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PART II.

Balaráma pre-
pares to slay the
Pándavas, but is
prevented by
Krishna.

Krishna defends
Bhíma.

Balaráma de-
nounces Bhíma.

Krishna excuses
Bhíma.

Bhíma forgiven
by Yudhish-
thira.

The Pándavas
go with Krishna
to see Duryod-
hana.

Recriminations
between Dur-
yodhana and
Krishna.

proached Duryodhana; and when Balaráma saw that his thigh was broken, he cried out to the Pándavas :—" In fighting with the mace, it is contrary to all rule to strike below the waist; and since in an open contest for the Raj, you are guilty of foul play, and transgress the laws of the combat, I will slay you all." And Balaráma took the ploughshare and the pestle, which he always carried with him as his weapons, and prepared to attack the Pándavas, and they all fled from before him; and he pursued them in great wrath, when Krishna caught him in his arms, and said :—" O brother, these Pándavas are our kinsmen and are worthy men; and in the present case Bhíma has not transgressed the rule of fighting, because Duryodhana had long ago incurred the blame by foul play with the dice, when Bhíma swore in the presence both of Duryodhana and Yudhishthira, that he would break the thigh of Duryodhana, and he has now only fulfilled his vow : Moreover, the Kauravas are all slain and gone, and if you now slaughter the Pándavas to whom will you give the Raj?" Balaráma answered :—" You say that these men are in the right; but how could I look on and see Bhíma set his foot upon the head of Duryodhana?" And Krishna tried his best to explain away the evil act; and he refused to release Balaráma until he had sworn to work no further ill against the Pándavas; and Balaráma made the promise and was released, and he immediately mounted his chariot, and went his way to Dwáraká.

When Balaráma had departed from the plain of Kurukshetra, Bhíma came forward and threw himself at the feet of Raja Yudhishthira, and implored pardon for the evil he had committed against Duryodhana; and Krishna and Arjuna, and all the rest who were present, came up and solicited the Raja for his forgiveness, which at last they obtained. Then they all went in a body to the spot where Duryodhana was lying, and they sat down around him. Duryodhana then charged Krishna with having been the cause of the death of Drona, and the death of Karna, and with having given the signal to Bhíma to strike him on the thigh contrary to the rules of fair fighting; and Krishna



retorted by recapitulating all the wrongs committed by Duryodhana against his kinsmen, and especially with the affront offered to Draupadī, and the cruel murder of the stripling Abhimanyu. Duryodhana replied :—" I governed my Raj with so much justice that the wolf and the lamb drank water from the same pond, and none ever demanded a thing from me that I did not bestow upon him : No one before me had conducted a government so well as myself, nor will any one who may follow me be able to equal it ; and I now beseech the Almighty that he will give me in eternity that lot which shall be the just retribution of my conduct." Whilst Duryodhana was thus speaking, flowers fell from heaven upon his head, and celestial music was heard in the sky ; and when the Pándavas perceived these things, their faces all turned pale, and they were seized with trembling.

Manifestations of the divine approval of Duryodhana.

Then Krishna, seeing that the Pándavas were all downhearted, said to them :—" You are now become Rajas, and have obtained the Raj at the point of your own swords, what is it therefore that you fear ? Take the government into your own hands, and administer justice to the ryots and to all those who are oppressed, and for all your good efforts God will reward you in the other world." Krishna then sounded his shell with all his might, and proclaimed the reign of Raja Yudhishtira ; and he made known that all who had risked their lives in support of the Raja should be exalted with due honours and rewards. And all the people who were present rejoiced greatly, and filled the air with their acclamations, crying out :—" Long live Raja Yudhishtira ! "

Krishna consoles the Pándavas, and proclaims Yudhishtira as Raja.

After this the Pándavas and their friends mounted their chariots and proceeded towards the camp of the Kauravas, leaving a few persons behind to look after Duryodhana. And when they arrived at the camp of their enemies, they found no one there save a few old people ; and they entered the quarters of Duryodhana, and saw so many jewels, and so much gold and spoil of all kinds, that their eyes were dazzled with the sight.

The Pándavas proceed to the camp of the Kauravas and obtain great spoil.

Yudhishtira requests Krishna to proceed to Hastinapur, and excuse the proceedings of himself and brethren to the Maharaja.

