigartas learned that the sacrificial horse had entered their kingdom, they came out to challenge the mighty armed Arjuna. They carried a hatred for the Pandavas like their forefathers had. The Trigartas endeavored to capture the horse, but Arjuna forbid them to do so. Disregarding Arjuna's orders, the Trigartas assaulted Arjuna with their full prowess. The King of the Trigartas, Suryavarman, attacked Arjuna with a barrage of arrows, but Partha countered his arrows and defeated Susharman's son with his selected weapons. Suryavarman was furious and attacked Arjuna with greater determination. Arjuna laughed with scorn at the young King and pierced his armor with many arrows.

Assisting Suryavarman was his younger brother, Ketuvarman, who made the mistake of assailing Arjuna with his weapons of fury. Not knowing that he was like a moth entering fire, Ketuvarman was killed by Arjuna's sharp arrows. Upon Ketuvarman's fall, the mighty car-warrior, Dhritavarman, assaulted Arjuna, showering him with a downpour of arrows. Beholding the lightness of hand displayed by the youthful prince, Gudakesha (Arjuna) was pleased with him. The son of Indra could not see when the young warrior took out his arrows and when he placed them on his bow-string. He only saw lightning fast arrows coming towards him. For a brief space of time, Arjuna gladdened his enemy and mentally admired his heroism and skill. The Kuru hero, smiling the whole time, fought with that youth who resembled an angry cobra. While Arjuna was fighting mildly with him, Dhritavarman released an arrow that pierced Arjuna's hand. The Gandiva bow fell to the ground and Dhritavarman laughed loudly, thinking he had become victorious. Arjuna was incensed, and once more picking up his bow, he vanquished the Trigarta army with his superior weapons. Beholding Arjuna in a fit of rage and releasing arrows like Yamaraja, the Trigarta army broke and fled in all directions. They surrendered to Arjuna pleading, We yield to you rulership! We have now become your slaves. Please command us according to your will. Arjuna ordered that they accept subordination to Maharaja Yudhisthira. The Trigartas agreed and once more the sacrificial horse was freed.

The sacrificial horse then proceeded to the kingdom of Pragjyotishapura. Hearing of this, the son of Bhagadatta, Vajradatta, came out to fight with Arjuna. He seized the sacrificial horse and then entered his own city. He mounted his foremost elephant and came out to fight with Arjuna. Impelled by childishness, he challenged Arjuna to fight. The enraged prince then urged the elephant towards Arjuna's chariot. The elephant resembled a veritable mountain, and from his temples and mouth issued temporal juice, indicating that the elephant was mad and uncontrolled. Urged on by the prince with his hook, that elephant cut through the air like a flying hill. Arjuna descended from his chariot and stood prepared to meet the onslaught of Bhagadatta's son. Vajradatta released countless arrows from his mighty bow, but these were all countered by Partha. Not wanting to waste time, Arjuna released a number of arrows equipped with golden wings. Vajradatta was hit by those arrows and fell from the back of his elephant. Coming back to consciousness, the prince once again mounted his elephant and fought with Arjuna, using his best weapons. Arjuna pierced the elephant on which the prince was riding and blood flowed from its many wounds.

The Battle between the mighty armed Arjuna and the son of Bhagadatta waged on for three days. On the fourth day, Vajradatta laughed loudly and exclaimed, Wait! Wait, O Arjuna! You shall not escape with your life. By killing you, I shall repay the debt I owe my deceased father. You killed my father, who was a friend to Pandu, only because of his advanced years. Now you must fight with me who am but a mere boy. Vajradatta then urged his elephant, whose every step cause the earth to tremble. Beholding the gigantic beast coming towards him, Arjuna released with full force a shaft that resembled a veritable flame of fire. When struck by that arrow, the elephant fell to the ground like a mountain hit by a thunderbolt. Dhananjaya then addressed the fallen King, Do not fear for your life. I have been ordered by my older brother not to slay those that challenge me. Rise up, O King, return to your city safe and sound. When the full moon day comes, you should arrive at the city of Hastinapura to witness the Ashvamedha sacrifice of King Yudhisthira. When Vajradatta heard Arjuna's order, he agreed with the proposal and again entered his city.

The challenge horse then entered the province of Manipur. The ruler of Manipur was Arjuna's son named Babhrvahana. Hearing that his father had come to his country, Babhrvahana came out of his city with all humility followed by a number of brahmanas. Seeing this, Arjuna was not pleased. The highly intelligent Arjuna then chastised his son, Your conduct is not befitting a king. You have fallen from the duties of a kshatriya. I have come here as the protector of Yudhisthira's sacrificial horse. Why, O son, will you not fight with me? Shame on you for not exhibiting your prowess! Shame on you for acting like a woman! Shame on you for receiving me peacefully!

Upon hearing Arjuna's chiding words, Ulupi, one of Arjuna's wives, pierced the earth and encouraged Babhrvahana, Know that I am your step mother, Ulupi. If you follow my instructions you will attain lasting fame. You should fight with this foremost descendent of the Bharata dynasty. If you do so, he will be pacified.

Incited by his stepmother, Babhrumahana mounted his chariot which was equipped with many different kinds of weapons. His horses traveled at the speed of the mind. He hoisted his standard which bore the mark of a golden lion. Ready for battle, King Babhrumahana proceeded against his father. He caused the sacrificial horse to be taken captive, indicating that he was ready to fight. Partha descended from his chariot and began to fight his son on foot. They covered each other with their formidable shafts and the fight was, indeed, wonderful. Babhrumahana pierced his father's shoulder and the arrow then entered the earth. Feeling acute pain, Arjuna supported himself on his bow and appeared like one who had left his body. Coming to his senses he praised his son, Excellent, excellent, O mighty armed son of Chitrangada! On beholding this feat, I am pleased with you. I shall now release my arrows. Stand for a while and do not run away.

Arjuna then released many arrows, but they were cut up by his son. Arjuna then cut off the royal standard of the Manipur King and killed his horses. Babhrumahana was red hot with anger, and descending from his chariot, he fought his father on foot. He then released an arrow that pierced Arjuna's chest, entering deep within his body. The mighty son of Pandu then fell to the earth devoid of life. King Babhrumahana had also been pierced with many arrows, and upon seeing the fall of his father, he also fell to the ground unconscious. At that time Babhrumahana's mother, Chitrangada, appeared on the scene and lamented the death of Arjuna. When Ulupi again appeared, Chitrangada chastised her, Behold, O Ulupi, our husband slain in battle by my son. This fault lies on you. It is through your action that our husband now lies dead. If you have the power, bring him back to life so that we will not have to indulge in grief. Chitrangada then took her husband's feet in her lap and shed tears of grief.

At that time King Babhrumahana awoke from his unconscious state. Seeing his dead father and his weeping mother, he was pained at heart. He addressed his mother, Alas, this foremost wielder of weapons has been slain by me. Alas, his golden mail, which was cut from his body by my arrows, lies by his side. O great brahmanas, what atonement is there for one who kills his father in battle. I am a wretched and sinful person. O daughter of the Snake King, I accomplished what you desired. However, I am now unable to live any longer. If you are not willing to bring him back to life, then I will give up this body by fasting. Having made up his mind to fast until death, King Babhrumahana touched water and made the following statement, O Ulupi, I make the following vow. If my father does not rise up with his life, then I will give up this body by fasting. There is no atonement for killing one's father. Therefore, surely, I will have to dwell in hell.

When the King of Manipur had made his firm vow, he sat down on the ground in meditation. At that time Ulupi informed the King, Do not lament or take any unnecessary vows. I will revive your father. In my possession, I have a jewel that is capable of bringing anyone back to life. This great hero cannot be slain by the gods and demons combined. I have exhibited this illusion for your father's benefit. Do not think that you have committed any sin. It was for testing your prowess that this battle took place. I shall now revive Arjuna with this precious jewel.

Ulupi then approached Arjuna and touched the jewel to his chest. When she did, Arjuna rose up like one awaking from sleep. Witnessing his father return to life, Babhruvahana approached him and worshiped him with many prayers. The king of heaven, Indra, then showered flowers upon the earth and caused the celestial denizens to sound their instruments. In the heavens were heard the sounds, Well done! Well done! Arjuna then embraced his son and smelled his head. When he saw Chitrangada and Ulupi lamenting in the distance, Arjuna questioned his son, Why, O Babhruvahana, is there simultaneously joy, sorrow, and wonder in all directions? Please explain this to me. I desire to know what has brought these ladies to this field.

Babhruvahana replied, I think that you should question Ulupi in this regard.

Arjuna then turned to his wife and inquired from her, Why have you come here, O daughter of the snakes? Have you come here with some evil intention? I hope that neither I nor my son Babhruvahana have offended you in any way.

