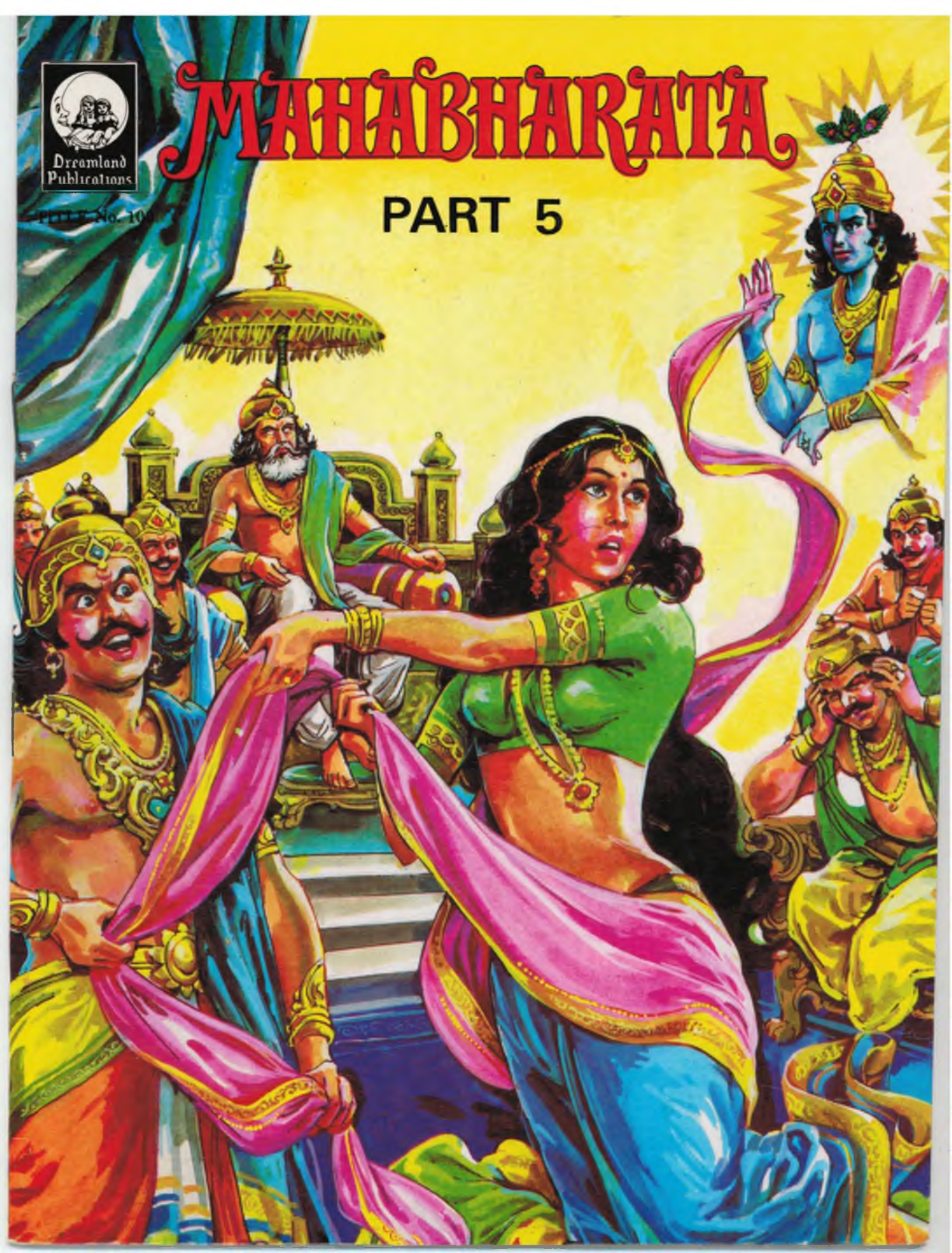




MAHABHARATA

PART 5



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PUBLISHED BY
DREAMLAND PUBLICATIONS
4425, NAI SARAK, DELHI-110006 (INDIA)
PHONE : 291 5831, 292 9770, FAX : 011-5 14 1327

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Rs. 20.00

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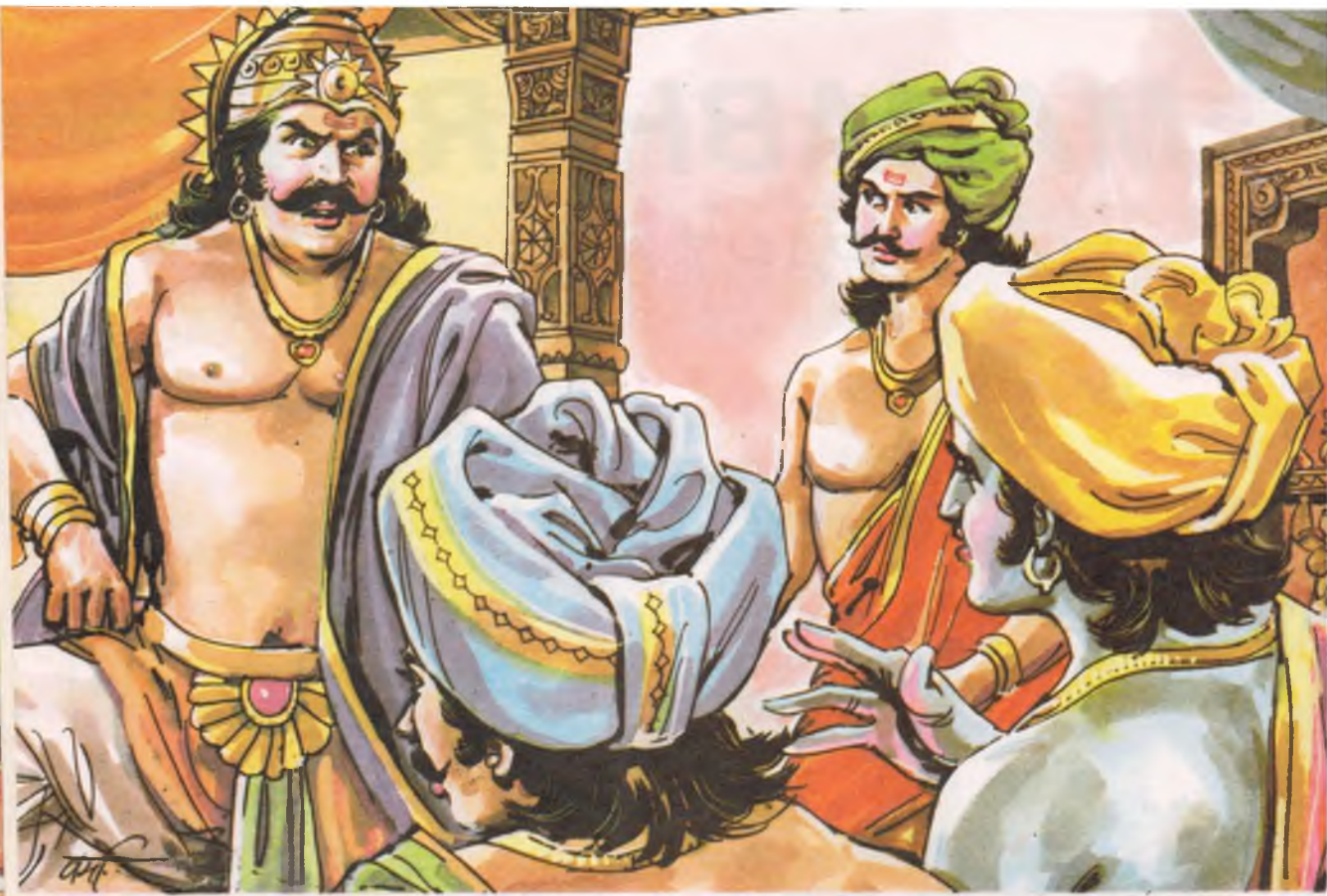
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We have read in the foregoing book that the challenge thrown by Krishna, Arjuna and Bheema had plunged Jarasandh into extreme rage as well as amazement. Even then, exercising full control over his temper, Jarasandh said to them, "You claim to be Brahamans but all your deeds are like those of Kshatriyas. You reached here after destroying Mount Chatyak which is so sacred to the people of my kingdom. When you reached the venue of the yajna, you did not accept my honour on the pretext of observing a silence-fast. So, I would like you to explain these things to me like true Kshatriyas."