Then Yudhishtira said to Krishna :—" I would have



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wished to have paid a visit to Mahárajá Dhritaráshtṛa and the Rání Gándhárí, and to have excused ourselves as much as possible to Gándhárí, who is a woman of the strictest virtue, and of a sound religious character, and who has always shown me great kindness : But now night has come on and I cannot wait upon her, and I am afraid that when she shall hear the news that all her sons are slain, she may utter a curse against us so that we all perish : I therefore pray you to go to Hastinápur alone to-night, and soothe her all you can, and do not let her unawares pronounce a curse upon us." Krishna replied :—"What you have said is

Krishna reaches Hastinápur on the first quarter of the night.

perfectly proper." And he immediately set off for Hastinápur, and arrived there before one quarter of the night was spent ; and he waited upon Dhritaráshtṛa, whom he found seated in his palace, and went and took his hand and kissed it. And the blind Mahárajá immediately guessed who he was, and said :—"It is Krishna !" And Krishna answered :—"Yes." Then Dhritaráshtṛa began loudly to weep and to wail, saying :—"O Krishna, do you approve of the slaughter of my sons ?" Krishna answered :—"Your heart is your eye, and nothing can be concealed from you, and you must be aware that what has occurred to your children is from the great god Siva, and not from me nor from the Pándavas." Dhritaráshtṛa said :—"I cannot but acknowledge this, and at present patience is my only remedy : But I am in great pain for Duryodhana's death, on account of his mother Gándhárí ; because women are naturally not so patient as men are : She must have heard of the slaughter of her sons, and she will be very miserable : So do you now go and visit her, and comfort her as well as you are able ; perchance she is already dead with anguish."

Interview between Krishna and the Mahárajá.

Affecting interview between Krishna and the Rání Gándhárí.

Now whilst Krishna was preparing to go to the Rání, Gándhárí herself entered the door, and all in tears said to him :—"O Krishna, had you no compassion for me, and did you deem it right that all my sons should be slaughtered ?" And with these words she fell down in a swoon. And Krishna's heart burnt within him, and he burst into tears, fearing that Gándhárí was really dead, and he called for



some sweet odours and sprinkled them upon her face. And Dhritarāshtra also came and laid Gāndhārī's head upon his knees, and after a considerable time she began to revive. Krishna then said to her:—"You are not as other women are, so as to lose all power of patience and resignation; or not to know that there is no remedy against the will of Providence: Were you not always aware from the conduct of your two sons, Duryodhana and Duhsāsana, that such a day as this must certainly await them? Will you not allow of yourself that in all this business no one is to blame but your sons? You yourself know what counsel I gave to Duryodhana, when I came here as ambassador from the Pāndavas: Now consider that these Pāndavas are also your sons, and have done nothing but in self-defence; and that what has befallen your own sons is only what your sons were desirous of inflicting upon the Pāndavas: You are a woman of great understanding; say now whether what has befallen your sons can be attributed as a crime to any one but Duryodhana: Do not therefore make a useless clamour, but submit with patience, and eternal paradise will hereafter be your portion from God: You are a woman of that profound sanctity, that if you were only once to utter a curse against the whole world, God would for your sake involve it in destruction; but if, seeing that your sons are already slain, you should now curse the Pāndavas, who will fulfil every filial duty to you and your husband a thousand times better than was done by your own sons, what advantage could possibly accrue to you?"

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Krishna consoles Gāndhārī by engaging that the Pāndavas should prove more dutiful than the Kauravas.

Gāndhārī listened attentively to all these arguments, and said to Krishna:—"I pray God to bless you for having awakened me from the state of grief in which I was plunged by the loss of my children, so that I was very nearly uttering a curse against the Pāndavas: But I am now aware that what you have said is just and right, and that I have no remedy but resignation: But now you must take care of this aged, blind, grief-stricken, broken-hearted husband of mine; and do not let too much evil overwhelm him, nor his enemies work their will upon him."

Gāndhārī's reply to Krishna.

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his promises.Returns to the
quarters of the
Pándavas in the
camp of the
Kauravas.Review of the
foregoing narra-
tive of the last
day of the great
war.Mythical refer-
ences to Krish-
na.Extraordinary
counsel of
Krishna that
Bhîma should
strike a foul
blow.Deaths of the
three heroes of
the Kauravas
ascribed to the
immoral inter-
ference of
Krishna.