You have not offended me in any way, nor has your son. Ulupi replied. Do not be angry with me and listen patiently to the reason I have acted in the way I did. In the great battle of the Bharata princes, you had slain Shantanu's royal son, Bhishma, unfairly. He was not engaged in battle with you when he was slain. He had laid aside his weapons because of the presence of Shikhandin. Relying on Shikhandi's help, you were able to overthrow the mighty Bhishma. By acting in the way I did, I have vanquished the sinful reaction to the unfair killing of the grandsire. If this sinful reaction had not been eradicated, then you would have surely seen hell. After Bhishma's death, the Vasus came to the bank of the Ganges and called for the goddess by reciting various prayers. With her permission, they cursed you to die. When I informed my father of this, he went to the Vasus and asked that the curse be removed. The Vasus replied to him, Arjuna has a powerful son who is the ruler of Manipur. In battle his son will slay him. At that time Arjuna will be freed from this curse.' I have acted in the way I did to free you from this curse. Please do not be angry with me.

Hearing about the true situation from Ulupi, Vijaya (Arjuna) became joyful and said, I find all this most pleasing. Arjuna then ordered his son, The horse sacrifice of King Yudhishthira will take place on the full moon day in the month of Chaitra. Come there, O King, with your mother and your counselors. Babhruvahana agreed with his father's wishes. After Arjuna had been sufficiently worshiped by his son, he left that place and continued following the sacrificial horse.

The sacrificial horse proceeded all over the earth. The horse entered the kingdom of Maghadha that was formerly ruled by Jarasandha. The son of Jarasandha was Sahadeva. He had fought for the Pandavas at Kurukshetra and was killed. Sahadeva's son was Meghasandhi. Following the duties of a kshatriya, Meghasandhi came out and challenged Arjuna. When the son of Sahadeva was defeated, he agreed to become subservient to King Yudhishthira's desires.

Arjuna then entered the kingdom of the Chedis. The son of Shishupala was Sarabha. He also fought with Arjuna and was defeated. After defeating the King of the Chedis, the sacrificial horse proceeded to the kingdoms of the Kashis, the Angas, the Koshalas, the Kiratas and the Tanganas. Receiving respect and worship from these kingdoms, Arjuna changed his course. He entered the kingdom of Gandhara and fought with Shakuni's son who remembered his father's hatred for the Pandavas. After Arjuna had fought with him and defeated him, he headed for the kingdoms of the Yadus. King Ugrasena greeted Arjuna and offered him every kind of hospitality. The sacrificial horse then headed in the direction of Hastinapura.

Arjuna soon entered the beautiful city of Hastinapura and was greeted royally by the citizens. Yudhisthira was overjoyed at his brother's return, and heard from him how he had singlehandedly subjugated the whole world. The kings from all provinces on the planet Earth then came to Hastinapura and were respectfully received by Maharaja Yudhisthira. Lord Krishna, accompanied by His elder brother Balarama, came to the horse sacrifice of Maharaja Yudhisthira. By the grace of Lord Krishna, the sacrifice was completed and all were satisfied. The brahmanas were given many valuable articles in charity and even the lower classes were given ample food and clothing. Thus Maharaja Yudhisthira successfully performed three Ashvamedha horse sacrifices, and the Earth's kings were gratified by his humility.

Thus ends the Ashvamedha Parva.

## Ashramvasika Parva

### Dhritarastra Attains Liberation

As explained previously, Vidura had quit his brother's palace because of Duryodhana's offenses. While traveling on pilgrimage, Vidura received knowledge of the destination of the self from the great sage Maitreya and then returned to Hastinapura. He returned some thirty six years after the Kurukshetra war. Vidura felt that he had become contaminated due to the association of Duryodhana, Shakuni and others. He, therefore, did not go directly to Lord Krishna for protection. He desired to first purify himself by traveling to different places of pilgrimage. After receiving transcendental knowledge from Maitreya, he came back to Hastinapura to try to save his elder brother, who was at the fag end of his life. When Vidura returned to his brother's palace, all the inhabitants such as Maharaja Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, Dhritarastra, Satyaki, Sanjaya, Kripacharya, Kunti, Gandhari, Draupadi, Subhadra, Uttara, Kripa, many other wives of the Kauravas, and other ladies with children-all hurried to see him in great delight. It so appeared that they had regained their consciousness after a long period. They all offered their obeisances and welcomed each other with embraces. Due to anxieties and long separation, they all cried out of affection. King Yudhisthira then arranged to offer sitting accommodations and a reception. After Vidura ate sumptuously and took sufficient rest, he was comfortably seated. Then the King began to speak to him, and all who were present there listened. Maharaja Yudhisthira said, My uncle, do you remember how you always protected us, along with our mother, from all sorts of calamities? You partiality, like the wings of a bird, saved us from poisoning and arson. While traveling on the surface of the earth, how did you maintain your livelihood? At which holy places and pilgrimage sites did you render service? My lord, devotees like your good self are verily holy places personified. Because you carry the Personality of Godhead within your heart, you turn all places into places of pilgrimage. My uncle, you must have visited Dvaraka. In that holy place our friends and well-wishers, the descendants of Yadu, are always rapt in the service of the Lord Shri Krishna. you might have seen them or heard about them. Are they all living happily in their abodes?

Thus being questioned by Maharaja Yudhisthira, Mahatma Vidura gradually described everything he had personally experienced, except news of the annihilation of the Yadu dynasty. Vidura was very compassionate and could not stand to see the Pandavas distressed at any time. Therefore he did not disclose this unpalatable and unbearable incident because calamities come of their own accord. Thus Mahatma Vidura, being treated just like a godly person by his kinsmen, remained there for a certain period just to rectify the mentality of his eldest brother and in this way bring happiness to all the others.

Insurmountable, eternal time imperceptibly overcomes those who are too much attached to family affairs and are always engrossed in their thought. Mahatma Vidura knew all this, and therefore he addressed Dhritarastra, saying, My dear King, please leave here immediately. Do not delay. Just see how fear has overtaken you. This frightful situation cannot be remedied by any person in this material world. My Lord, it is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as eternal time that has approached us all. Whoever is under the influence of Supreme kala must surrender his most dear life, and what to speak of other things, such as wealth, honor, children, land and home. Your father, brother, well-wishers and sons are all dead and passed away. You yourself have expended the major portion of your life, your body is now overtaken by invalidity, and you are living in the home of another. You have been blind from your very birth, and recently you have become hard of hearing. Your memory is shortened, and your intelligence is disturbed. your teeth are loose, you liver is defective, and you are coughing up mucus. Alas, how powerful are the hopes of a living being to continue his life. Verily, you are living just like a household dog and are eating the remnants of food given by Bhima. There is no need to live a degraded life and subsist on the charity of those whom you tried to kill by arson and poisoning. You also insulted one of their wives and usurped their kingdom and wealth. Despite your unwillingness to die and your desire to live even at the cost of honor and prestige, your miserly body will certainly dwindle and deteriorate like an old garment. He is called undisturbed who goes to an unknown, remote place and, freed from all obligations, quits his material body when it has become useless. He is certainly first-class man who awakens and understands, either by himself or from others, the falsity and misery of this material world and thus leaves home and depends fully on the Personality of Godhead residing within his heart. Please, therefore, leave for the North immediately, without letting your relatives know, for soon that time will approach which will diminish the good qualities of men.

Thus Maharaja Dhritarastra, the scion of the Kuru family, firmly convinced by introspective knowledge, broke at once the strong network of family affection by his resolute determination. Thus he immediately left home to set out on the path of liberation, as directed by his younger brother Vidura. He left in the middle of the night unnoticed by anyone. The gentle and chaste Gandhari, who was the daughter of King Subala of Gandhara, followed her husband, seeing that he was going to the Himalaya Mountains, which are the delight of those who have accepted the staff of the renounced order like fighters who have accepted a good lashing from the enemy.

Maharaja Yudhisthira, whose enemy was never born, performed his daily morning duties by praying, offering fire sacrifice to the sun-god, and offering obeisances, grains, cows land and gold to the brahmanas. He then entered the palace to pay respects to the elderly. However, he could not find his mother, uncles or aunt, the daughter of King Subala. Maharaja Yudhisthira, full of anxiety, turned to Sanjaya, who was sitting there, and said, O Sanjaya, where is my mother, who always gave us protection after the death of her husband. Where is our uncle, who is old and blind? Where is my well-wisher, uncle Vidura, and aunt Gandhari, who is very afflicted due to all her son's demise? My uncle Dhritarastra was also very mortified due to the death of all his sons and grandsons. Undoubtedly I am very ungrateful.

Did he, therefore, take my offenses very seriously and, along with his wife, drown himself in the Ganges? When my father, Pandu, died, we were all small children, they were always our good well-wishers. Alas, where have they gone from here?

Because of compassion and mental agitation, Sanjaya, not having seen his own master, Dhritarastra, was aggrieved and could not properly reply to Maharaja Yudhisthira. First he slowly pacified his mind by intelligence, and wiping away his tears and thinking of the feet of his master, Dhritarastra, he began to reply to Maharaja Yudhisthira. My dear descendant of the Kuru dynasty, Sanjaya said, I have no information of your mother's determination or your two uncles or Gandhari. O King, I have been cheated by those great souls.

While Sanjaya was thus speaking, Shri Narada, the powerful devotee of the Lord, appeared on the scene carrying his tumburu. Maharaja Yudhisthira and his brothers received him properly by getting up from their seats and offering obeisances. Maharaja Yudhisthira said, O godly personality, I do not know where my mother and two uncles have gone. Nor can I find my ascetic aunt who is grief stricken by the loss of her sons. You are like a captain of a ship in a great ocean, and you can direct us to our destination.