Krishna replied, "Listen, O Jarasandh! we did not accept your honour in the morning because we were and are even now in the house of our enemy."

"How are we enemies after all? I am just at a loss to understand what you say. Please elaborate it." argued Jarasandh.

"You have imprisoned a large number of kings for no fault of theirs. We are also kings. How can we take you to be not our enemy?" replied Krishna.

"I have imprisoned them after defeating them in pitched battles. Now as a victor, it is my right to treat them as I like," replied Jarasandh.



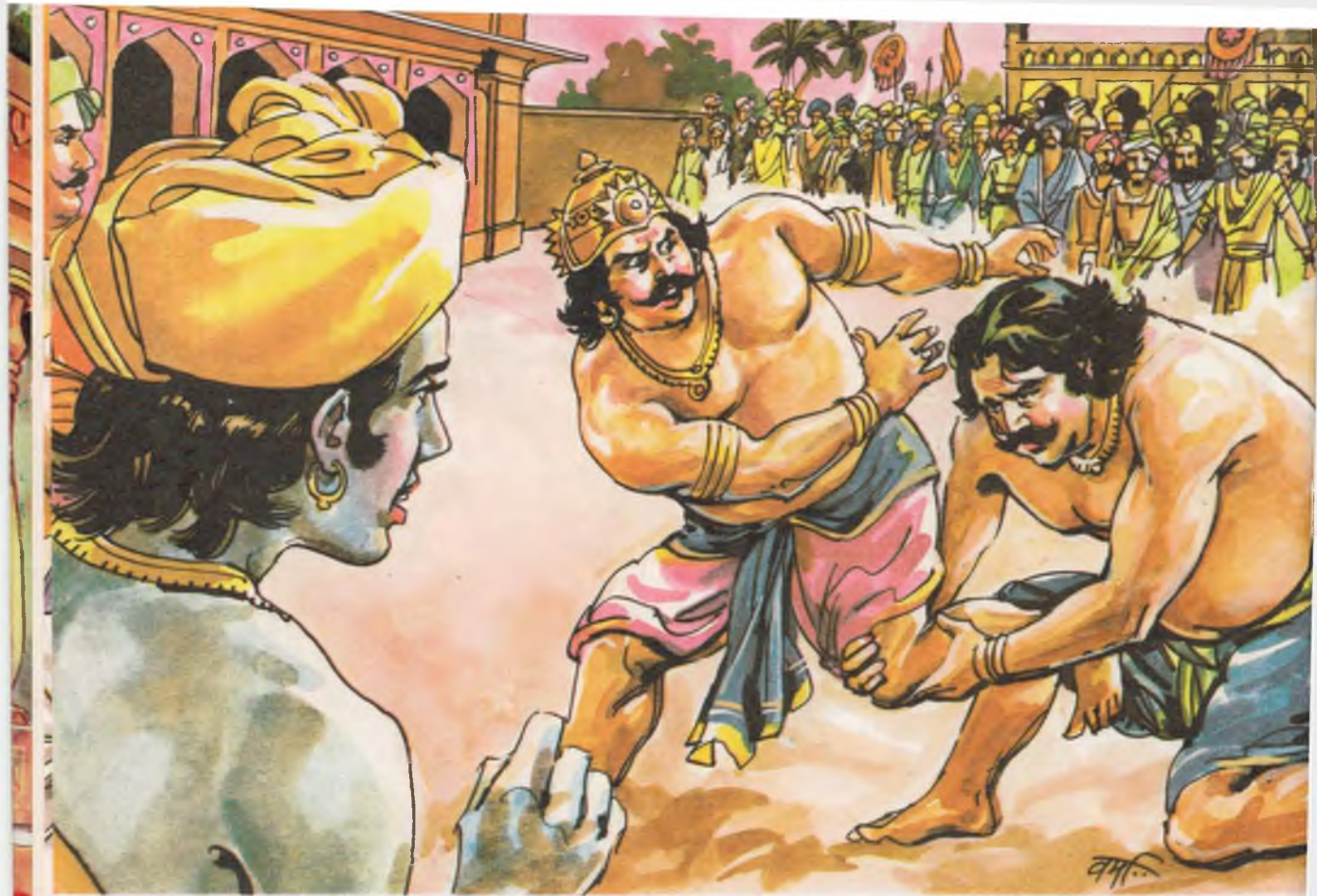
“That is right; but you want to sacrifice those kings at the altar of Lord Rudra. Is it proper for a Kshatriya to sacrifice another Kshatriya like that. Moreover, we have come to know that you want to imprison still more kings to take the number of the kings to be sacrificed to 101. Who knows when you may make war on us too in order to achieve your object? So, we thought it better to come to you and challenge you for a wrestling bout,” argued Krishna.

“Which kingdom are you the king of? Who are these two persons and what do you want from me?” questioned Jarasandh.

Disclosing his identity, Krishna said, “I am Krishna, king of Dwarika and your old enemy. They are two Pandava brothers—Arjuna and Bheema from Indraprastha.”

“Bheema is ready to have a duel with you. We want you to release all the captive kings and accept the overlordship of king Yudhisthir of Indraprastha failing which be ready to meet with your end at the hands of Bheema.” Krishna further said.

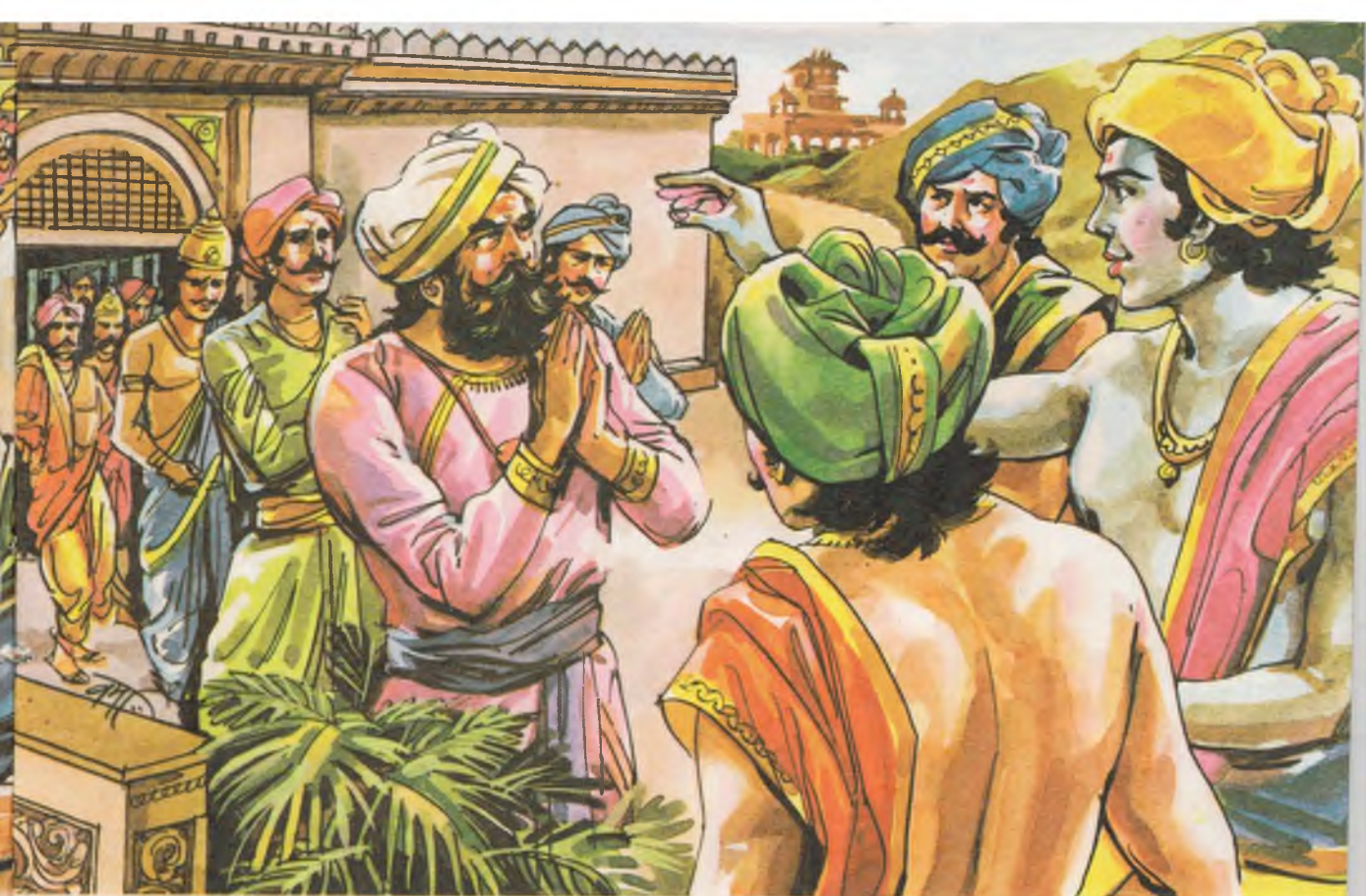
Jarasandh retorted, “Look here Krishna! I am a Kshatriya and I accept your challenge. Let me know whether Bheema would like to have a wrestling duel or a combat with swords or with maces.”