Krishna answered her :—" Fear not, for Raja Yudhishtira will perform every filial duty to your husband Dhritarashtra a thousand times better than was ever done by Duryodhana ; and the Mahārāja will be a thousand times better treated by the Pándavas than ever he was by his own sons ; and if Duryodhana and Duhsāsana were your sons, Yudhishtira and Arjuna will be your slaves." And Gándhārī was consoled by these words of Krishna ; and Krishna then returned to the Pándavas, who had taken up their quarters for the night in the camp of the Kauravas ; and he entered the presence of Yudhishtira and related to him all that had occurred during his visit at Hastinapur.

The foregoing narrative of the events of the last day of the great war is deeply interesting, but calls for little comment. The mythical references to Krishna are however singularly suggestive ; both as regards his strange counsel during the battle between Bhîma and Duryodhana, and his mythical mission to Hastinapur at the conclusion of the war. Upon the former point it may be remarked that Duryodhana had hitherto displayed a peculiar enmity towards Krishna ; or, to use a later and more mythical form of expression, he had ever opposed the worship of Krishna, and disbelieved in his divine nature. For some strange reason, which can scarcely be fathomed, the deaths of the three leading heroes of the Kauravas are ascribed to Krishna's interference, although each case involved a moral delinquency. He caused the death of Drona by suggesting the lie which was told as regards Aswattháma. He caused the death of Karna by counselling Arjuna to shoot an arrow when Karna was trying to raise his chariot-wheel from the earth. Finally, he suggested the foul blow with the mace beneath the waist by which Duryodhana was mor-



tally wounded by Bhíma. Accordingly the divine hero is bitterly reproached by Duryodhana for these offences; and the difficulty is to understand why the Brahmanical compilers should have attributed such undoubted deviations from morality to their own particular deity. Possibly they desired to transfer the guilt from responsible heroes to an irresponsible Supreme Being. The narrative of Yudhishtira's lie, of Arjuna's unfair shot, and of Bhíma's foul blow, may have been related in the original tradition, without any reference to Krishna, and without any attempt at palliation, simply because at that early period they were not opposed to the moral sense of the community. In the Brahmanical age however such deeds were by no means creditable to the national heroes; although when changed to religious mysteries, and ascribed to an incarnation of the Supreme Being, they might be treated as acts which mere humanity could not venture to praise or condemn.

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Krishna re-
proached by
Duryodhana.

Origin of the
myth.

The mission of Krishna to console the blind Mahárajá Dhritaráshtra, and the Rání Gándhári, for the slaughter of their sons, and, above all, to reconcile the bereaved pair to the murderers of their sons, is a circumstance which is far more in accordance with the religious character of Krishna, who is not unfrequently represented as a consoler in times of sorrow and suffering. Indeed, the tone of thought which prevails throughout this portion of the poem sufficiently indicates its later origin; and it may be safely passed over as a pure invention and interpolation of the Brahmanical compilers.

Krishna appears
in his mission to
Hastinapur in
the character of
a consoler.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE REVENGE OF ASWATTHÁMA.

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the war and
triumph of the
Pándavas.Three warriors
alone remaining
of all the forces
of the Kauravas.Vow of Aswat-
tháma, son of
Drona, to be
revenged for the
death of his
father.

THE great war of Bhárata was now over. The cause of the Pándavas had triumphed. Duryodhana was lying mortally wounded upon the plain of Kurukshetra, and of all his numerous followers only three remained alive. But these three were still prepared to renew the struggle; a circumstance that tends to confirm the view that the war turned upon single combats, and that the forces engaged might have been counted by tens or hundreds rather than by millions or billions. Amongst these three men was one named Aswattháma. He was the son of the old preceptor Drona, and had fought, like his father, on the side of the Kauravas, but had hitherto made no figure in the history. When however Drona was slain by Dhrishta-dyumna on the fifteenth day of the war, Aswattháma had sworn to be revenged on his father's murderer; and on the night of the last day of the war circumstances occurred which enabled him to fulfil his vow. Yudhishtira and his brethren were sleeping in the camp of the Kauravas, on the opposite side of the lake; but all their surviving followers and servants, together with their wife Draupadí and their five sons, were sleeping in



their own entrenched camp in apparently the most perfect security, having, as they supposed, not a single enemy remaining alive who was capable of working them any harm. The story of the revenge of Aswattháma is as follows:—