Thus addressed, the godly personality, Devarshi Narada, greatest of the philosopher devotees, began to speak, O pious King, do not lament for anyone, for everyone is under the control of the Supreme Lord. Therefore all living beings and their leaders carry on worship to be well protected. It is He only who brings them together and disperses them. As a cow, bound through the nose by a long rope, is conditioned, so also human beings are bound by different Vedic injunctions and are conditioned to obey the orders of the Supreme. As a player sets up and disperses his playthings according to his own sweet will, so the supreme will of the Lord brings men together and separates them. O King, in all circumstances, whether you consider the soul to be an eternal principle, or the material body to be perishable, or everything to exist in the impersonal Absolute Truth, or everything to be an inexplicable combination of matter and spirit, feelings of separation are due to illusory affection and nothing more. Therefore, give up your anxiety due to ignorance of the self. You are now thinking of how they, who are helpless poor creatures, will exist without you. This gross material body made of five elements is already under the control of eternal time, action and the modes of material nature. How, then, can it, being already in the jaws of the serpent, protect others? Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands; those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong, and the general rule holds that one living being is food for another.

Therefore, O King, you should look to the Supreme Lord only, who is one without a second and who manifests Himself by different energies and is both within and without. That Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna, in the guise of all-devouring time has now descended on the earth to eliminate the envious from the world. The Lord has already performed His duties to help the demigods, and He is awaiting the rest. You Pandavas may wait as long as the Lord is here on earth. O King, your mother Kunti, your uncle Dhritarastra, his brother Vidura and his wife

Gandhari have gone to the southern side of the Himalaya mountains, which are shelters of the great sages. The place is called Saptasrota, because there the waters of the sacred Ganges were divided into seven branches. This was done for the satisfaction of the seven great rishis. On the banks of the Saptasrota, Dhritarastra is now engaged in beginning astanga-yoga by bathing three times daily, in the morning, noon and evening, by performing the Agni-hotra sacrifice with fire and by drinking only water. This helps one control the mind and the senses and frees one completely from thoughts of familial affection. One who has controlled the sitting postures and the breathing process can turn the senses toward the Absolute Personality of Godhead and thus become immune to the contaminations of the modes of material nature, namely mundane goodness, passion and ignorance. Dhritarastra will have to amalgamate his pure identity with intelligence and then merge into the Supreme Being with knowledge of his qualitative oneness, as a living entity, with the Supreme Brahman. Being freed from the blocked sky, he will have to rise to the spiritual sky. He will have to suspend all the actions of the senses, even from the outside, and will have to be impervious to interactions of the senses, which are influenced by the modes of material nature. After renouncing all material duties, he must become immovably established, beyond all sources of hindrances on the path. O King, he will quit his body, most probably on the fifth day from today. And his body will turn to ashes.

While outside observing her husband, who will burn in the fire of mystic power along with the thatched cottage, his chaste wife will enter the fire with rapt attention. Upon observing the forest area burning in flames, your mother Kunti will also enter into the fire to give up her life. Vidura, being affected with delight and grief, will then leave that place of sacred pilgrimage. He will travel to Prabhasa and leave his body in that holy place. Because he is always absorbed in thought of Lord Krishna, he will be received by the denizens of Pitriloka and installed in his original post. Having spoken thus, the great sage Narada, along with his vina, ascended into outer space. Yudhisthira kept his instruction in his heart and so was able to get rid of all lamentations.

Thus Ends the Ashramvasika Parva, entitled, Dhritarastra Attains Liberation.

## Mausala Parva

### The Curse Upon the Yadu Dynasty

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna, as well as His powerful brother, Balarama, executed the killing of many demons. The Yadu dynasty also helped in this regard. To further remove the burden of the earth, the Lord arranged for the great battle of Kurukshetra, which suddenly erupted in violence between the Kurus and the Pandavas. Previously, before the appearance of the Lord, He had ordered that the demigods appear in the pious families of the Yadus. However, some members of the Yadu dynasty saw the Lord as an ordinary human being. Because of their mundane vision of the Supreme Person, they considered themselves on the same level as the Lord. Because they took their birth in the Yadu dynasty, they had inconceivable strength, and thus they misunderstood Lord Krishna's supreme position. Having forgotten that Krishna was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they constituted a great burden. Consequently, it was then necessary for Lord Krishna to remove that burden from the face of the earth. Although many members, who were devoted to Krishna, died in this fratricidal war, they were returned to their original positions as universal demigods. Others, who were eternal associates of the Lord, returned to His Own abode. Thus the Lord fulfilled his promise in Bhagavad-gita that His devotee never perishes.

After the battle of Kurukshetra, Gandhari had cursed the Yadu dynasty to be destroyed by fratricide. She did this because she considered Lord Krishna to be the cause of her sons' death. This curse satisfied the Lord because He was considering how to remove His family from the face of the earth. The Supreme Lord, Shri Krishna, used the Yadu dynasty, which was protected by His own arms, to eliminate the kings, who with their armies, had been a burden to this earth.

Then the unfathomable Lord thought to Himself, "The abatement of the earth's great burden, eighteen akshauhinis, has now been effected with the help of Drona, Bhishma, Arjuna and Bhima. But what is this? There is still the invincible strength of the Yadu dynasty, born of Myself, which may be a more unbearable burden. No outside force could ever bring about the defeat of this family, the Yadu dynasty, whose members have always been fully surrendered to Me and are unrestricted in their opulence. But if I inspire within the dynasty a quarrel, it will act just like a fire created from the friction of bamboo in a grove, and then I shall achieve My real purpose and return to My eternal abode."

When the Supreme Almighty Lord, whose desire always comes to pass, had thus made up His mind, He withdrew his own family on the pretext of a curse spoken by an assembly of brahmanas. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is the reservoir of all beauty. His personal form is so attractive that it steals the eyes away from all other objects, which then seem devoid of beauty in comparison to Him.

When Lord Shri Krishna was on the earth, He attracted the eyes of all people. When Krishna spoke, His words attracted the minds of all who remembered them. By seeing the footprints of Lord Krishna, people became attached to Him, and thus they desired to become His most obedient servants. In this way Krishna very easily spread His glories, which are sung throughout the world by the most sublime and essential Vedic verses. Lord Krishna considered that simply by hearing and chanting those glories, conditioned souls born in the future would cross beyond the darkness of ignorance. Being satisfied with this arrangement, He left for His desired destination.

Once upon a time, the sages Visvamitra, Asita, Kanva, Durvasa, Bhrigu, Angira, Kashyapa, Vamadeva, Atri and Vashistha, along with Narada and others, performed devotional rituals that award abundant pious results, bring great happiness and take away the sins of Kali-yuga for the whole world by merely being recounted. The sages duly executed these rituals in the home of the chief Yadu, Vasudeva, the father of Lord Krishna. After Lord Krishna, who was staying in Vasudeva's home as time personified, respectfully sent the sages off at the conclusion of the ceremonies, they went to the holy place called Pindraka. While in that holy place, the princes of the Yadu dynasty had Samba, the son of Jambavati, dress up in a woman's garb. Playfully approaching the great sages gathered there, the princes grabbed hold of the sages' feet and impudently asked them, with feigned humility, "O learned brahmanas, this black-eyed pregnant woman has something to ask you, She is too embarrassed to inquire for herself. She is just about to give birth and is very desirous of having a son. Since all of you are great sages with infallible vision, please tell us whether her child will be a boy or a girl."

While the princes were thus joking in this way, the sages became angry. Narada then cursed them, "Fools! She will bear you an iron club that will destroy your entire dynasty." Narada could never have any ill feeling toward the members of the Yadu dynasty, since his Lord was Shri Krishna. Narada is never influenced by the modes of nature like passion or ignorance. Therefore, in cursing the Yadu dynasty, he was simply acting as an instrument of the Lord.

Upon hearing the curse of the sages, the terrified princes quickly uncovered Samba's belly, and indeed they observed that there was an iron club. The young men of the Yadu dynasty exclaimed, "Oh, what have we done? We are so unfortunate! What will our family members say to us?" Speaking thus and being very disturbed, they returned to their homes, taking the club with them. The luster of their faces completely faded. The Yadu princes brought the club into the royal assembly and described what had happened to King Ugrasena in the presence of all the Yadavas.

When the citizens of Dvaraka heard about the infallible curse of the brahmanas and saw the mace, they were astonished and fearful. King Ugrasena thought to himself, "Samba and others should not feel any shame or fear." Thus without consulting Lord Shri Krishna, he ordered the club ground into fragments and thrown into the water, along with a small iron lump that remained. A certain fish swallowed the iron lump, and the bits of iron, carried to the shore by the waves, implanted themselves there and grew into tall, sharp canes. The fish was caught in the ocean along with other

fish in a fisherman's net. The iron lump in the fish's stomach was taken by the hunter Jara, who fixed it as an arrowhead at the end of his shaft. Knowing fully the significance of all these events, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, though capable of reversing the brahmana's curse, did not wish to do so. Rather, in His form of time, He gladly sanctioned the events.