Hearing the words of Jarasandh, Bheema stood up and said, "Be ready for a wrestling duel." Jarasandh got up in rage and said, "Good God! you throw me a challenge in my own capital. Surely you are valiant and courageous too." Saying these words, he charged at Bheema. Both of them grappled with each other. Thus began a ferocious duel that attracted a large crowd of the people of Jarasandh's capital.

For thirteen days Bheema and Jarasandh remained engaged in a bitter bout but with no result. Neither of them was showing signs of tiredness. So, at the end of the thirteenth day again it was a drawn bout. On the fourteenth day, the bout began as usual. Krishna, with a view to discouraging Jarasandh, addressed Bheema and said, "The enemy looks very tired. Don't attack him fatally otherwise he is sure to be killed. Don't use the divine power either, which you have got from the wind-god."

This was actually an indirect instruction to Bheema which meant—*now or never*. So, Bheema attacked Jarasandh in full fury and in the twinkling of an eye lifted him above his head in the air and flung him down with a thud. Just at this moment Krishna tore a leaf into two demonstrating it to Bheema that he should tear his enemy in the same manner.



The story goes that Jarasandh was born in two pieces which were joined by a demonesess named Jara and hence his name—Jarasandh. His body had a vertical joint running from top to the lower end of the back-bone. And we know that a joint is always less strong. So, Bheema tore Jarasandh's body apart into two parts without much difficulty.

Throwing the pieces—each in its own side—Bheema turned to Krishna and Arjuna in joy. But when he looked back, he was horrified to see that the two parts of Jarsandh's body drew close to each other and were soon joined again. Nay, he saw Jarasandh standing against him as before casting on him a fiery look.

For a moment, Bheema looked quite helpless. As soon as he turned his eyes towards Krishna, he saw him tearing a leaf vertically and throwing its two parts in opposite directions.

So, getting the hint, Bheema fell upon Jarasandh, flung him down and tore off his legs apart once again and threw the right piece to his left-hand side and the other to his right-hand side. He was overjoyed to see that this time the torn pieces did not move from where they had been thrown respectively.

Krishna and Arjuna patted Bheema in appreciation of his victory.



Now Krishna, Arjuna and Bheema entered the palace of Jarasandh where they were received by Sahdev, Jarasandh's son, cordially. So, the three friends decided to crown Sahdev as the next king of Magadha. Soon all arrangements were completed and Sahdev was crowned as king of Magadha.

Krishna persuaded Sahdev to set all the kings, imprisoned by his father, free. This done, the freed kings expressed their heartiest thanks to Krishna and the Pandava brothers. Bheema was especially congratulated on his success in killing Jarasandh and highly praised for his skill in wrestling.

When Bheema attributed the credit of his success to Krishna, the liberated kings paid their obeisance to him.

Krishna and both the Pandava brothers accepted the thanks of the liberated kings with humility and invited each of them to take part in the Rajsuya Yajna at Indraprastha. Then they bade farewell to each of them. All the kings gleefully departed to their respective capitals.

Krishna, Arjuna and Bheema also returned to Indraprastha and conveyed the news of Jarasandh's death to Yudhishtir giving him a green signal to start the performance of the yajna.



Yudhishtir was so pleased at what Krishna had been doing for them—the Pandavas—that he was all praises for him. As a token of his gratitude, Yudhishtir presented a beautiful chariot to Krishna who taking leave of Kunti, Draupadi and the five Pandavas, left for Dwarika in his new chariot.

Yudhishtir set about the task of making preparations for the Rajsuya Yajna. He entrusted his youngest brother, Sahdev, with the task of going to learned Brahmins and saints to extend invitations to them for participating in the yajna.

Thereafter invitations were also sent to all the kings, respectable *Vaishyas* and other prominent persons to take part in the yajna.

The invitees began pouring in Yudhishtir's capital, Indraprastha, and the town was full of hustle and bustle. Every participant was coming to Indraprastha with valuable gifts for the Pandava king. When most of the kings had reached Indraprastha, Yudhishtir sent his brother Nakula to Hastinapur in order to invite Bhishma, Guru Drona, Vidur, Kripacharya, Dhritrashtra and all the Kaurava princes. Dhritrashtra had also brought valuable presents for his nephew Yudhishtir, his four brothers, their mother Kunti and for Draupadi and Subhadra as well.



After the arrival of the Kaurava princes, they were also entrusted with important jobs. Duryodhana was given the job of receiving presents from the incoming kings while Dushasana was put in charge of food-catering. Kripacharya was to make arrangements of all the sacred rituals while Saint Susama was to make necessary announcements. Krishna chose the humblest of the jobs—washing the feet of the Brahmans and the saints. Karna was given the job of making charities.

We have read in an earlier book that Saint Ayudhaumya had accepted to act as the royal priest of the Pandavas. So, he was given the seat of the chief priest performing the yajna. All *aahuties* were to be offered to the sacred fire at his bidding only. All arrangements completed, Yudhishtir inaugurated the yajna amidst chanting of Vedic hymns and *mantras*.

Saint Vyasa, author of the Mahabharata, was to supervise the entire performance of the ritual so that it might be done just according to the regulations prescribed in the scriptures. By God's grace, the yajna saw its completion without any impediment or untoward happening. In fact, Jarasandh was the only mighty ruler from whom any trouble could be apprehended. But he had been killed and so Yudhishtir was beside himself with joy to see his cherished desire fulfilled.



It was customary to send off the kings participating in the yajna with due honours conferred upon them with valuable gifts given to them. Prior to this rite, the best participant was to be selected and worshipped. Sagacious Yudhishtir chose to leave the choice of the best participant to the assembly of kings.

So, addressing the assembly, he said, " I want to know whom you would like to be worshipped as the best participant so that the ritual of his worship and the subsequent rite of conferring honours may be started."

Hearing Yudhishtir's words, Sahdev, king of Magadha, stood up and proposed Krishna's name for worship as the best participant. Bhishma and Drona at once seconded the proposal followed by a large number of other kings.

But a group of kings opposed the proposal saying that either Bhishma or Drona should be worshipped as the best participant in the yajna.

The group opposing Krishna's worship was led by Shishupal who was Krishna's cousin (son of his father's sister). He had always been jealous of Krishna because of his strength, miraculous powers and other qualities. How could he tolerate that Krishna should be honoured like that in his very presence.