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Now it was on the evening of the eighteenth and last day of the great war that the Pándavas had left Duryodhana on the plain of Kurukshetra, and that Krishna had visited Dhritaráshtra and Gándhárí at Hastinápura. And when Duryodhana was left by the Pándavas, he sat up in spite of his wound, and cleansed his face from blood and dust, and bound up his hair. Meantime Aswattháma, Kripa, and Kritavarman perceived that the Pándavas had departed; and they came out of their place of concealment, and presented themselves to Duryodhana; and when the people whom Yudhishtira had stationed to take care of the Raja, saw those warriors approaching, they ran away. And when the three warriors came near to Duryodhana, and beheld his wretched condition, they rolled themselves in the dust and wept aloud. And Aswattháma said to Duryodhana:—"You know how Dhrishta-dyumna slew my father Drona, and how with like treachery Bhíma has worked this evil upon you: If now you will lay your commands upon me, I will this very night go and slay every one of the Pándavas." Duryodhana then bade Kripa bring Aswattháma before him; and Kripa took Aswattháma's hand, and did as he was commanded. Duryodhana then said:—"I now appoint you, Aswattháma, to be Chief in my room." And Raja Duryodhana turned to the other two, Kripa and Kritavarman, and said:—"Henceforth do you look upon Aswattháma as you have hitherto looked upon me." And Aswattháma kissed the ground, and uttered a prayer for the Raja; and the Raja said:—"The time of my death has now arrived, and it is my wish that you go this very night and slay all the Pándavas and their army, and bring me the head of Bhíma, that on beholding it I may go out of this world with-

Night of the
eighteenth day
of the war.

Duryodhana
wounded and
alone upon the
plain.

The three
surviving war-
riors of his army
visit him.

Their great
grief.

Aswattháma
offers to slay the
Pándavas that
night.

Duryodhana
appoints As-
wattháma Chief
in command,
and directs him
to bring the
head of Bhíma.



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The three warriors leave Duryodhana upon the plain.

Aswattháma sees an owl kill the sleeping crows.

Resolves to fall upon the Pándavas in like manner.

Kripa remonstrates.

Aswattháma persists in revenging the slaughter of Drona.

out regret." So saying, the strength of Duryodhana again failed him, and he fainted away from weakness and pain.

After Duryodhana had thus appointed Aswattháma, son of Drona, to be Chief and Commander in his own stead, the three warriors took leave of the dying Raja and went their way. And they sat down under a tree to consult what they should do; and Aswattháma said:—"I have already received the orders of the Raja to slay all the Pándavas this very night, and I must now do something or forfeit my head." And Aswattháma saw that a large number of crows were roosting in the tree; and presently an owl came, and killed the crows one by one, without alarming the others.

And Aswattháma said to his two companions:—"This owl instructs me how to act towards my enemies if they be too numerous: It is to kill them by night one after the other, without making any noise that will disturb the rest: Give me your advice! Shall I go and fall upon our enemies, particularly upon Dhrishta-dyumna, who slew my father Drona?"

Kripa replied:—"You are well aware that Duryodhana will now certainly die, and we have already done very much in his service: My opinion is that we should betake ourselves to Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira and the Rání Gándhárí, and mention this scheme to them; and then if they order us to set about it we should do so, but that otherwise we should not move in the matter." And both Kripa and Kritavarman strongly urged Aswattháma, but he would not listen to them, saying:—"These people have slain my father, and I am confident that they will all be sleeping after their victory; and if I do not watch this opportunity for revenge, I am very sure I shall never meet with another; and the grief that now overburthens my heart will never be assuaged as long as I live: If I conquer in this effort it is well; otherwise if I am killed I do not care: So do not interrupt me, but leave me to my purpose: In the beginning of the war I ought not to have taken up arms at all, because I am a Bráhmaṇ; and I should have occupied myself in study and prayer: But now that I have launched my life upon the torrent of war, I must fight to some purpose: The least that



I can do is to revenge my father's blood upon his enemies, and if I do not accomplish this, what can I say for myself?"