While the Vrishnis and the Andhakas were thus endeavoring to avoid the impending calamity, the embodied form of eternal time (Kala) wandered every day about their houses. He was terrible to behold. His head was bald, and his complexion was blackish. His eyes were fierce like fire. Sometimes he was seen by the Yadus as he peered into their houses. The mighty bowmen of the Vrishnis shot hundreds and thousands of arrows at him, but none on these succeeded in piercing him, for he was none else than the destroyer of all creatures. Day by day strong winds blew, and there were many awful, evil omens that arose, foretelling the destruction of the Yadu dynasty. The streets swarmed with rats and mice. Earthen pots were broken from no apparent cause. At night, the rats and mice ate away the hair and nails of sleeping men. Crows uttered inauspicious sounds within the houses of the Vrishnis, and they did not cease day or night. Many birds, impelled by death, appeared that were pale in complexion. Asses took birth from cows, and elephants took birth from mules. Cats were born of dogs, and mice took birth from the mongoose. The Vrishnis committed sinful acts and did not feel any shame upon doing so. They showed disregard for the brahmanas, demigods and the deities. They insulted and humiliated their seniors and preceptors. Only Lord Krishna and Balarama acted otherwise. Wives deceived their husbands, and husbands deceived their wives. The sun seemed surrounded by headless trunks of human form.

Beholding the inauspicious omens, Hrishikesha, the Lord, understood that the thirty-sixth year had come, and that the curse of Gandhari and the brahmanas was now taking effect. He then ordered an assembly of the Yadus in the Sudharma imperial court. The Yadus fixed their eyes upon the transcendental form of the Lord and were unable to withdraw them. Once that form entered their hearts and became fixed there, it would never depart. What to speak of acquiring fame, the great poets who described the beauty of the Lord's form would have their words invested with transcendently pleasing attraction. And by seeing that form on Arjuna's chariot, all the warriors on the battlefield of Kurukshetra attained the liberation of gaining a spiritual body similar to the Lord's.

When all the Yadus had gathered in the Sudharma royal court, Lord Krishna spoke the following words, "O leaders of the Yadu dynasty, please note all these terrible omens that have appeared in Dvaraka just like the flags of death. We should not remain here a moment longer. The women, children and old men should leave this city and go to Sankhoddhara. We shall go to Prabhasa-kshetra, where the river Saraswati flows toward the west. There we should bathe for purification, fast, and fix our minds in meditation. We should then worship the demigods by bathing their images, anointing them with sandalwood pulp, and presenting them various offerings. After performing these pious rituals with the help of greatly learned brahmanas, we will worship those brahmanas by offering them cows, land, gold, clothing, elephants, horses, chariots and dwelling places. This is indeed the

appropriate process for counteracting the evil omens we see, and it is sure to bring about the highest good fortune. Such worship of the demigods, brahmanas and cows can earn the highest birth for all living entities."

Having heard these words from Lord Krishna, the enemy of Madhu, the elders of the Yadu Dynasty gave their assent, saying, "So be it." After crossing over the ocean in boats, they proceeded on chariots to Prabhasa. There, with great devotion, the Yadavas performed the religious ceremonies according to the instructions of the Supreme Godhead, their personal Lord. They also performed various other auspicious rituals. When their intelligence had been covered by Providence, they liberally indulged in drinking the sweet Maireya beverage, which can completely intoxicate the mind. Then Satyaki, intoxicated on wine, began laughing and insulting Kritavarman in the midst of the Yadu assembly. He scorned him as follows, "What kshatriya is there who, armed with weapons, would slay men locked in the embraces of sleep and, therefore, already dead? Hence, O son of Hridika, the Yadavas will never tolerate what you have done."

When Satyaki had spoken these critical words, Pradyumna, the foremost chariot fighter, applauded them expressing his disregard for the son of Hridika. Highly incensed at this, Kritavarman spoke harshly with Satyaki, "You are professing yourself to be a hero, but you have slain the defenseless Bhurishravas, who was sitting in meditation."

Hearing this criticism of Satyaki, Lord Krishna cast an angry glance at Kritavarman. Then Satyaki reminded Lord Krishna that Kritavarman had taken part in the assassination plot of Satrajit, the father of Satyabhama. Remembering her father's death, Satyabhama came to her husband's side and began shedding tears. Rising up in rage, Satyaki pointed at Kritavarman and exclaimed, "I swear by truth that I shall soon cause this one to follow the path taken by the five sons of Draupadi, Dhristadyumna, and Shikhandi. Your period of life and fame has come to an end!" Having taken this oath, Satyaki rushed at Kritavarman and severed his head with a sword in the very sight of Keshava. Satyaki then began to strike down others present, and Lord Krishna ran to stop him.

The Bhojas and Andhakas were furious that Kritavarman was slain, and they attacked Satyaki intending to kill him. Pradyumna rose to help Satyaki but it was too late. Both of them were slain by superior numbers. Infuriated, the Yadus seized their bows, arrows, swords, ballas, maces, lances and spears and attacked one another on the shore at Prabhasa. Completely abandoning their natural friendship, the members of the various Yadu clans, the Dasharas, the Vrishnis, the Andhakas, the Bhojas, the Satvatas, Madhus, the Arbudas, the Mathuras, the Surasenas etc. all slaughtered one another. Thus bewildered, sons fought with fathers, brothers with brothers, nephews with maternal and paternal uncles, and grandsons with grandfathers. Friends fought with friends, and well wishers fought with well wishers. In this way intimate friends and relatives killed one another. When all their bows and weapons had been exhausted, they seized tall stalks of cane on the shore of the ocean. When they did, these stalks of canes turned into iron rods as hard as thunderbolts. With these weapons the warriors began attacking one another again

and again. When Lord Krishna tried to stop them, they attacked Him as well. In their confused state they also mistook Lord Balarama for an enemy. With weapons in hand they ran toward Him to kill Him. Lord Krishna and Balarama became furious, and picking up stalks of cane, they killed the remnants of the Yadu dynasty. When the slaughter was finished there was approximately 560,000,000 members of the Yadu dynasty lying dead at Prabhasa. The only two left were Babhru and Daruka. They approached Lord Krishna and spoke to him the following words, "O Lord, a large number of men have been slain. Let us leave this area and follow the path of Lord Balarama."

Then Lord Krishna, Babhru, and Daruka began to search for Lord Baladeva, the son of Rohini. They found him sitting under a tree near the ocean. After finding His elder brother, Lord Krishna ordered Daruka, "Go to the Kurus and inform Arjuna of this great slaughter. Arjuna should come here as soon as possible." After Daruka had gone away, Lord Krishna said to Babhru, "Go quickly to the city of Dvaraka and protect the ladies from robbers and thieves. Offer protection to the old and the young." Thus commanded by Lord Krishna, Babhru, still intoxicated from wine and depressed from the slaughter of his kinsmen, started for Dvaraka. As soon as he had gone a short distance, an iron bolt attached to a hunter's mallet struck Babhru, who was included in the curse of the brahmanas.

Beholding Babhru slain, Lord Krishna said to Balarama, "Wait here till I place the ladies of Dvaraka under proper protection." Lord Krishna then entered Dvaraka and informed the remnants of His family of the fratricide at Prabhasa. Lord Krishna addressed His father, "Please protect the ladies of our house till Arjuna comes. Just near the ocean in a forest Balarama waits for Me. I shall practice penances and austerities with Him. This massacre of the Yadus was similar to the slaughter of the Kurus at Kurukshetra. It is impossible for Me to live without the Yadavas as My companions."

Lord Krishna touched the feet of His father, and left the palace to the sounds of crying women. Lord Krishna then proceeded to the ocean and saw His brother sitting in meditation. Suddenly, a great white snake issued from His mouth, and ascending that snake, He went back to the spiritual world. Lord Krishna, witnessing the ascendance of His brother to Vaikuntha, sat down under a nearby Pippala tree. The Lord was exhibiting his brilliantly effulgent four armed form, the radiance of which, just like a smokeless fire, dissipated the darkness in all directions. His complexion was the color of a dark blue cloud, and His effulgence the color of molten gold. His all auspicious form bore the mark of the Shrivatsa. A beautiful smile graced His lotus face. Locks of dark blue hair adorned His head. His lotus petal eyes were very attractive, and His shark shaped earrings glittered. He wore silken garments, an ornamental belt, sacred thread, bracelets, and arm ornaments, along with a crown, Kaustubha jewel, necklaces, anklets and other royal emblems. Around His neck were flower garlands, and His personal weapons were next to Him in their embodied forms. As He sat He held His foot with its lotus red sole on His right thigh. At that time a hunter named Jara had approached that place, and mistook the Lord's foot for the face of a deer. Thinking that he had found his prey, Jara released an arrow which he had fashioned from the remaining iron fragment of Samba's club. The

arrow did not actually pierce the Lord's foot but merely grazed it. Seeing the four armed form of the Lord, the hunter became terrified that he had made some kind of offense, fell down at the lotus feet of the Lord, and prayed, "O Lord Madhusudana, I am a most sinful person. I have committed this act out of ignorance. O purest Lord, O Uttamasloka, please forgive this sinner. O Lord Vishnu, the learned say that for any man constant remembrance of You will destroy the darkness of ignorance. O master, I have made a great offense. Therefore, O Lord of Vaikuntha, please kill this sinful hunter of animals, immediately, so he may not commit offenses against divine personalities again. Neither Brahma, nor any of his sons headed by Rudra, or any of the great sages who are masters of Vedic mantras, can understand the function of your mystic power. Because your illusory potency has covered their sight, they remain ignorant of how Your mystic power works. Therefore, what can I, a low born person, possibly say."