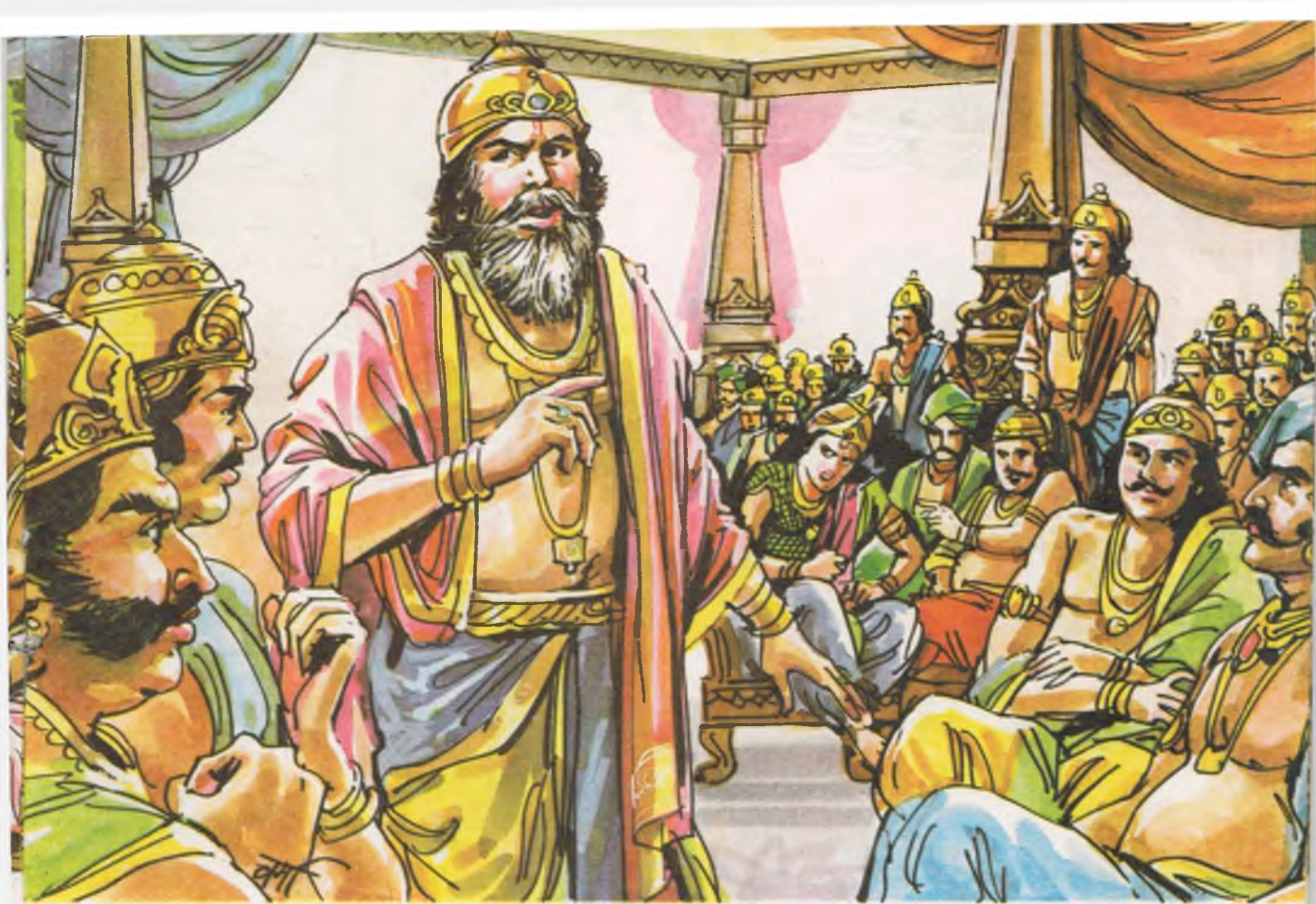
Shishupal stood up and said, "Yudhishthir, you should not have accepted the proposal of Sahdev, king of Magadha. He is obliged to Krishna for his coronation. As for Bhishma and Drona, they have gone crazy with this cowerd boy who has started claiming himself to be a king. In age also, he is perhaps the juniormost amongst all of us. How does he then deserve the honour that you are going to confer on him?"

Then turning to Krishna, Shishupal said, "Dor't you feel ashamed being honoured in the presence of so many kings who are older than you in age and senior to you in all other respects. Yudhishthir and his brothers may be afraid of you but not I and other kings. You should have refused to be honoured like that. I think you are dead to all sense of shame and manners."

Shishupal kept hurling objectionable terms and almost abusive words on Krishna who was standing quietly lost in reflections as to what he should do.

As for Duryodhana and other Kaurava princes, they were enjoying what Shishupal was saying about Krishna, the Pandavas, Bheeshma and Drona.

As no one tried to stop Shishupal from what he was doing, he felt encouraged and condemned Krishna outright in open abusive language.

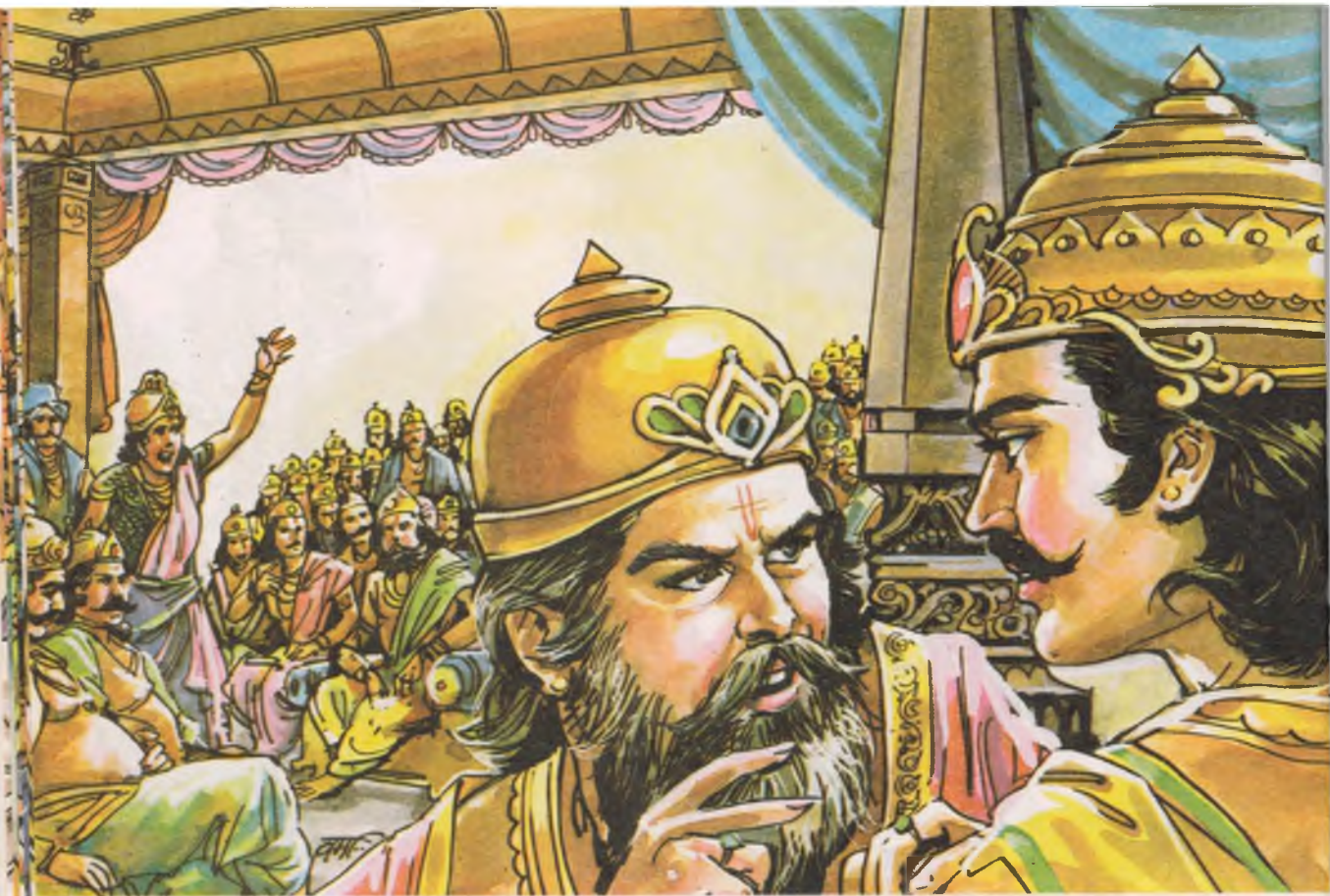


Bheeshma had been so agitated now because of Shishupal's objectionable remarks that he lost his cool and stood up in rage.

Asking Shishupal to sit down silently, Bheeshma addressed all the kings and said, "You all know that among the Brahmans, the most learned person is worthy of being worshipped. And in Kshatriyas, the most valiant deserves to be worshipped. In my opinion, Krishna stands head and shoulders above all of us in both the points of view. Besides, courage and fame, he is fully conversant with the knowledge of the Vedas and other religious scriptures.

