

Takṣaka who had offered wealth to Kāśyapa and persuaded him not to go to Hāstina-pura 1. 46. 35-41; Janamejaya wished to know from his house-priest if there was any rite by which he could get Takṣaka and his relatives in the kindled fire; just as Takṣaka had burnt Parikṣit by the fire of his poison (*viṣāgni*), so too Janamejaya wished to burn the serpent; priests informed Janamejaya about a rite known as *sarpasatra*, not performed by any one before; thereupon Janamejaya considered Takṣaka as good as burnt in the sacrificial fire 1. 47. 3-8; Takṣaka having come to know of the *sarpasatra* went to Indra and sought his shelter; Indra had already propitiated Pitāmaha on Takṣaka's behalf and therefore assured Takṣaka that there was no danger to his life from the fire of *sarpasatra*; Takṣaka then lived happily in Indra's dwelling 1. 48. 14-18; in the meantime when the snake sacrifice was in progress Āstika appeared at the place of sacrifice where serpents were falling in the fire in large numbers; he praised king Janamejaya; pleased, Janamejaya desired to offer a boon to Āstika and asked permission of the officiating priests; they gave the permission since Takṣaka was to arrive soon; but the *hotṛ* priest told Janamejaya that Takṣaka was not showing; Janamejaya asked the priests to spare no pains and get Takṣaka quickly; the priests told the king that as the Śāstras informed them and as the Fire narrated to them Takṣaka, out of fear, had taken shelter with Indra 1. 51. 1-5 (*yathā śāstrāṇi naḥ prāhur yathā tamsati pāvakaḥ/indrasya bhavane rājans takṣako bhayapīḍitaḥ*); the king's bard Lohitākṣa, who knew what had transpired (*paurāṇiko veditavān purastāt* 1. 51. 6), confirmed what the priests had told the king; he said that Indra had asked Takṣaka to stay with him and feel free from

any danger from fire; Janamejaya urged his *hotṛ* priest to proceed and the priest with his *mantras* called Indra himself; Indra appeared on the scene with the serpent tucked to his *uttariya*; Janamejaya asked the priests to make Takṣaka fall in the fire with Indra if he sought shelter in Indra's residence; priests told Janamejaya, as they heard a thunderous roar, that Takṣaka was coming under the king's control, they were sure that the serpent was dropped down by Indra and was falling from his lap, the serpent's body was loosened by the *mantras* (*mantravisrastakāyaḥ* 1. 51. 13) and he had lost consciousness; they permitted Janamejaya to grant a boon to Āstika since the rite was progressing according to the prescription and as Takṣaka was about to fall into the fire; Āstika chose the boon: "let this sacrificial session come to an end, and let no more serpents fall (into the fire)" (*satraṁ te viramatv etan na pateyur ihoragāḥ* 1. 51. 17); in vain did Janamejaya try to persuade Āstika to choose another boon; Janamejaya agreed to stop the session and granted freedom from risk to serpents 1. 51. 6-23; 1. 53. 8; Āstika admitted that Takṣaka was somehow saved because Janamejaya followed the path of truth (and kept his word) (*kathamcit takṣako muktaḥ satyavāt tava pārthiva*) 15. 43. 14; Sūta called it a great miracle of Āstika that when Takṣaka slipped from Indra's hand, he remained in the sky and did not drop down in the fire; on Śaunaka's query whether Takṣaka's not falling down from the mid-region was due to the fact that the (suitable) *mantras* did not reveal themselves to the priests (*mantragrāmo manīṣiṇām na pratyabhāt* 1. 53. 4), Sūta replied that that happened because Āstika thrice said to the serpent 'stay' (*tiṣṭha*) 1. 53. 1-6, and Takṣaka