Replying to the hunter the Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "My dear Jara, do not fear. Please get up. What has been done is actually my desire. With my permission go now to the abode of the pious, the spiritual world." So instructed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, who assumes His transcendental body by His own will, the hunter circumambulated the Lord three times and bowed down to Him. The hunter then ascended a Vaikuntha airplane which took him to the spiritual world.

After this incident, Daruka suddenly appeared because he could not bear separation from the Lord. As he approached that place where the Lord was sitting, he could perceive the aroma of Tulasi leaves in the breeze, and followed the direction of the scent. Upon seeing Lord Krishna sitting under a banyan tree, surrounded by His shining weapons, Daruka could not control the loving affection he felt in his heart. Tears fell from his eyes as he descended from the chariot and fell at the Lord's lotus feet. Daruka said, "Just as on a moonless night people are plunged into darkness and cannot find their way, now that I have lost sight of Your lotus feet, my Lord, I have lost my vision and am wandering blindly in darkness. I cannot find my direction, nor can I find any peace."

While Daruka was speaking, the Lord's chariot, horses, and emblem, which was marked with the sign of Garuda, ascended into the sky. All the Lord's divine weapons also ascended following the path of the chariot. Daruka was most astonished to see all this, and the Lord compassionately spoke to him, "O Suta, go to Dvaraka and tell our family members how Lord Baladeva has disappeared. Also tell them of my present condition. You and your family members should not remain in Dvaraka, because once I have abandoned that city, it will be inundated by the ocean. Whatever family members are left should be gathered together, and under Arjuna's protection leave for Indraprastha. My dear Daruka, you should be firmly fixed in devotion to Me. Remain fixed in spiritual knowledge and unattached to material considerations. Understanding these pastimes to be a display of My illusory potency, You should remain peaceful." Thus ordered, Daruka circumambulated the Lord and offered obeisances to Him again and again. He placed Lord Krishna's lotus feet on His head, and then with a sad heart went back to the city.

At this time Lord Brahma arrived at Prabhasa along with Lord Shiva and his consorts, the sages, the Prajapatis and all demigods headed by Indra. The forefathers, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Vidyadharas and great serpents also came along with the Charanas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Kinnaras, Apsaras, and the relatives of Garuda, greatly anxious to see the departure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Approaching Prabhasa, they all glorified the Lord Sauri, Krishna. Crowding the sky with their many airplanes, they showered flowers with great devotion. Seeing Lord Brahma and the other demigods before Him. Lord Krishna closed His lotus eyes, and fixed His mind within Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Without employing the mystic meditation to burn up His body, Lord Krishna entered His own abode. As soon as Lord Krishna left the earth, truth, religion, faithfulness, glory and beauty immediately followed Him. Kettledrums resounded in the heavens, and flowers showered from the sky. Most of the demigods and higher beings lead by Lord Brahma could not see Lord Krishna as He was entering His own abode., since He did not reveal His movements. But some of them did catch sight of Him, and they were extremely amazed.

After the Lord had disappeared, Daruka returned to Dvaraka and threw himself at the feet of Vasudeva and Ugrasena. He drenched their feet with his tears, lamenting the loss of Lord Krishna. Daruka delivered the account of the total destruction of the Vrishnis, and upon hearing this, all became deeply distraught in their hearts and stunned with tears and sorrow.

Meanwhile, in Hastinapura, Yudhisthira had sent Arjuna to find out the next plans of the Lord. Upon reaching Dvaraka, Arjuna learned of the destruction of the Yadu Dynasty and the disappearance of the Lord. Proceeding to the city of the Vrishnis, Arjuna saw the city to be like a woman bereft of her husband. Seeing that Partha had come to protect them, the ladies sent up loud wails. Arjuna became greatly afflicted upon seeing the many wives of Lord Krishna without their protector. Rukmini and Satya fell down on the ground next to Arjuna and uttered loud cries of grief. Arjuna then began to glorify the superhuman activities of the Lord, and thus he managed to pacify them to some extent. He then proceeded to see his maternal uncle Vasudeva. Arjuna found the father of Lord Krishna lying on the ground and burning in separation from his son. Upon seeing Arjuna, Vasudeva embraced him and wept aloud remembering Lord Krishna. Vasudeva said, "Without beholding my son who subjugated the whole earth and defeated the Daityas a hundred times, I do not desire to live. No doubt the curse of the rishis is the cause of the destruction of this dynasty. How could the slayer of Madhu look on with indifference at the slaughter of His kinsmen. Yourself, Narada and the rishis know Him to be the eternal Lord Vishnu. My son must have allowed all this to happen. He is the Lord of the universe. He did not, however, wish to falsify the curses of Gandhari and the rishis. Thinking of My two sons and of the destruction of my Kinsmen, I am abstaining from food or drink. I shall neither eat nor live. You should now accomplish all that Krishna wanted you to do. This kingdom with all its wealth and women is now yours. As regards to myself, I shall follow the path of my son for I cannot bear His separation."

Arjuna then replied to his uncle, "O Vasudeva, I am unable to look upon this earth without the presence of my friend Krishna. King Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva and Draupadi have the same mentality as I do. The time for our departure from this world is at hand. However, I shall first of all remove the women of Dvaraka to the city of Indraprastha." Arjuna then addressed Daruka, "I wish to see without delay the remnants of Vrishni house." Arjuna then entered the Sudharma assembly house. Very soon the leading heroes of the Yadu dynasty, who were left alive, entered the assembly hall. There also came many brahmanas, leading citizens and ministers of state. Surrounding the son of Kunti, they cried in deep separation from their master. With great effort Arjuna addressed them, "I shall take away the remnants of the Vrishnis and the Andhakas. The sea will soon engulf this city. Equip your chariots and place upon them all your wealth. The great grandson of Krishna, Vajra will be the King of Mathura. We shall depart from Dvaraka on the seventh day from today."

After hearing the instructions from Partha, the Vrishnis and the Andhakas began to make preparations to leave with Arjuna. Arjuna spent that night in one of the palaces of Lord Krishna and was overwhelmed with grief and lamentation. When the morning dawned, it was learned that Vasudeva had left his body and attained the spiritual world. A loud and heart rending sound was heard in the palace of Vasudeva. Devaki, Bhadra, Rohini and Madira threw themselves on the body of their lord. Arjuna then arranged for the last funeral rites to be performed and the four wives of Vasudeva ascended the funeral pyre to attain the same destination as their husband.

Arjuna then proceeded to Prabhasa where the fratricide of the Yadu dynasty took place. Seeing the slaughter of so many men for whom he had such great affection, he became despondent. He then arranged for the proper funeral rites to be performed for all those dead heroes. He found the bodies left by Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama, and he caused the shraddha rites to be performed for those two Personalities of Godhead. The body that was left by the Lord was considered by great saintly persons to be the Universal form of the Lord. Lord Krishna left a body like an ordinary mortal to satisfy those atheistic men who looked upon the Lord as an ordinary human being.

After the seventh day had passed, Arjuna led the procession of the Vrishnis and Andhakas out of the city of Dvaraka. Most of the procession were women, the aged and children. Arjuna personally took care of the sixteen thousand wives of Lord Krishna. The widows of the Vrishni, Bhoja and Andhaka heroes numbered many millions. When all had left Dvaraka, the ocean suddenly engulfed the whole city. The waves of the ocean smashed the walls of the beautiful city and completely engulfed the celestial mansions, parks, palaces and market places. The place of pastimes of the Supreme Lord was now removed from the face of the earth.

As the great procession was passing through the various provinces, a group of robbers numbering many thousands attacked the caravan and began to abduct the beautiful women and plunder the wealth. Urged on by the course of time, they fell upon the procession frightening it with loud shouts. The son of Kunti, Arjuna, seeing

the situation at hand, ordered the robbers, "You sinful persons, stop this action if you desire to live! I will sever your limbs and send you to the abode of Yamaraja." Enraged, Arjuna endeavored to string the Gandiva bow. However, he did so with great difficulty. The robbers disregarded Arjuna's command and continued to plunder the women of Dvaraka and its wealth. Arjuna then began to think of his celestial weapons, but they would not come to his mind. Beholding the loss of his strength and the non appearance of his weapons, he became ashamed. The Vrishni warriors were also not able to stop those robbers from taking away the women and the wealth. Arjuna managed to strike the robbers with arrows from his Gandiva bow, but soon his arrows became exhausted. In former days his shafts had been inexhaustible. Now, however, they proved otherwise. The son of Indra then began to strike the robbers with the horn of his bow, but the mlecchas, in the very sight of Partha, took away those ladies of the Vrishni and Andhaka dynasties. Regarding all of this as the work of destiny, he breathed heavily. He then proceeded with the remnants of that procession and soon reached Kurukshetra. He established the son of Kritavarman in the city of Marttikavat with the remnant of the women of the Bhoja King. On the banks of the Saraswati, Arjuna installed the son of Satyaki and handed over to his care many of the old men and women of Dvaraka. The sovereignty of Mathura was given to Vajra, the great grandson of Lord Krishna. Rukmini, Saivya, Himavati, and Jambavati ascended the funeral pyre unable to tolerate the separation of their Lord. Satyabhama and many other queens of Lord Krishna entered the forest to practice austerities.