Not only this, he possesses immense wit, keen discretion and unlimited patience. I am all praises for him that he, in spite of highly provoking remarks of Shishupal, has kept his cool."

Bheeshma further said, "Short-sighted Shishupal does not know that Krishna is the beginning and the end of the universe. He has not seen his colossal form so far but we have. He possesses in himself the sun, stars, the moon, planets and all the ten directions. If Shishupal is ignorant of Krishna's qualities, the fault lies with him, not with anybody else. I warn him to behave properly at least in this assembly of kings who have gathered here for a religious purpose and not for abusing one another."



Shishupal was red in anger to hear Bheeshma's words. So, he started bursting out aloud against Krishna. His supporters were backing him blatantly. Feeling encouraged, he addressed the gathering and said, "I am ready to act as your general. Come on, let us see how brave and powerful Krishna is. At the same time Bheeshma and Pandavas will also learn a lesson never to insult their invitees like that in future."

Yudhishtir felt very unhappy at the worsening situation and said to Bheeshma, "Revered Grandpa! the entire gathering seems to be enraged. What should I do now?"

"Don't worry; a dog can never kill a lion. Nobody is going to be misled by Shishupal," replied Bheeshma.

Bheeshma's words added fuel to the fire and Shishupal lost control over his temper.

He thundered, "I think this old man has gone insane because of his advanced age. Now I am sure that he has been either impotent or affecting celebrity (*brahamacharya*) just to impress others. This cowardly boy, Krishna by name, has also gone so arrogant due to the indulgence of the Pandavas and the persons like Bheeshma. But we, true warriors, care a fig for them. We won't allow his worship at all."

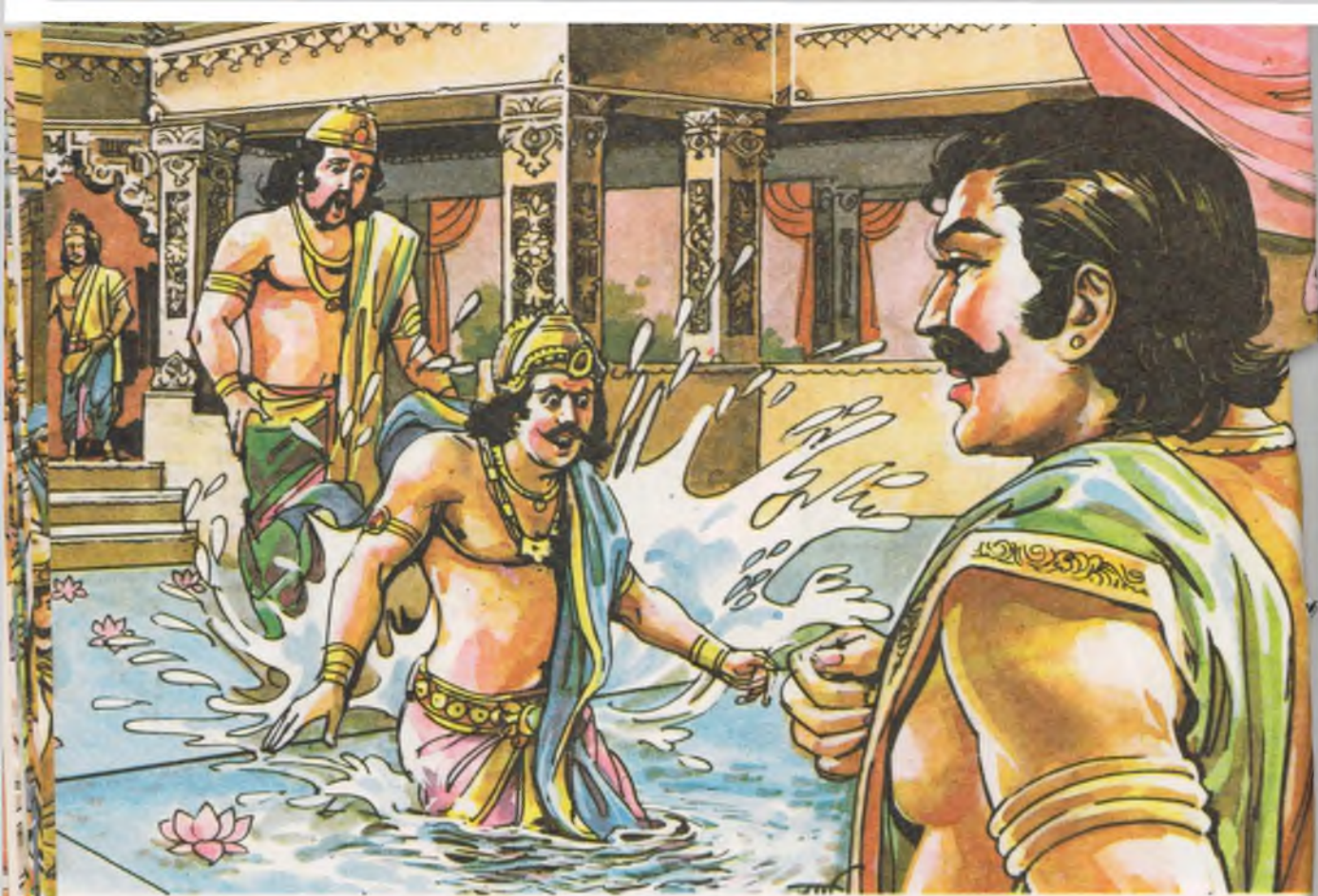


Krishna had kept his calm till now in spite of repeated provocations on the part of Shishupal.

But when he heard indecent words used for elderly Bhisma, he addressed the assembly and said, "Respected guests! you are all alive to what I am going to say. Shishupal is my cousin—son of my father's sister. For the reasons best known to him he has always felt jealous of me. His excesses towards me are innumerable. He is a man of bad character who has violated the chastity of several ladies forcibly. Not only this, he has committed incest by abducting his real uncle's daughter. He tried to set fire to the town of Dwarika when I was away. Not only this, he caught the horse of the Ashwamedh Yajna performed by my revered father. Several times, I decided to punish him for his misdeeds but every time his mother (my aunt) came begging to spare his life."

Continuing further, Krishna remarked, " I had promised my aunt to pardon his one hundred excesses. I had been counting his misdeeds on fingers. They have already come to one hundred in number. So, I am going to make short work of him before your eyes so that it should be a lesson for other sinners. "

Saying so, Krishna wielded his chakra and shot it at Shishupal. Whirling round and round it went whizzing to Shishupal, chopped his head off his body and flung it away.