Kripa replied :—" Since you are so sore upon your father's death, I pray you to remember that it is wrong to fall upon our foes unawares : Stay now till morning, and we will all three go and fight the Pándavas fairly, and see to whom the great god Siva will give the victory : Let us sleep now, and to-morrow set our faces to the battle." Aswattháma said :—" Rage will not let me sleep, but you may go to sleep and welcome." Kripa answered :—" I only advise you that it is a most enormous crime to slay people in their sleep ; for the rest, do as you please." Aswattháma said :—" What you have counselled is very true, but however much I strive with myself, I cannot let the slaughter of my father go unpunished ; and if I can but accomplish the death of Dhrishta-dyumna, let what may come to pass, be it going to heaven or going to hell."

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Kripa proposes to wait till morning, and then to fight the Pándavas fairly.

Aswattháma refuses.

When Aswattháma had done speaking, he rose up and harnessed his horses to his chariot, and he put on his armour and drove off ; and when Kripa and Kritavarman saw that advice had no effect upon him, they both followed after him. And Aswattháma went straight to the camp of the Pándavas.

Aswattháma, followed by Kripa and Kritavarman, proceeds to the camp of the Pándavas.

Now Raja Yudhishtira and his four brethren were at that time in the camp of the Kauravas, where they had found much spoil, and had taken up their quarters for the night ; but their five sons by Draupadí, and all the other Chieftains of the army, were in their own camp, sleeping soundly in their several quarters in perfect security, and Draupadí also was sleeping in the camp. Now the camp of the Pándavas was surrounded by a deep trench, so contrived as to have only one gate or entrance ; and there was no way of entry on any other side. And when Aswattháma came to the gate he saw that his two friends were following behind ; and he requested them to stay and guard the entrance, whilst he went in and worked his revenge. He then passed through the gate without seeing any one ; and went straightway to the quarters of Dhrishta-dyumna ; and he saw Dhrishta-dyumna sleeping in splendour with all his women sitting

Absence of the Pándavas in the camp of the Kauravas.

The single gateway.

Aswattháma leaves his two friends to guard the gate whilst he enters the camp.

Surprises Dhrishta-dyumna and slaughters him.



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Screaming of the women, and general confusion.

The five sons of the Pándavas rush out and are slain by Aswattháma.

Fearful slaughter amongst the followers and servants of the Pándavas.

Aswattháma escapes with the heads of the five sons of the Pándavas.

about him. And the women were thunderstricken at the approach of Aswattháma, and he went and kicked Dhrishta-dyumna on the head, and awoke him from his sleep. Then Dhrishta-dyumna beheld Aswattháma standing before him with a drawn sword, and he cried out:—"What cowardice is this to fall unawares upon a naked man!" And Aswattháma struck him on the head with the back of the sword and broke his skull. Then the women began to scream and Aswattháma rushed out, and no one knew who he was; but the people of Dhrishta-dyumna, who had come out with drawn swords on hearing the alarm, seeing a man rush out from the quarters of their Chief with a naked sword, ran hastily after him. And Aswattháma killed a great number of them, and in their confusion many of them killed each other.

Now it so happened that Draupadí had come into the camp that very night with her five sons whom she had borne to the Pándavas. And the young men were roused by the noise and alarm, and hearing that some one had killed Dhrishta-dyumna, who was the brother of their mother, they armed themselves and ran out to revenge him. And Aswattháma fell upon the five sons of the Pándavas one after the other, and cut them down and slew them one after the other. And all the camp was in horrible confusion, and the people, as they rushed out from their several quarters, fell upon each other in their alarm, and fathers slew their sons and sons their fathers, and no man knew what was done either by himself or by the others. And every one who tried to escape by the gate of the camp was cut down and slain by Kripa and Kritavarman, whom Aswattháma had posted there. And Aswattháma found a great pile of firewood in the camp, and he set it on fire, and by the light of the flame he discovered and slew very many. And the horrors of that night surpassed all that had occurred during the eighteen days of the war, for Krishna and the Pándavas were sleeping far away in the quarters of Duryodhana, but all their followers and servants innumerable had been left behind in the camp of the Pándavas. And Aswattháma cut off the heads of the five sons of



Draupadí, and carried them in his hands; and he made his escape through the gate of the camp, and joined Kripa and Kritavarman, and he boasted that he had avenged his father's blood, and proposed that they should return to Duryodhana, and acquaint him with their victory.