Arjuna then went to the ashrama of Vyasa and offered his obeisances unto the great sage. He explained to his grandfather about the disappearance of the Yadu dynasty and about the departure of the Lord. He also informed Vyasadeva about the robbers who had stolen many of the women from the procession, and how he was powerless to stop them. Arjuna said, "Thinking repeatedly of the carnage of the Yadava warriors and of the departure of Lord Krishna, I do not desire to live in this world. Alas, bereft of Govinda, I have nothing left to live for. O best among men, please tell me what I should do now, for I wander aimlessly with an empty heart."

Vyasadeva replied, "The mighty chariot fighters of the Yadu dynasty have been consumed by the curse of the brahmanas. O chief of the Kurus, you should not grieve for them. It was ordained by providence. It was Govinda who removed them from the face of the earth. Do not think otherwise. The Lotus-eyed Lord Krishna, having lightened the burden of the earth, has ascended to His own abode. You and your brothers have also assisted the Lord in killing many demons and establishing world peace. O foremost of the Kuru race, I consider you as crowned with success. The time for your departure from the world has now come. O Bharata, the time has now come for you to attain the highest goal of life. You should now follow the Lord to His Own abode. In my opinion this is the most beneficial course of action." Having heard the advice of Vyasa, Arjuna left that place and entered the city of Hastinapura.

Thus Ends the Mausala Parva.

## Mahaprasthanika Parva

### The Pandavas Return to the Spiritual World

While Arjuna had been away in Dvaraka, a few months had passed and still he did not return. Maharaja Yudhisthira then began to observe some inauspicious omens, which were very fearful. He saw that the direction of eternal time had changed, and this was disturbing. There were disruptions in the seasonal regularities. The people in general had become very greedy, angry and deceitful. And he saw that they were adopting foul means of livelihood. All ordinary transactions and dealings became polluted with cheating, even between friends. And in familial affairs, there was always misunderstanding between fathers, mothers and sons, between well-wishers, and between brothers. Even between husband and wife there was always strain and quarrel. In the course of time it came to pass that people in general became accustomed to greed, anger, pride, etc.

Maharaja Yudhisthira, observing all these omens, spoke to his younger brother, Bhima "I sent Arjuna to Dvaraka to meet his friends and to learn from Lord Krishna about His recent pastimes and activities. Since he departed, seven months have passed, yet he has not returned. I do not know factually how things are going there. Is He going to quit His earthly pastimes, as Devarshi Narada indicated? Has that time already arrived? From Lord Krishna only, all our kingly opulence, good wives, lives, progeny, control over our subjects, victory over our enemies, and future accommodations in the higher planets have become possible. All this is due to His causeless mercy upon us. Just see, O man with a tiger's strength, how many miseries due to celestial influences, earthly reactions and bodily pains--all very dangerous in themselves--are foreboding danger in the near future by deluding our intelligence. The left side of my body, my thighs arms and eyes are all quivering again and again. I am having heart palpitations due to fear. All this indicates undesirable happenings. Just see, O Bhima, how the she-jackal cries at the rising sun and vomits fire, and how the dog barks at me fearlessly. O Bhimasena, tiger amongst men, now useful animals like cows are passing me on my left side, and lower animals like the asses are circumambulating me. My horses appear to weep upon seeing me. Just see! This pigeon is like a messenger of death. The shrieks of the owls and their rival crows make my heart tremble. It appears that they want to make a void of the whole universe. Just see how the smoke encircles the sky. It appears that the earth and mountains are throbbing. Just hear the cloudless thunder and see the bolts from the blue. The wind blows violently, blasting dust everywhere and creating darkness. Clouds are raining everywhere with bloody disasters. The rays of the sun are declining, and the stars appear to be fighting amongst themselves. Confused living entities appear to be ablaze and weeping. Rivers, tributaries, ponds, reservoirs and the mind are all perturbed. Butter no longer ignites fire. What is this extraordinary time? What is going to happen?

The calves do not suck the teats of the cows, nor do the cows give milk. They are standing, crying, tears in their eyes, and the bulls take no pleasure in the pasturing grounds. The Deities seem to be crying in the temple, lamenting and perspiring. They seem about to leave. All the cities, villages, towns, gardens, mines and hermitages are now devoid of beauty and bereft of happiness. I do not know what sort of calamities are now awaiting us. I think that all these earthly disturbances indicate some greater loss to the good fortune of the world. The world was fortunate to have been marked with the footprints of the lotus feet of the Lord. These signs indicate that this will no longer be."

While Maharaja Yudhishthira was speaking to Bhima, Arjuna came back from the city of the Yadus. When he bowed at his feet, the King saw that his dejection was unprecedented. His head was down, and tears glided from his lotus eyes. Seeing Arjuna pale due to heartfelt anxieties, the King, remembering the indications of the sage Narada, questioned him in the following words, "My dear brother, please tell me whether our friends and relatives of the Madhu, Bhoja, Dasarha, Arha, Satvata, Andhaka, and Yadu families are passing their days in happiness. Is my respectable grandfather Surasena in a happy mood? And are my maternal uncle Vasudeva and his younger brothers all doing well? His seven wives headed by Devaki, are all sisters. Are they and their sons and daughters-in-law all happy? Are Ugrasena, whose son was the mischievous Kamsa, and his younger brother still living? Are Hridika and his son Kritavarman happy? Are Akrura, Jayanta, Gada, Sharana and Satrujit all happy? How is Balarama, the Personality of Godhead and the protector of devotees? How is Pradyumna, the great general of the Vrishni family? Is He happy? And is Aniruddha, the plenary expansion of the Personality of Godhead, faring well? Are all the chieftain sons of Lord Krishna, such as Susena, Carudeshna, Samba the son of Jambavati, and Rishabha, along with their sons, all doing well? Also, Shrutadeva, Uddhava and others, Nanda, Sunanda and other leaders of liberated souls who are constant companions of the Lord are protected by Lord Balarama and Krishna. Are they all doing well in their respective functions? Do they, who are all eternally bound in friendship with us, remember our welfare? Is Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who gives pleasure to the cows, the senses and the brahmanas, who is very affectionate towards His devotees, enjoying the pious assembly at Dvaraka Puri surrounded by friends? The original Personality of Godhead, the enjoyer, and Balarama, the primeval Lord Ananta, are staying in the ocean of the Yadu dynasty for the welfare, protection and general progress of the entire universe. And the members of the Yadu dynasty, being protected by the arms of the Lord, are enjoying life like the residents of the spiritual sky. Simply by administering comforts at the lotus feet of the Lord, which is the most important of all services, the queens at Dvaraka, headed by Satyabhama, induced the Lord to conquer the demigods. Thus the queens enjoy things which are prerogatives of the wives of the controller of thunderbolts. The great heroes of the Yadu dynasty, being protected by the strong arms of Lord Shri Krishna, always remain fearless in every respect. And therefore their feet traverse the Sudharma assembly house, which the best demigods deserved but which was taken away from them.

\_"My dear brother," Yudhisthira continued, "please tell me whether your health is all right. You appear to have lost your bodily luster. Is this due to others disrespecting and neglecting you because of your long stay at Dvaraka? Has someone addressed you with unfriendly words or threatened you? Could you not give charity to one who asked, or could you not keep your promise to someone? You are always the protector of the deserving living beings, such as brahmanas, children, cows, women and the diseased. Could you not give them protection when they approached you for shelter? Have you contacted a woman of impeccable character, or have you not properly treated a deserving woman? Or have you been defeated on the way by someone who is inferior or equal to you? Have you not taken care of old men and boys who deserve to dine with you? Have you left them and taken your meals alone? Have you committed some unpardonable mistake which is considered to be abominable? Or is it that you are feeling empty for all time because you might have lost your most intimate friend, Lord Krishna? O my brother Arjuna, I can think of no other reason for your becoming so dejected."

Arjuna, the celebrated friend of Lord Krishna, was grief stricken because of his strong feeling of separation from Krishna. Due to grief, Arjuna's mouth and lotus-like heart had dried up. Therefore his body lost all luster. Now, remembering the Supreme Lord, he could hardly utter a word in reply. With great difficulty he checked the tears of grief that smeared his eyes. He was very distressed because Lord Krishna was out of his sight, and he increasingly felt affection for Him.