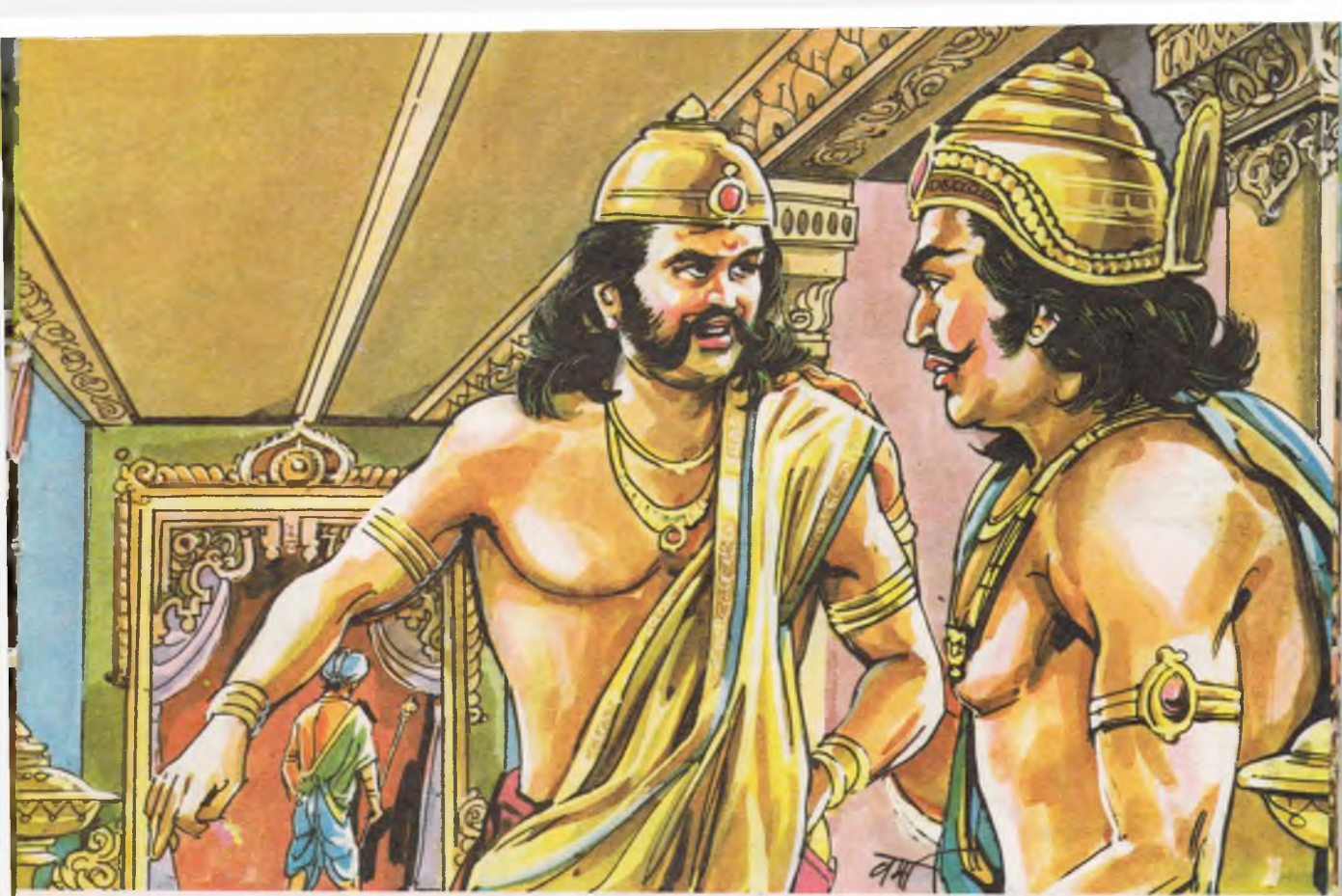
Shishupal's murder sent a current of fear all through the gathering. Krishna consoled them and comforted his son as well. Then he helped him perform the last rites of Shishupal and went with him to crown him as the next king of Shishupal's kingdom.

Soon after, the guests also left Indraprastha with the gifts given to them by Yudhishtir.

Duryodhana was so amazed to see the beautiful palace of Yudhishtir that he asked Shakuni, his maternal uncle, to stay back and enjoy the grandeur of the palace where every thing was illusory—it gave the impression of being something else. Several days passed happily but one day a sad thing happened which regenerated the embitterment in Duryodhana's mind against the Pandavas.

One day Duryodhana followed by Shakuni, tried to enter what appeared as an open door though the door was only an illusion. Naturally Duryodhana struck against the wall which in fact it was. Draupadi was sitting just near by on a cushion. Giggling aloud, she remarked, "*Blind son of a blind father.*"

Duryodhana was cut to the quick at Draupadi's pungent remark and decided in his heart of hearts to avenge the insult one day.



But that was not all. Hardly had Duryodhana recovered from his insult when he lifted his mantle mistaking the crystal floor to be a pool of water. But stepping onto it he said, " Oh ! it's not water but floor. Really wonderful ; what an architecture !" Going a few steps on this floor he failed to locate the pool of water which looked like floor and as such fell into it amid general laughter and jeering on the part of the lookers-on.

All these things created a sense of keen jealousy towards the Pandava's prosperity in Duryodhana's mind. He said to Shakuni, " Uncle ! I cannot bear with the prosperity of these sons of Pandu. I feel like attacking them and capturing this palace for myself. " But Shakuni made him realise that by force he could not defeat the Pandavas. At the same time, he assured him that he had a plan that could strip Yudhishtir of all his belongings including the palace. At the same time, it could enable Duryodhana to avenge his insult suffered at Draupadi's hand.

" Let me know how it can be done, " asked Duryodhana impatiently.

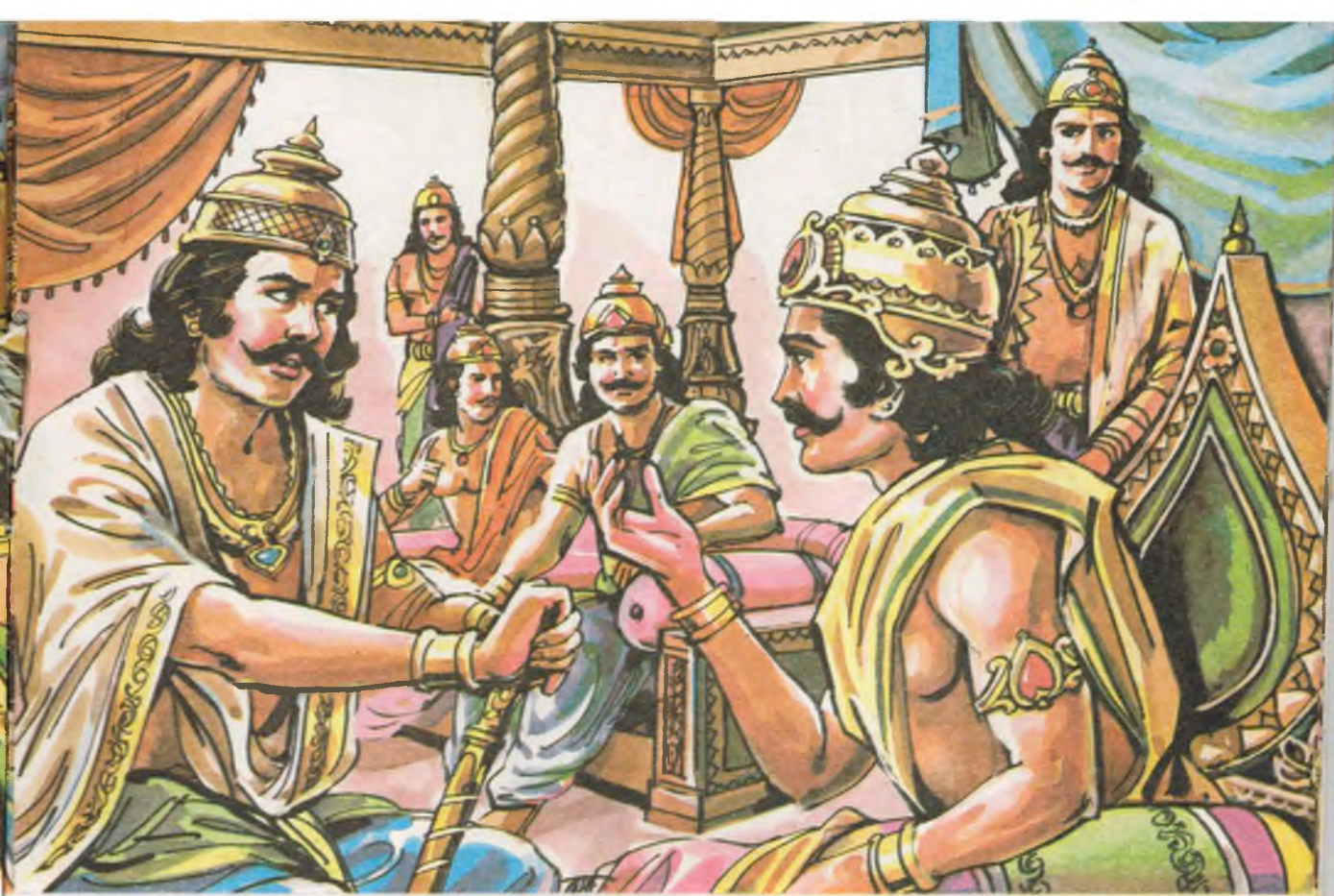
" Yudhishtir is fond of gambling, you know. And none can beat me in this game because I use charmed dice, you know too. Your job is to persuade him to gamble against me. Leave everything else to me, " replied Shakuni.



Having returned to Hastinapur, Duryodhana and Shakuni approached Dhritrashtra and said, "We were really wonder-struck to see Yudhishtir's palace at Indraprastha. Its grandeur is just indescribable." They also narrated to the king how Draupadi had insulted Duryodhana and how he was jeered at by the spectators when he fell into water mistaking it for dry floor. Dhritrashtra also felt pinched to hear what Draupadi had remarked.