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After this the three warriors proceeded to the spot where they had left Duryodhana; and on their way they saw the wolves and the jackals devouring the bodies of those who

The three warriors return to Duryodhana.

had been slain in the great war, as they lay on the plain of Kurukshetra. When they approached the Raja, they found him fallen in the midst of blood and dust, but with a portion of his senses still remaining, and they sat down near him and began to weep. Then Duryodhana looked up and knew who they were, and he made signs with his hand to ask them whence they came. Aswattháma said:—"A curse be on us

for being alive while you are in this state: Nevertheless, I have brought you something which even yet will give you joy." Hearing this, Duryodhana, notwithstanding his weakness, raised himself up and asked what he had got. As-

Aswattháma passes off the heads of the sons for the heads of the fathers.

wattháma answered:—"I have this night killed all the five Pándavas with their whole army, and here are their five heads." When Duryodhana heard these words he leaped

Exultation of Duryodhana.

up a full cubit from his place, and said:—"Do you really speak truth?" Then Aswattháma produced the heads, and Duryodhana desired that they should be shown to him one by one, which was done; and as the day had not fully dawned, and as the heads of the five sons of the Pándavas were perfect semblances of their respective fathers, Duryodhana thought as he beheld them in the hands of Aswattháma that they were the real heads of the Pándavas. And Dur-

yodhana said:—"O Aswattháma, you have entirely taken away my grief, and now give me Bhíma's head into my own hand." And Aswattháma gave him the head of Bhíma's

Duryodhana takes the head of Bhíma's son, and discovers the imposture by crushing the skull.

son; and Duryodhana took it and squeezed it with all his might, until the skull burst in. Duryodhana then said:—"Alas, Aswattháma, this can never be the head of Bhíma, which must be vastly too strong and hard to be broken between my hands." And Duryodhana then asked for the



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Reproaches
Aswattháma for
the murder of
the innocent
sons.

Death of Dur-
yodhana.

Flight of the
three warriors.

Yudhishtira
falls down in a
swoon.

His lamenta-
tions.

Krishna con-
soles him.

other heads, and examined them, and he perceived that they were the heads of the sons of Draupadí, and not those of her husbands; and he instantly fell into the most profound grief, and exclaimed:—"O Aswattháma, you have done a horrid deed in slaying these harmless youths, and thus cutting short my whole race: Had these young men lived they would have preserved our name alive: My enmity was against the Pándavas, and not against these innocents." Saying this Duryodhana leaned his head upon the knees of Kritavarman and immediately expired. And the three warriors looked on and wept; and then reflecting that the Pándavas would soon discover the mischief of the night, and hasten to pursue them, they said to each other:—"Raja Duryodhana is now dead, and the Pándavas will presently come and take away his body, and this is no place for us." So each one mounted his chariot and fled.

Now when Aswattháma had taken his revenge in the camp of the Pándavas, one quarter of the night still remained; and the charioteer of Dhrishta-dyumna mounted his master's chariot and set off for the camp of the Kauravas; and at day-break he arrived at the quarters of Yudhishtira and his brethren, and informed them of all that had occurred. Then Raja Yudhishtira fell down in a swoon, and all his brethren thought him dead, and began most bitterly to bewail him; but Krishna consoled them, and said that Yudhishtira was certainly alive, and ordered some perfumed water to be brought, and sprinkled it plentifully on his face. After some time Yudhishtira came to himself, and turning his face towards Krishna, he said:—"What grief upon grief is this that comes on us every moment? This unfortunate Draupadí, who for thirteen years has endured for our sakes so many miseries and afflictions in the jungle, has no sooner come into the camp, and seen her sons and kinsmen, than the worst of all calamities has befallen her in the loss of her brother Dhrishta-dyumna and all her five sons: I much fear that this misfortune will cause her death." Krishna answered:—"The decree of the great god Siva is without remedy, and there is now no resource but resignation; and



