

King mistaking the sage's silence for haughtiness threw in anger a dead snake round his neck and went away. But, within seven days of the incident Parikṣit was bitten to death by Takṣaka, king of the Nāgas according to the curse pronounced on him by Gavijāta, son of sage Śamika.

Janamejaya was only an infant at the time of his father's death. So the obsequies of the late king were performed by his ministers. After that at an auspicious time Janamejaya was crowned King. Within a short time he mastered statecraft. Dhanurvidyā was taught by Kṛpācārya. Very soon he earned reputation as an efficient administrator. He got married in due course. (Devī Bhāgavata, 2nd Skandha).

4) *His hatred towards snakes.* In the course of a talk one day with Janamejaya Uttānka the sage detailed to him the circumstances of his father's death. Only then did he understand the actual cause of Parikṣit's death, and the information kindled in him intense feelings of revenge not only against serpents but also against the whole serpent dynasty. (Devī Bhāgavata, 2nd Skandha).

5) *Sarpasatra.* (*Serpent yajña*). Janamejaya sought the advice of priests and Ṛtviks as to how best revenge could be taken against the serpents, and they advised him to perform the great Yajña called Sarpasatra. And, accordingly all necessary arrangements for the Satra were made, and the King began dikṣā (Initiation) for it (to live for a few days under severe routine to prepare the author of the yajña for it). But the priest who made the arrangements looked into signs about the successful conclusion of the yajña and opined that it would be obstructed by a brahmin, and, the King, therefore, ordered strict steps to be taken against the entry of strangers into the Yāgaśālā.

And, the Sarpasatra began. High priests wore black clothes, and chanting mantras they made offerings in the sacred fire, and this created a burning sensation in the hearts of serpents. They began, one after another to come and fall into the fire. All varieties of serpents got consumed by the fire thus.

Sages like Uttānka, Caṇḍabhārgava, Śārṅgarava, Vyāsa, Uddālaka, Ātreya, Pramataka, Śvetaketu, Nārada, Devala, Kālaghaṭa, Śrutaśravas, Kohala, Devaśarman, Maudgalya and Samasaurabha acted as Ṛtviks at the Satra. Though almost all the serpents courted death in the fire, Takṣaka alone did not come. Fear-stricken he had taken refuge with Indra.

As the chanting of mantras increased in intensity and volume Vāsuki began to feel the burning sensation. He requested his sister Jaratkāru to find out some means of escape from the Satra, and at the instance of Jaratkāru her son Āstika set out for the palace of Janamejaya to obstruct the Yajña.

Though the Ṛtviks invoked for a long time Takṣaka did not appear. Enraged at his absence, Uttānka searched for Takṣaka with his divine eyes and found him seated on the throne of Indra along with him, who had given him (Takṣaka) asylum. This challenge of Indra kindled the wrath of Uttānka all the more, and he invoked Indra, Takṣaka and Indra's throne too so that all of them might together come and fall into the fire. And, lo! there came the whole lot of them. Only two minutes more and all of them would be reduced to ashes.

By now Āstika, the son of Jaratkāru had arrived at the

Yajña śālā. Janamejaya received the young Sage with all respect and promised to grant his desire whatever that be. Āstika's demand was that the Sarpa Satra should be stopped. Though Janamejaya was not for stopping the yajña, he was reminded of his promise to grant any desire of Āstika and the latter insisted on the stopping of the Satra. Janamejaya stopped it. Āstika blessed that the serpents which had died at the Satra would attain salvation. (Ādi Parva, Chapters 52-58 ; Devī Bhāgavata, 2nd Skandha).

6) *Listens to the Bhārata story.* While the Sarpa Satra was being conducted Vyāsa came over there and related the whole story of the Mahābhārata at the request of Janamejaya. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 60).

7) *Saramā's curse.* Janamejaya along with his brother once performed a yajña of long duration at Kurukṣetra. While the yajña was going on, a dog (son of Saramā the bitch of the Devas) came there. The three brothers of Janamejaya beat the dog which returned to its mother, Saramā, crying. The mother asked him whether he had done anything to deserve the beating, and he answered thus : "No, mother, I had done nothing wrong. I did not lick the havis, nor did I even look at it." Hearing her son's reply Saramā in deep anguish, went to Kurukṣetra and questioned Janamejaya as to why her innocent son was beaten by his brothers. Neither he nor his brothers replied to Saramā, and she cursed Janamejaya that he would be subjected to adṛṣṭaphala (unforeseen results). This curse upset Janamejaya so much that after the Sarpa Satra was over and on his return to Hastināpura he made a search for a Purohita (priest) competent enough to redeem him from his sins, and at last he invited Somaśravas, son of the great sage Śrutaśravas to be his Purohita, and thus did Somaśravas become the priest of Janamejaya (Ādi Parva, Chapter 3).

8) *Successors of Janamejaya.* Janamejaya had two sons, Candrāpīḍa and Suryāpīḍa by his wife Kāśyā. Hundred sons, experts in archery, were born to Candrāpīḍa. The eldest of them, Satyakarṇa, ruled the country after Janamejaya. Satyakarṇa had a son called Śvetakarṇa to whom was born a son called Ajapārśva by his wife Yādavī, the daughter of Sucāru. (Bhaviṣya Parva, Chapter 1).

9) *Other Information*

(1) Janamejaya defeated the King of Takṣaśilā and subjugated the country. Ādi Parva, Chapter 3, Verse 20).

(2) The Sage called Veda was the preceptor of Janamejaya. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 3, Verse 82).

(3) After the Sarpa Satra, Janamejaya performed an Aśvamedha yajña at which Vyāsa delivered a lengthy discourse on life and salvation. As Janamejaya said that if he were to believe the words of Vyāsa his dead father Parikṣit should be shown to him. Vyāsa brought Parikṣit down from Svarga and showed him to his son. On the occasion were also present sage Śamika and his son Śṛṅgi. (Āśramavāsika Parva, Chapter 35).

10) *Life time of Janamejaya.* The great war at Kurukṣetra was fought in 3138 B.C. (See under Mahābhārata) After the war was over the Pāṇḍavas ruled the country for 36 years. Vyāsa took three years to compose the Mahābhārata. According to the Mahāprasthānika Parva the Pāṇḍavas set out for the forest after handing over the government to Parikṣit, who ruled the country for