

The serpent Takṣaka, a friend of Indra, lived in this forest with his wife and children. Indra knew that Agni had come to burn the Khāṇḍava forest and resolved to save Takṣaka at any cost. When Agni (fire) began to catch the forest, Indra had already begun rain. So it was not possible for Agni to consume the forest. Agni tried seven times to consume the forest and in all these seven attempts he failed. Agni again approached Brahmā, who told him that the Nara-Nārāyaṇas would take birth in the earth as Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and that at that time it would be possible for fire to consume the forest Khāṇḍava.

2) *Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the forest of Khāṇḍava.* While the Pāṇḍavas were living in Indraprastha, once the hot season became so unbearable that Arjuna took Kṛṣṇa with him and went to the forest of Khāṇḍava. While they were playing in the river Yamunā with their wives Agni came there in the guise of an old Brāhmin and told them all that had happened and requested their help for eating the Khāṇḍava forest. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna promised to help him in this affair.

3) *Preparation of weapons.* For the time being Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were not having sufficient weapons. Agni (fire-god) thought of Varuṇa (the God of water) who instantly appeared. At the request of Agni Varuṇa gave Arjuna the famous bow 'Candradhanus' (Gāṇḍīva), a quiver which would never become empty of arrows and a chariot having a flag with the sign of monkey and to Śrī Kṛṣṇa the weapon of the discus. Varuṇa gave four white horses also with gold chains round their necks for drawing the chariot of Arjuna. With these weapons Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna got ready to help Agni. Śrī Kṛṣṇa became the charioteer of Arjuna.

4) *Burning the forest.* When Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna stood ready Agni began to consume the forest. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna guarded the boundaries of the forest so that the inmates of the forest might not escape. The living creatures ran hither and thither finding no way to escape. Many died of suffocation. At that time the hermits who were dwellers of that forest ran to Indra and informed him of the great calamity. Indra instantly got ready to fight and save the forest. He covered the whole of the sky with clouds and a heavy rain was showered on the forest. Arjuna created a covering of arrows like an umbrella over the fire and saved him from the rain.

5) *The family of Takṣaka.* At this particular time Takṣaka had been away at Kurukṣetra. Aśvasena the son of Takṣaka was writhing with heat and pain. Seeing this his mother (wife of Takṣaka) swallowed him from tail to head. Then she ran to the boundary to throw the child into the outer region. Seeing this Arjuna got angry and cut at the head of Aśvasena. But at the nick of time Indra sent a storm and made Arjuna swoon and Aśvasena was saved. So Arjuna became furious and began to cut down every creature he saw. Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa and Agni together cursed Aśvasena that he would get refuge nowhere.

Aśvasena kept up his hatred of Arjuna. In the Bhārata battle, Aśvasena got on an arrow sent by Karṇa at Arjuna and knocked off the crown of Arjuna and returned. But due to the curse Karṇa did not receive him back.

6) *Deadly fight.* The serpents and hawks confronted Arjuna, who cut off their heads. Kṛṣṇa killed the

Asuras with the weapon discus. Indra came to the battle-field riding on his elephant Airāvata. Kāla (Time), Kubera, Skanda, Aśvinīdevas and all the other Devas (gods), and Asuras (demons) helped Indra in the fight. But Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna came out victorious.

7) *The advent of Maya.* Meanwhile Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna called Indra and told him who they were and informed him that Takṣaka had gone to Kurukṣetra. Hearing this Indra blessed Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and retreated from the battlefield. Agni began to consume the forest more vigorously than before. Because of the unbearable heat, Maya, the architect of the Asuras, came out of the house of Takṣaka and ran to Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and entreated them to save him. Accordingly Arjuna saved him from the fire.

8) *The story of four birds which escaped from the fire.* In that forest a hermit named Mandapāla had erected his hermitage and lived there performing penance. He died and went to the world of ancestors. But there, the hermit did not attain any fruit of the penance he had performed. The hermit asked the Devas for the reason. They replied that it was because the hermit had no sons. The hermit came to the forest again to marry and beget sons. Mandapāla married a bird called Jaritā. Four sons named Jaritārī, Sārisṛkka, Stambamitra and Droṇa, were born to them. After this Mandapāla left Jaritā and her sons and went after another woman Lapitā.

Feathers were not yet grown on the body of Jaritā's four sons. The burning of the forest began before it. Jaritā and her sons were in a sorry plight. The mother could fly. But she did not think of leaving her young ones in danger. She decided to die in the fire folding the young ones under her wings. But her sons did not agree to it. They entreated her to fly away. Thus moments of tears passed by. At last Jaritā told them crying, "There is the hole of a rat closeby. The rat had been taken away by a kite. I will take you to that hole and close it. Then I shall go away and return when the fire is abated."

But the young ones did not agree to this. They loved to be killed by fire, rather than to be killed by rat. Finally at their request Jaritā flew away.

Mandapāla thought of his sons. He separated from Lapitā, and came to Agni and requested him to save his sons and Jaritā. Agni consumed the forest and neared the birds. The young birds requested Agni to save them. Agni Deva saved them. Mandapāla and Jaritā returned. That family lived for a long time in joy and happiness and finally attained the world of the gods. Agni returned to heaven after the burning of the forest of Khāṇḍava. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapters 233 to 346).

KHĀṆḌAVAPRASTHA. See under Indraprastha.

KHĀṆḌAVĀYANA. Paraśurāma gave all the countries conquered by him to Kaśyapa. Along with the lands he gave a golden dais also. The group of hermits called Khāṇḍavāyanas cut the dais into pieces and shared them with the permission of Kaśyapa. (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 117, Stanza 13).

KHĀṆḌIKYA. A Kṣatriya King. Keśidhvaja was the son of his paternal uncle. Both had learned well the ways of union with the divine life. Khāṇḍikya had become an expert in Karmayoga (the path of action) for becoming one with the divine life whereas Keśidhvaja tried to achieve oneness with divine life by Jñāna