it is your duty to return him thanks for your own preservation, and to live in hopes that he will bestow upon you other children." Raja Yudhishtira then sent his brother Nakula to bring Draupadí that he might comfort her. And when Draupadí came she was weeping very bitterly; and she said to her husbands:—"You have been wandering thirteen years in the desert and jungle in the hope at the end to enjoy the happiness of having your children about you; and now that you have seen Abhimanyu, and all my five sons, slain by your enemies, have you still the inclination to be Rajas, and to rule the world and flaunt upon thrones?" Yudhishtira and Krishna both replied to her, saying:—"You are the daughter of a great and wise Raja, and there are now no such women in the whole world as Kuntí and Gándhárí: You should first reflect upon the number of sons and brothers and other kinsmen they have lost in this great war, and not act like other women who have no reflection, and whose example leads you to make this outcry." Then Draupadí was somewhat consoled, and she replied:—"I feel myself tranquillized by your words, but can you with all your valour and prowess hold it allowable that the son of a Bráhmaṇ, like this Aswattháma, should slaughter my brother and sons with impunity?" She then turned to Bhíma, and said:—"Can you, stout as you are, permit Aswattháma to do all this mischief without suffering for it? If you do not bring me his head let me never see your face again." Yudhishtira answered her:—"Aswattháma is a Bráhmaṇ and the son of our tutor Drona: If he has committed any crimes, Vishnu, who is superior to all gods, will certainly avenge it on him; and what good will it do you to have him slain? Will it bring your sons and brother to life again? Leave him to God, for Vishnu will certainly revenge on him the wrong he has done to you and us." Draupadí said:—"I will not then insist upon his death, but I have heard that he has upon his head a precious jewel that will illuminate the darkest night and protect its possessor against every enemy; and that jewel

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Yudhishtira
sends for Draupadí.

Draupadí de-
scribes the idea of
her husbands
ruling as Rajas.

Consoled by
Yudhishtira
and Krishna.

Prays for re-
venge upon
Aswattháma.

Yudhishtira
represents that
Aswattháma
is the son of a
Bráhmaṇ, and
that revenge
must be left to
Vishnu.

Draupadí per-
sists in having
an amulet be-
longing to As-
wattháma.



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PART II.

Arjuna deprives
Aswattháma of
the amulet, and
gives it to Bhí-
ma.

Bhima consoles
Draupadi, and
gives her the
amulet.

Draupadi trans-
fers the amulet
to Yudhish-
thira.

Procession of
the blind Mahá-
raja, with all the
women of his
household, to
the plain of
Kurukshetra.

Their interview
with the three
surviving warri-
ors of the Kau-
rava armies.

you must take from him and give it me, and the loss of it will be worse to him than the loss of his life."

At these words of Draupadí, Bhíma mounted his chariot and set off in pursuit of Aswattháma, and Arjuna and Krishna followed after. And Arjuna and Krishna overtook Aswattháma on the banks of the Ganges, and compelled him to give up the jewel. And the jewel was given to Bhíma. And Bhíma went to Draupadí, and found her in tears, and he said to her :—" O Draupadí, do you not remember that day when the Kauravas insulted you and drove us all out of the city of Hastinápura, and when I came to you and bade you not to grieve, for that the day should come when their own wives should dishevel their hair in sorrow for their husbands ? Then you said that you would not care if all your sons were slain, and all your husbands save one, so long as that one could revenge your affliction upon the Kauravas : Now all we five brethren are alive, and all the Kauravas are slain, and their wives are dishevelling their hair for them, according to your wish : What better then could have happened than for your sons to be slain in battle and so go to paradise ? And here too is Aswattháma's jewel for you, which you demanded ; so take it, and give thanks to God." Then Draupadí was entirely consoled by these words, and she took the jewel and gave it to Yudhishthira, saying :—" Yudhishthira is now the Mahárája, and it becomes him to wear this jewel upon his head." So Yudhishthira wore the jewel on his head, and it appeared as resplendent as the sun, and all the people cried out :—" Long live Mahárája Yudhishthira !"