Remembering Lord Krishna and His well wishes, benefactions, intimate familial relations and His chariot driving, Arjuna, overwhelmed and breathing very heavily, began to speak, "O King! The Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari, who treated me exactly like an intimate friend has left me alone. Thus my astounding power, which astonished even the demigods, is no longer with me. I have just lost Him whose separation for a moment would render all the universes unfavorable and void, like bodies without life. Only by His merciful strength was I able to vanquish all the lusty princes assembled at the palace of King Drupada for the selecting Draupadi in marriage. With my bow and arrow I could pierce the fish target and thereby gain the hand of Draupadi. Because He was near to me, it was possible for me to conquer with great dexterity the powerful King of heaven, Indradeva, along with his demigod associates and thus enable the fire-god to devour the Khandava forest. And only by His grace was the demon named Maya saved from the blazing Khandava Forest, and thus we could build our assembly house of wonderful architectural workmanship, where all the princes assembled during the performance of Rajasuya sacrifice and paid you tributes.

"Your respectable younger brother, who possesses the strength of ten thousand elephants, killed, by His grace, Jarasandha, whose feet were worshiped by many kings. These Kings had been brought for sacrifice in Jarasandha's Mahabhairava sacrifice, but they were thus released. Later they paid tribute to Your Majesty. It was He only who loosened the hair of all the wives of the miscreants who dared open the cluster of your Queen's hair, which had been nicely dressed and sanctified for the great Rajasuya sacrificial ceremony. At that time she fell down at the feet of Lord Krishna with tears in her eyes. During our exile, Durvasa muni, who eats with his ten

thousand disciples, intrigued with our enemies to put us in dangerous trouble. At that time He, Lord Krishna, simply by accepting the remnants of food, saved us. By His accepting food thus, the assembly of munis, while bathing in the river, felt sumptuously fed. And all the three worlds were also satisfied.

Arjuna continued, "It was by His influence only that in a fight I was able to astonish the great Lord Shiva and his wife, the daughter of mount Himalaya. Thus Lord Shiva became pleased with me and awarded me his own weapon. Other demigods also delivered their respective weapons to me, and in addition I was able to reach the heavenly planets in the present body and was allowed a half-elevated seat. When I stayed as a guest in the heavenly planets, all the heavenly demigods, including King Indradeva, took shelter of my arms, which were marked with the Gandiva bow, to kill the demon named Nivatakavacha. O King, descendant of Ajamidha, at the present moment I am bereft of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by whose influence I was so powerful.

"The military strength of the Kauravas was like an ocean in which there dwelled many invincible existences, and thus it was insurmountable. But because of His friendship, I, seated on the chariot, was able to cross over it. And only by His grace was I able to regain the cows and also collect by force many helmets of the kings which were bedecked with jewels that were sources of all brilliance. It was He only who withdrew the duration of life from everyone and who, in the battlefield, withdrew the speculative power and strength of enthusiasm from the great military phalanx made by the Kauravas, headed by Bhishma, Karna, Drona, Salya, etc. Their arrangement were more than adequate, but He Lord Shri Krishna, while going forward, did all this. Great generals like Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Bhurishravas, Susharma, Salya, Jayadratha, and Bahlika all directed their invincible weapons against me. But by Lord Shri Krishna's grace they could not even touch a hair on my head. Similarly, Prahlada Maharaja, the supreme devotee of Lord Nrisimhadeva, was unaffected by the weapons the demons used against him. It was by His mercy only that my enemies neglected to kill me when I descended from my chariot to get water for my thirsty horses. And it was due to my lack of esteem for my Lord that I dared engage Him as my chariot driver, for He is worshiped and offered service by the best men to attain salvation.

"O King! His joking and frank talks were pleasing and beautifully decorated with smiles. His addresses unto me as 'O son of Pritha, O friend, O son of the Kuru Dynasty,' and all such heartiness are now remembered by me, and thus I am overwhelmed. Generally both of us used to live together and sleep, sit and loiter together. And at the time of advertising oneself for acts of chivalry, sometimes, if there were any irregularity, I use to reproach Him by saying, 'My friend, You are very truthful.' Even in those hours when His value was minimized, He, being the Supreme Soul, used to tolerate all those utterings of mine, excusing me exactly as a true friend excuses his true friend, or a father excuses his son.

"O Emperor," Arjuna continued, "now I am separated from my friend and dearest well-wisher, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore my heart appears to be void of everything. In His absence I have been defeated by a number of infidel

cowherds men while I was guarding Lord Krishna's wives. I have the very same Gandiva bow, the same arrows, the same chariot drawn by the same horses, and I use them as the same Arjuna to whom all the kings offered their due respects. But Lord Krishna's absence, all of them, at a moment's notice, have become null and void. It is exactly like offering clarified butter on ashes, accumulating money with a magic wand or sowing seeds on barren land. O King, since you have asked me about our friends and relatives in the city of Dvaraka, I will inform you that all of them were cursed by the brahmanas, and as a result they all became intoxicated on rice wine and fought among themselves with sticks, not even recognizing one another. Now all but four or five of them are dead and gone. Factually this is all due to the supreme will of the Lord, the Personality of Godhead. Sometimes people kill one another, and at other times they protect one another. O King, as in the ocean the bigger and stronger aquatics swallow up the smaller and weaker ones, so also the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to lighten the burden of the earth, has engaged the stronger Yadu to kill the weaker, and the bigger Yadu to kill the smaller. Now I am attracted to those instructions imparted to me by the Personality of Godhead because they are impregnated with instructions for relieving the burning heart in all circumstances of time and space."

Thus being deeply absorbed in thinking of the instructions of the Lord, which were imparted in the great intimacy of friendship, and in thinking of His lotus feet, Arjuna's mind became pacified and free from all material contamination. Arjuna's constant remembrance of the lotus feet of Lord Shri Krishna rapidly increased his devotion, and as a result all the trash in his thoughts subsided. Because of the Lord's pastimes and activities and because of His absence, it appeared that Arjuna forgot the instructions left by the Personality of Godhead. But factually this was not the case, and again he became the lord of his senses. Because of his possessing spiritual assets, the doubts of duality were completely cut off. Thus he was freed from the three modes of material nature and placed in transcendence. There was no longer any chance of his becoming entangled in birth and death, for he was freed from material form.

When the Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna, left this earth planet in His selfsame form, from that very day Kali, who had already partially appeared, became fully manifest to create inauspicious conditions for those who are endowed with a poor fund of knowledge. Maharaja Yudhisthira was intelligent enough to understand the influence of the age of Kali, characterized by increasing avarice, falsehood, cheating and violence throughout the capital, state, home and among individuals. So he wisely prepared himself to leave home, and he dressed himself accordingly. In the capital of Hastinapura, he enthroned his grandson, Parikshit, who was trained and equally qualified, as the emperor and master of all land bordered by the seas. Then he posted Vajra, the son of Aniruddha, at Mathura as the King of Surasena. Afterwards Maharaja Yudhisthira performed a Prajapatya sacrifice and placed in himself the fire for quitting household life.

Maharaja Yudhisthira at once relinquished all his garments, belt and ornaments of the royal order and became completely disinterested and unattached to everything. Maharaja Yudhisthira dressed himself in torn clothing, gave up eating all solid foods,

voluntarily became dumb and let his hair hang loose. All this combined to make him look like an urchin or madman with no occupation. He did not depend on his brothers for anything. And, just like a deaf man, he heard nothing. He then started for the north, treading the path accepted by his forefathers and great men, to devote himself completely to the thought of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And he lived in that way wherever he went.

The younger brothers of Maharaja Yudhisthira observed that the age of Kali had already arrived throughout the world and that the citizens of the kingdom were already affected by irreligious practice. Therefore they decided to follow in the footsteps of their elder brother. They all had performed all the principles of religion and as a result rightly decided that the lotus feet of the Lord Shri Krishna are the supreme goal of all. Therefore they meditated upon His lotus feet without interruption. Draupadi also saw that her husbands, without caring for her, were leaving home. She knew well about Lord Vasudeva, Krishna, the Personality of Godhead. Thus she followed her husbands wherever they went.

The citizens tried to persuade the Pandavas to return, but they were intent on following the path taken by the Supreme Lord. It so happened that a dog joined the party making the number at seven. Yudhisthira walked in front followed by Bhima. Then came Arjuna, the twins, Draupadi and the dog walked next to Yudhisthira. The Pandavas traveled through various provinces until they came to the ocean. Arjuna had brought with him his bow and two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. As they were walking, suddenly the deity of fire, Agni, appeared before them. He blocked their path and would not allow them to proceed further. He then addressed the Pandavas, "O mighty armed heroes, I am the fire god Agni. It was I who caused the destruction of the Khandava forest with the help of the Lord Krishna and Arjuna. At that time I gave to Arjuna the Gandiva bow and two inexhaustible quivers. Now, O Yudhisthira, Arjuna has no more need of these weapons. The Gandiva was given to Partha by Varuna. Please give that foremost bow back to the deity of the water."

Arjuna's brothers then urged him to give back the bow to the demigod Varuna. Hearing the appeals of his brothers, Arjuna cast the bow and the two quivers into the ocean. The demigod of fire then disappeared. The Pandavas continued on their journey and headed toward the Himalayan mountains. They crossed those mountains and also the great desert. They then came upon mount Meru. As they were proceeding up the mountain, Draupadi fell to the earth. Bhima then inquired from Yudhisthira, "O brother, this princess never performed any sinful act. Tell us the reason why Draupadi has fallen on the Earth."