Duryodhana found that it was right time to make hay while the sun was shining. He was sure that his father would certainly agree to their evil plan at this moment of troubled emotions. So, he said, "Dad ! we have thought of a plan. Shakuni is a past-master in gambling as he plays with enchanted dice. If we persuade Yudhishtir to gamble against Shakuni, he will certainly lose everything including the palace, his kingdom and perhaps Draupadi too. We shall be in a position to avenge our insult thoroughly."

Though Dhritrashtra liked the plan because he was burning under the anguish of Draupadi's remarks, yet he decided to consult Vidur in this matter. How could Vidur agree to such an evil plan. He advised the king to dissuade Duryodana from doing anything that might reopen the mutual rift which had been duly bridged as a result of the division of the kingdom. So, Dhritrashtra did not give his assent to Duryodhana's plan.



Duryodhana, though disappointed, again said to his father, "Father dear ! Vidur is misguiding you. Enemies must be destroyed by hook or by crook. Just see, the people who were roaming as beggars yesterday have felt encouraged to insult you today. The riches have turned their head to such an extent."

"Even then, my son, gambling is not a noble thing. It is a grave evil that often leads to ruin one way or the other. Sometimes it leads to destructive wars even that annihilate dynasties from the very surface of the earth. So, I would advise you to refrain from this plan and be content with what you have already got."

But Duryodhana did not see reason and remained adamant on his point. Dhritrashtra, having been blind, had been overindulgent towards his son from the very beginning. Moreover, he had a fickle mind and seldom stuck to his point. So, he permitted Duryodhana to have his way and thus sowed the seeds of bitter enmity between his sons and the Pandavas. This enmity ultimately led to a bloody war that came to be known as the *Mahabharat*. So, Vidur was sent to Indraprastha to invite Yudhishtir for a game of dice. But Vidur, instead of persuading Yudhishtir, alerted him explaining the evils of gambling. *What is to be must be*. Yudhishtir's weakness for gambling did not let him heed the advice of Vidur and he left for Hastinapur along with his brothers and Draupadi.



Having been duly entertained by Duryodhana and Shakuni, the Pandavas rested at night. Next day, Yudhishthir went to the gambling hall along with his brothers. Shakuni welcomed them and the game began. Shakuni said to Yudhishthir, "Your Majesty ! let us decide about the stakes."

"Uncle! one thing must be remembered that game should be quite fair and not fraudulent. Unfair games are most unbecoming of Kshatriyas," remarked Yudhishthir.

"Yudhishthir, it is the dice that decide the game. Play fearlessly if you have the courage to accept whatever comes out of it. If you are afraid, nobody is going to force you to play. You can refuse and quit," argued Shakuni.

"Uncle ! you know that I have a weakness for playing dice and can never afford to refuse when invited for it. So, the question of my quitting does not arise. Let me know who is going to play with me and who will put the stakes ?" remarked Yudhishthir.

Hearing Yudhishthir's words, Duryodhana at once said, "I shall put the stakes and uncle Shakuni shall throw the dice for me. Is it acceptable to you ?"



Yudhishthir gave his approval and the game began. Family elders like Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, Vidur and Dhritrashtra were also present in the hall where the game was going on. Shakuni was using charmed dice and so he went on heaping defeats on Yudhishthir and, as a result, the Pandava king lost his riches, kingdom, his attendants, his brothers one by one and finally himself even. Last of all he staked his wife Draupadi and lost her too.

Duryodhana was beside himself with joy to have ruined the Pandavas. He was almost mad to have won back the part of the kingdom that was given to Yudhishthir.

Then he asked his prime minister Vidur. "Go and bring Draupadi here. She will work as a maid in my palace."

Vidur declined saying, "Shame on you Duryodhana! you are so mean, I had never thought. Why are you putting your hand in a cobra's hole. To me, you look as a poor deer who intentionally wants to enter a lion's den." But Duryodhana was not going to hear any advice

He thundered, "Vidur! don't forget that you are a maid's son. We gave you the honour of being our prime minister because of grandpa Bhishma. How did you take courage to reply back like that? You are supposed to obey the order of the crown-prince."



Duryodhana went as far as to ask Vidur to leave the court if he was to support the Pandavas. So, Vidur made up his mind to leave the Kaurava court and said, "I have always wished welfare and prosperity for the sons and grandsons of king Vichitravirya. But I feel that my services are not required in the court of Hastinapur now. Who can go against the destiny." Saying these words, Vidur left the court.

Just after Vidur had left, Duryodhana turned to his younger brother Dushasana and said, "Dushasan ! go immediately and drag Draupadi to my court before long."

Without saying even a single word, Dushasan left the court with a view to obeying the command of his elder brother. In no time, he got to the guest-house where the Pandavas were staying. Draupadi was sitting on her cot. Seeing Dushasan standing before her, she was highly amazed and asked him what the matter was."

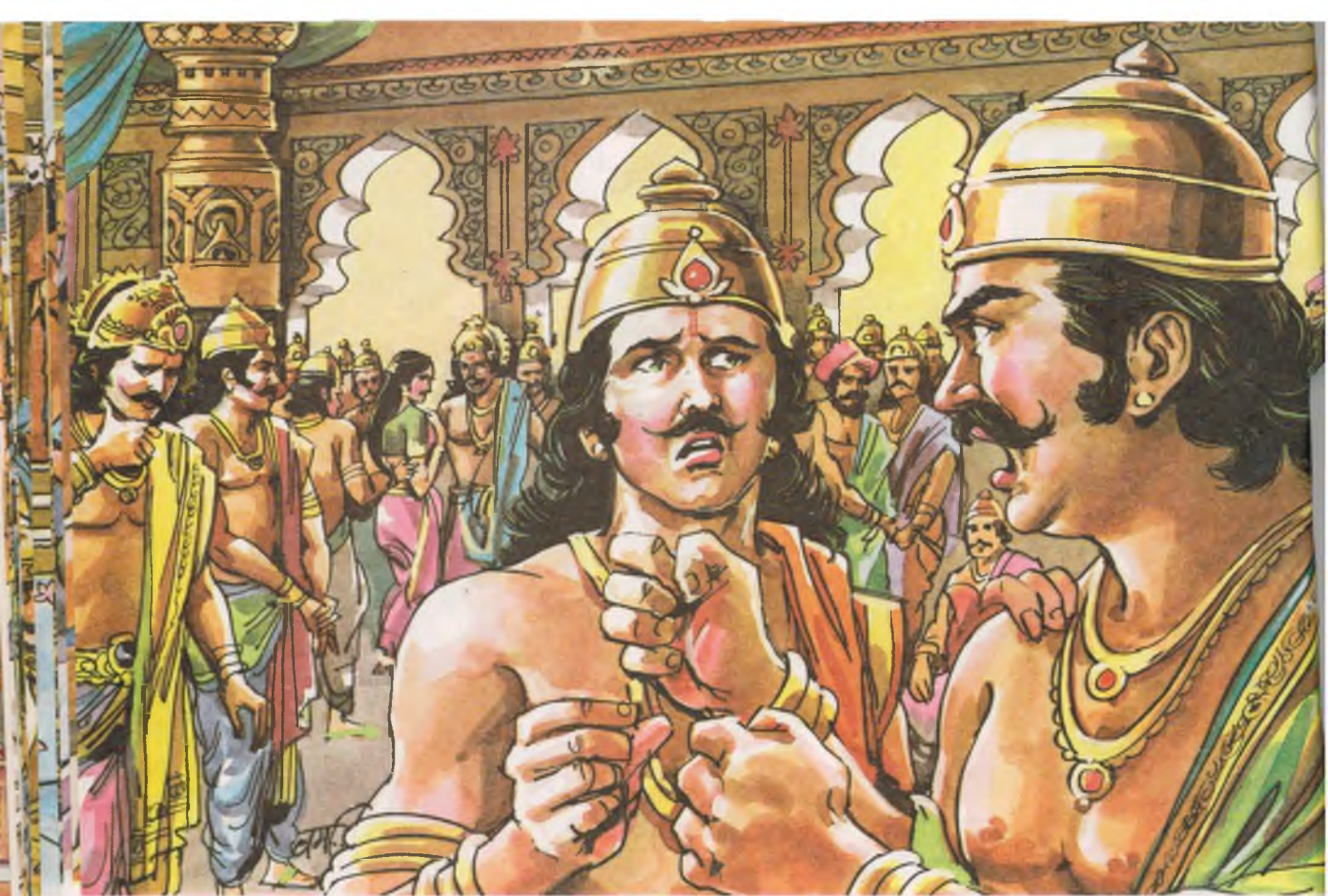
"Listen, O Draupadi ! your husband has lost you along with his brothers, his kingdom and every other thing that he possesses to my brother Duryodhana in a game of dice. You are, therefore, now our maid. I have been ordered to drag you to the court so that you may act as a maid-servant there," retorted Dushasan curtly.



