

8) *Curse of Maitreya.* The Pāṇḍavas entered the Kāmyaka forest where they were welcomed by the sages. Among them Maitreya whom the misfortune of the Pāṇḍavas affected much started for Hastināpura for peace parleys. Vidura advised Dhṛtarāṣṭra that Maitreya's proposals should be respected lest he should curse the King. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana received the sage with respect. And, the sage asked them to recall the Pāṇḍavas from the forest and live on friendly terms with them. Duryodhana did not in any manner respond to the advice of the sage, but stood there absolutely mum tapping his thigh with his fingers and making drawings with the fingers of his feet on the ground. This the sage interpreted as an insult to him. He stood up ablaze with anger and cursed Duryodhana thus: "You will, sooner than later reap the consequences of your false pride; your cruelty will invite terrible war, and in the fight Bhīma will rend asunder your thigh, which you struck with your fingers just now."

Greatly agitated over the curse Dhṛtarāṣṭra prayed the sage for redemption and the sage said: "if only your son resorts to forbearance and peace the curse will not take effect, otherwise it will come true." And after making this announcement the sage returned to the forest. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 10).

9) *The procession.* While the Pāṇḍavas were staying in the Kāmyaka forest Duryodhana and others went there on the pretext of looking after the cows. The Gandharvas took them captive; but the Pāṇḍavas intervened and set them free. Feeling humiliated at the mishap Duryodhana decided to end his life after crowning Duśśāsana as King. But Duśśāsana did not agree to the proposal. (For details see *Ghoṣayātrā*).

10) *Duryodhana's attempt at death and his trip to Pātāla.* Humiliated at the procession thus and turning down the advice of friends to return to the palace, Duryodhana spread grass on the ground and lay down there to die. As his death would spell disaster to the Dānavas they decided to send him back to his palace for which purpose they performed the Vaitāna sacrifice in Pātāla. While offering milk in the sacrificial fire a Rākṣasa woman, Kṛtyā, arose therefrom, and at the instance of the Dānavas she carried Duryodhana over to Pātāla. There they told him thus: "Oh Duryodhana, a part of your body has been earned by us from Śiva by our penance. That part of your body above the waist is made of diamond. Therefore, arrows will not pierce your body. Grieve not. Bhagadatta and other heroes have been born to help you. Your great supporter Karṇa is possessed of the soul of Narakāsura." These words of the Dānavas instilled fresh hope in Duryodhana, and he was taken back to his Kingdom by Kṛtyā. This incident appeared as a dream to Duryodhana. Bucking up confidence and courage again he returned to Hastināpura and continued to rule (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 252).

11) *Duryodhana's Viṣṇu yajña.* At this juncture Duryodhana thought of performing a Rājasūya for which he invited brahmins to the palace. After bestowing much thought on the subject the brahmins pointed out that there was no sanction for Duryodhana to conduct a Rājasūya as his elders, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Dharmaputra were still alive. At the same time they pointed out that

there was another Yajña called Viṣṇu Yajña as efficacious as Rājasūya which Duryodhana was competent to perform. Accordingly Duryodhana performed the Viṣṇu yajña and earned reputation among evil monarchs. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapters 256, 257).

12) *Boon from Durvāsas.* Once Durvāsas accompanied by his disciples, came to Duryodhana's palace, and Duryodhana decided somehow or other to befriend and use the maharṣi as a weapon against the Pāṇḍavas. He housed the maharṣi and his disciples in the palace for a few days and pleased them by careful service at which the maharṣi asked Duryodhana to request for any boon he desired. And, Duryodhana asked the maharṣi to visit the Pāṇḍavas one day in the forest with his disciples when they had finished taking their meals. The maharṣi agreed. And, this was the period of time when Pāñcālī had received the akṣayapātra from Sūrya. Everyday the pātra would produce enough food for the Pāṇḍavas and the other people with them, but it would become empty for the day after Pāñcālī had eaten her food. This was the nature of the akṣayapātra.

Pāñcālī had finished her meals one day when Durvāsas and his disciples came to the Pāṇḍavas. Not knowing that Pāñcālī had already finished her food Dharmaputra welcomed the maharṣi and his disciples and requested them to take bath in the Gaṅgā and return for their meals. Pāñcālī was in a fix. The akṣayapātra would not produce any more food for the day, and if not duly fed the maharṣi would get angry and curse them. In this painful dilemma she prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for succour, and lo! he appeared and asked Pāñcālī for some food. She replied that the akṣayapātra was quite empty. But, Kṛṣṇa got from her the pātra and ate one particle of Kīra (a leafy vegetable) which had stuck on its side. That leafy substance fully satisfied his hunger and thirst whereupon the hunger and thirst of Durvāsas and his disciples were also quenched. Then Kṛṣṇa asked Sahadeva to bring back the maharṣi and his disciples from the bank of the Gaṅgā and accordingly he went there and invited them. Only a few minutes had passed since the maharṣi and his disciples had felt the satisfaction of a sumptuous meal. They were also astonished to think how in such a short time food for so many people could be cooked by Pāñcālī. They felt rather anxious about the reaction which Dharmaputra would evince in case they returned to him to say that they required no food. Durvāsas realised only too well that to quarrel with the Pāṇḍavas, who enjoyed the friendship and support of Kṛṣṇa was like playing with fire. Therefore, the maharṣi with his disciples ran away from the place secretly. Pāṇḍavas waited long for the maharṣi and his disciples to return fearing that the object of Durvāsas might be to return at the untimely hour and curse them. But, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told them the details about the maharṣi's departure and assured Dharmaputra that he and his disciples would not return. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 263).

13) *War against Virāṭa.* After twelve years' exile in the forest the Pāṇḍavas began their life incogni to at Virāṭa nagara. Kīcaka, brother-in-law of Mātsya, the Virāṭa King, was killed secretly by Bhīmasena, and news was spread that Kīcaka was killed by a Gandharva.

None of the spies deputed by Duryodhana to spot out the Pāṇḍavas during their life incognito could gather