"O best of men," Yudhisthira replied, "though we were all equal to her, she had greater partiality for Dhananjaya. Today, she obtains the fruit of that affection."

Having said this, that foremost one of the Bharata race proceeded on. His mind was in rapt meditation on the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As they were proceeding, Sahadeva fell to the ground. Bhima then inquired from Yudhisthira, "He, who with great humility used to serve us all, has now fallen to the ground. What is the cause of this?"

"He never thought anyone his equal in wisdom," Yudhisthira replied, "It is for this fault that he has fallen."

Having said this much, the Pandavas continued on their journey leaving Sahadeva there. Upon seeing Draupadi fallen as well as Sahadeva, Nakula suddenly fell to the ground. Bhima then inquired, "O Bharata, for what reason has our younger brother fallen?"

"O Vrikodara," Yudhisthira replied, "Nakula was righteous and the foremost of all persons endowed with intelligence. However, he thought no one was his equal in beauty. Indeed, he thought himself superior to all in this respect. It is for this reason that he has fallen."

After saying this much, Yudhisthira continued on his journey. As they were walking suddenly Arjuna fell to the ground. When that invincible hero had fallen, Bhima inquired of Yudhisthira, "I do not recollect any untruth uttered by this great person. Indeed, not even in jest did he ever speak a lie. Why, then, has he fallen to the Earth?"

"Arjuna said that he would consume all foes in a single day," Yudhisthira replied. "Proud of his heroism, he did not, however, accomplish what he had promised. For this reason he has fallen down. This Phalguna has disregarded all wielders of bows. One desirous of prosperity should never indulge in such sentiments."

Having said this much, the King proceeded on. Suddenly Bhima fell to the ground. He called to Yudhisthira, "O King, I have now fallen to the earth. What sin have I committed that this is happening to me?"

"You ate too much and you have always boasted of your strength," Yudhisthira replied. "You never considered the desires of others while eating. It is for this reason that you have fallen." Saying this much the King proceeded on without looking back. His only companion was the dog.

As the King was walking suddenly Indra, the King of heaven, appeared in the sky. He descended to the earth and asked Yudhisthira to ascend the chariot. Remembering how his brothers had fallen, Yudhisthira said, "My brothers have all fallen to the earth. They must go with me to visit your planet. Without them, I do not wish to go to heaven. The delicate princess Draupadi deserving of every comfort should also come with us."

"You shall see your brothers in heaven." Indra replied, "They have already reached there in their self same bodies. Please ascend this chariot, and I will take you to Amaravati."

"This dog, O lord of heaven, is exceedingly devoted to me," Yudhisthira said. "He should come with me. My heart is full of compassion for him. I do not desire to enjoy the prosperity of heaven if I have to leave those who are devoted behind."

"There is no place in heaven for dogs." Indra replied, "Besides, if this dog does accompany you, you will lose all your pious credits. O Yudhisthira, do abandon this dog and ascend this chariot."

"It has been said that one incurs sin when he abandons one who is devoted to him." Yudhisthira said. "It is equal to the sin of slaying a brahmana. Therefore, I shall not abandon this dog to enjoy the heavenly region. My vow is that I will never refuse a person that is terrified, nor one that is devoted to me, nor one that seeks my protection. I shall never give up one who approaches me in this way."

Upon hearing these words, the dog transformed into Yamaraja, the deity of justice and spoke to Yudhisthira the sweet words, "O King, your birth is divine, and you possess the good qualities of Pandu. You have compassion for all creatures, and you are a good example for others. Formerly, O son, I examined you by the lake in Dvaitavana when your brothers had fallen to the ground. On that occasion you asked that Nakula be revived instead of Bhima and Arjuna. On this occasion you have chosen the devoted dog instead of the chariot of the demigods. There is no equal to you in heaven, O King."

After speaking these praises, Yamaraja caused his son to ascend the celestial chariot of Indra. Accompanied by Yamaraja, Indra, the Maruts and the twin Asvins, King Yudhisthira ascended to the heavenly region. Upon reaching the heavenly planets, Yudhisthira could not see his brothers. He told the King of Heaven that he did not want to stay there without his brothers and the beautiful Draupadi. Yudhisthira was then taken to the hellish planets. He was taken down a road that was enveloped in darkness and walked by men of sinful deeds. It was polluted with the stench of flesh and blood, and it abounded with gadflies, stinging bees and gnats. Rotting corpses lay here and there. Covered with bones and hair, it was terrible to behold. It was infested by crows and other birds and vultures, all having beaks of iron. Human corpses were scattered all over it. Some of the corpses were smeared with fat and blood, and some had their limbs severed. Yudhisthira beheld a river of boiling water, and trees had leaves as sharp as razor blades. The son of Kunti beheld all the tortures given to sinful men. He then understood that he had been taken to the hellish regions. Yudhisthira then asked the celestial messengers, "How long shall we follow this path, and why have I been taken to the regions where the sinful are punished?" After asking this question, all the illusions of hell disappeared and Yudhisthira saw the demigods headed by Indra standing before him. Indra then answered the inquiry of Yudhisthira, "During the great battle of Kurukshetra, you were ordered to tell a lie by Lord Krishna. When asked to inform Drona that his son was dead, you hesitated being attached to mundane morality. Because you hesitated to act on that order, you have seen the hellish regions. You have therefore seen Hell by an act of deception. You may now attain the divine regions where the most pious persons live."

Yudhisthira was then taken to the abode of Indra, and there he saw his brothers in their full splendor. He then saw that his own body was dressed in divine clothes and ornaments. As he looked up he saw Draupadi effulgent as the goddess of fortune. Indra then spoke to Yudhisthira, "O son of Dharma, this is Shree herself. It was for

your sake that she took birth as the daughter of King Drupada, and it was for your pleasure she was asked to take birth by great Lord Shiva." Yudhisthira and his brothers then beheld many of the great warriors who had died on the field of Kurukshetra. He saw many of them in the forms of demigods. After greeting them and inquiring of their welfare, the Pandavas spent some time in the heavenly region.

The sons of Pandu and the goddess of fortune Draupadi were all eternal associates of the Lord. They, therefore, desired the association of the Lord of Goloka, Lord Shri Krishna. Thus by pure consciousness due to constant devotional remembrance, they attained the spiritual sky, which is ruled over by the Supreme Narayana, Lord Krishna. This is attained only by those who meditate upon the one Supreme Lord without deviation. This abode of the Lord Shri Krishna, known as Goloka Vrindavana, cannot be attained by persons who are absorbed in the material conception of life. But the Pandavas, being completely washed of all material contamination, attained that abode in their very same bodies. Thus they were transferred to the eternal spiritual sky and the eternal association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna.

The subject of the departure of the sons of Pandu for the ultimate goal of life, back to Godhead, is fully auspicious and is perfectly pure. Therefore anyone who hears this narration with devotional faith certainly gains the devotional service of the Lord, the highest perfection of life.

Thus Ends the Mahaprasthanika Parva, The Pandavas Return to the Spiritual World.

Thus Ends the Summary Study of the Mahabharata

This summary study of the great epic Mahabharata has been completed in New Vrindavana community on the full moon day in the month of Jyaistha (May-June). This is the 499th year of our Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This corresponds to June 3, 1985 of the Christian calendar.

## Concluding Words

The birth, activities and disappearance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are not like the activities of ordinary mortals in this world. As stated in the fourth chapter of Bhagavad-gita, "One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." One should not foolishly think the Mahabharata to be a fantasy made up by the imaginative minds of the great sages of old. The Mahabharata is pure fact. Vyasadeva, the literary incarnation of the Supreme Lord, wrote down the activities of the Lord and His devotees by virtue of His divine vision. Therefore, the Mahabharata and other Vedic literatures such as the Ramayana, Shrimad Bhagavatam, Upanishads and others are divinely inspired literatures and are meant to purify the mind and instill constant thought of the Supreme Lord. This is the final conclusion of this book. There are many editions of the Mahabharata which differ in small details, but the Siddhanta or conclusion is the most important ingredient. Whether Shishupala was killed with a Sudarshana discus or an arrow is not important. The important thing to understand is that Shishupala attained liberation from the cycle of birth and death. This summary study of the Mahabharata has taken the conclusions of the Shrimad Bhagavatam wherein many of the same pastimes are told. Originally the Mahabharata was written by Vyasadeva to attract the minds of the shudras, women and fallen twice born brahmanas. In it there are many descriptions of the heavenly planets and of fruitive activities. This summary study of the Mahabharata consists of the essence of spiritual life and concentrates on that theme. The essence is that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that we are all His servants. This Siddhanta has been stated in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita which is included in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. There Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend. Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." Vyasadeva hoped that by reading the historical narrations of the Mahabharata common persons would be attracted to the philosophy of Bhagavad-gita. We have tried to present Mahabharata so that this conclusion is present on every page. I hope that the readers of this edition will enjoy the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees the Pandavas, and remember the Supreme Lord Krishna by chanting the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.