Hearing Dushasan's words, Draupadi felt as if ground were slipping from under her feet. Shocked to the back-bone, she began to cry bitterly and ran towards the inner palace to get to Gandhari's chamber so that she might be safe there. But Dushasana did not allow her to go very far. He held her by the hair and dragged her towards the court saying, "You haughty lady! we have won you in the game and so you are now our property. We may treat you anyway we like."

Mercilessly dragged and pushed, Draupadi's hair got dishevelled and her clothes got partly off her body. She cast a glance with pensive and helpless eyes at the Pandava brothers who were sitting with their heads hung down in shame. She said, "Shame on the descendants of emperor Bharata who have ceased to be true Kshatriyas and started losing their honour in dice games. I condemn the elders sitting here and watching me being disgraced before their very eyes. Who will answer my question — Had my husband any right to stake me when he had lost himself?"

There was pin-drop silence in the hall and everybody was sitting with his head bowed low. None could dare utter a single word in reply to Draupadi's question. How strange! the warriors who boasted of their prowess were unable to save the honour of a lady, nay, a queen, who was bewailing for help.



Bheema could not control himself any more. He stood up bursting with anger and said, "Yudhishtira! everything has crossed the limit now. I kept silent even when you staked us (the four brothers) in the game because you are not only our elder brother but our king also. But I ask what right you had got to stake Draupadi when you had lost yourself even."

Then Bheema asked his younger brother Arjuna to bring fire so that he could burn both the hands of Yudhishtira. Arjuna stood up and going up to Bheema said, "Brother! be calm for God's sake. It is not good for us to frown and fret on our dear brother. Keep up the decorum of decency. I request you with folded hands."

"But how can I put up with Draupadi's disgrace before my eyes? She is our honour, the honour of the entire Pandava Kingdom. Isn't it?" Saying these words, Bheema covered his face with both his hands.

On the other hand, Karna found it a good chance to degrade the Pandavas because he had always been humiliated because of them. He asked Dushashana to strip all the five brothers of their royal garments and to strip Draupadi as well there in the court itself.



Dhushasana got up at once and going up to Draupadi held the open end of her saree. Then he began to pull it hard so that Draupadi might be stripped in the presence of all sitting there.

With tears in her eyes, Draupadi looked at everybody for help but none could dare to come to his rescue.

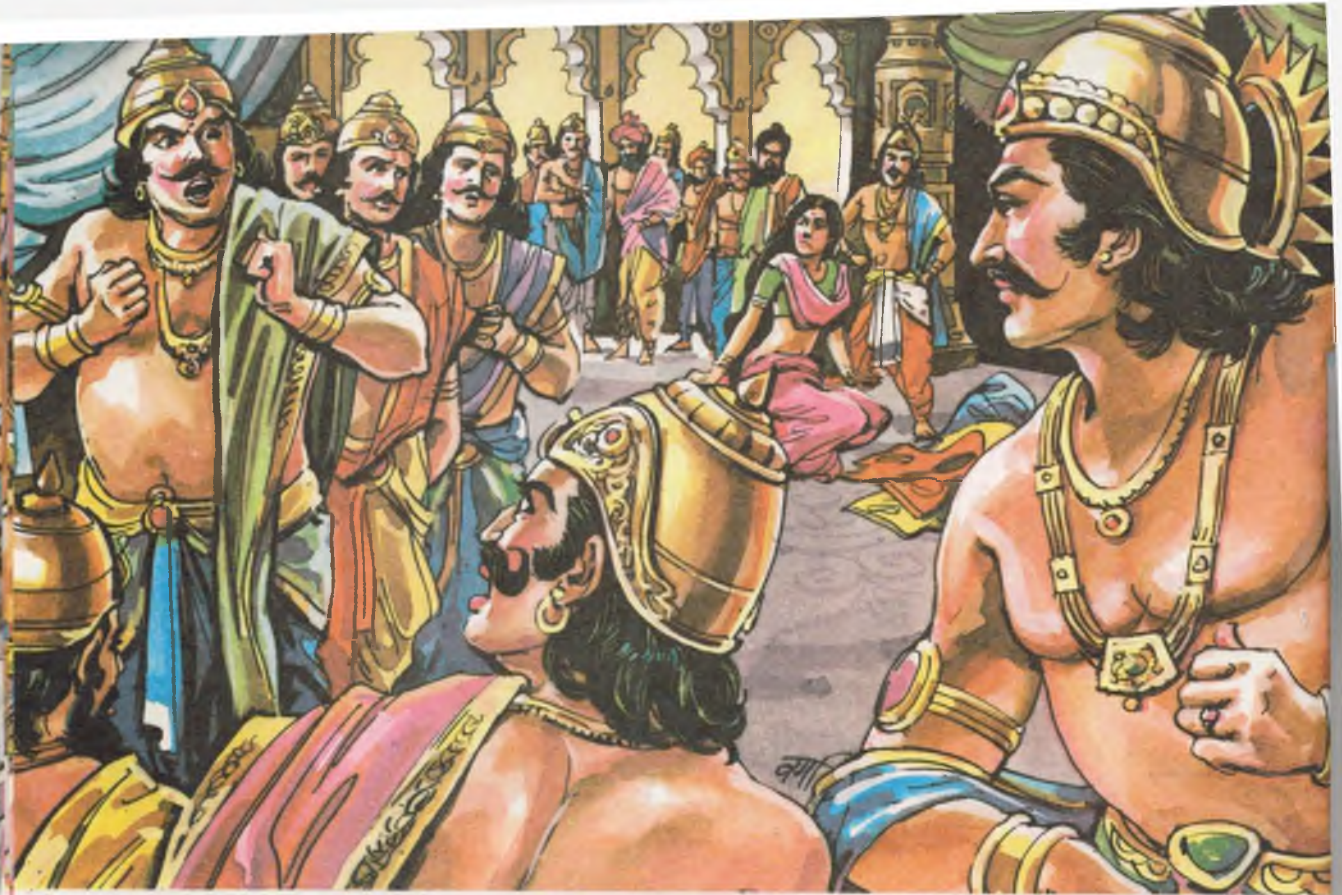
Now Draupadi invoked Krishna silently to save her honour. Krishna at once responded though invisibly through his miraculous power.

How strange ! as soon as the first saree ended, it was found to be joined to another at the end of which emerged the third one the fourth one — the fifth one — and so on.

Dushasana went on pulling the sarees that were appearing in different colours. At last he got tired and began to perspire heavily.

All of a sudden, clouds overcast the sky followed by thunder and lightning flashes. A voice from heaven was heard to say something.

So, everybody was amazed and Dushasana's hands stopped pulling the sarees any more.



The heavenly voice warned Dushasana, "Hold your hand, O Mean Dushasana! Your evil deed has crossed the limit. Leave the saree at once otherwise you will be struck by lightning and reduced to ashes in no time."

Dushasana was so frightened that leaving *the saree*, he ran away out of fear.

But Duryodhana came forward and said to Draupadi. "Come here, at once ; I shall seat you on my thigh and avenge your words— '*a blind son of a blind father.*'"

At this, Bheema stood and proclaimed, "Listen, O Duryodhana ! I take a vow to break this thigh with my mace in the battle." Bheema further said, " As for your brother Dushasana, I shall tear his chest and with the blood that comes out, I shall wash Draupadi's hair."

Dhritrashtra was horrified to see the miracle of sarees and to hear Bheema's vow.

So, he thought it wise to release the Pandavas out of Duryodhana's slavery and return to Yudhishtir everything he had lost in the game.

ISBN 81-7301-044-7