Meanwhile Mahárája Dhritaráshtira, together with his wife Gándhárí, and his brother's widow Kuntí, and all the women of the family, set out to behold the field of Kurukshetra where the great war had been fought between the Kauravas and the Pándavas. And as they journeyed they met with the three warriors, Aswattháma, Kripa, and Kritavarman, who had worked such terrible mischief in the camp of the Pándavas. And the three men said to Dhritaráshtira :—" Your sons engaged in a desperate war, and are now gone to the mansions of Indra ; and our whole army is destroyed,



and we are the only three survivors.” Kripa then said to Gándhárí:—“O Rání, your sons have fought so bravely, that they are now enjoying happiness and glory in the mansions of Indra: Lament not therefore for them! Nor have the Pándavas obtained an easy victory, for we three entered their camp in the night time, and slew their sons and many of their heroes: Take comfort therefore and permit us to depart, for we are flying for our lives from the Pándavas.” So saying the three took their leave and proceeded towards the river Ganges; and on their way they parted from each other and followed three different directions; and then it was that Arjuna came up with Aswattháma, and took from him the jewel.

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The Kauravas said to have ascended to the heaven of Indra, because they had died fighting bravely.

The terrible picture which the foregoing narrative calls up to the imagination comprises, perhaps, some of the most graphic scenes in the history of the war. After many days of battle and slaughter, the plain of Kurukshetra was as silent as death. The sounding of war-shells, the beating of drums, the shouts of combatants, and the shrieks of the wounded, had passed away. The plain was covered with the corpses of the fallen; and amongst them the dying Chieftain of the Kauravas was lying upon the bare earth in mortal agony of mind and body, but thirsting like a wounded tiger for the blood of his enemies. Meantime, the triumphant Pándavas and their party were reposing in two camps on either side of the lake; the five brethren in the deserted camp of their defeated enemy, and their family and followers in their own camp. Of all the forces of the Kauravas none remained alive excepting Aswattháma and his two associates; and at evening time these three warriors paid a visit to the prostrate Duryodhana. The talk then was only of revenge. The dying Raja passionately called upon Aswat-

Review of the foregoing story of the “Revenge of Aswattháma.”

Appearance of the plain of Kurukshetra on the evening of the last day of the war.

Passionate desire for revenge exhibited by the surviving Kauravas.

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Comparison
between the
massacre by
Aswattháma
and the most
barbarous inci-
dents in the
war.

Effect of the
appearance of
the owl devour-
ing the birds
upon the mind
of Aswattháma.

tháma to go and slay all the Pándavas, and, above all, to bring him the head of Bhíma, that he might die without sorrow ; and Aswattháma was equally prepared on his part to revenge the defeat of his Raja and the death of his father.

The subsequent vengeance of Aswattháma forms, perhaps, one of the most barbarous incidents of the war. One horrible night has indeed been described, during which armies mangled and slaughtered each other beneath the glare of torchlight, and carried about with ghastly exultation the bleeding heads of friends and kinsmen. Again, the scene in which Bhíma drinks the blood of his murdered enemy is revolting to the last degree. But in both cases the passions of the combatants were stirred up to the highest pitch by the fury of the hand-to-hand struggle. The massacre, however, in the camp of the Pándavas was widely different. It was revenge inflicted upon sleeping and unarmed men, and upon sons instead of fathers ; and, perchance, a more hateful form of vengeance has scarcely ever been perpetrated.¹

At sunset on the evening of the last day of the great war, Aswattháma and his two associates were sitting beneath a tree. Aswattháma was burning for wholesale vengeance, whilst smarting under a sense of weakness and helplessness. To a rude warrior, who implicitly believed in omens as lessons or warnings, the incident of an owl pouncing upon the birds, one at a time, as they were sleeping upon a tree, could not fail to produce a marvellous effect. "Thus," he cried, "will I slay the Pándavas!" He accordingly entered the Pándava camp, leaving

¹ A scene somewhat similar is to be found in Homer (*Iliad*, Book x.), where Diomed and Ulysses surprise the Thracian camp.



his two companions to guard the only means of entrance or exit. Then followed the attack upon the sleeping Dhrishtha-dyumna, the slaughter of the naked man, the midnight panic, the horrible confusion of friends and foes, the escape of the murderer with the five heads of the sons of the Pándavas, and the dreary walk over the plain at early morning, when the first light of dawn just disclosed the wolves and jackals who were still feasting upon the bodies of the slain.

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But another scene was yet to follow, which no one could have portrayed or imagined saving an Oriental bard who could fully sympathize in the joy of gratified revenge. In the dim light of early morning the three warriors once more stood by the side of the dying Raja. For a brief interval Duryodhana was deceived. For a brief interval he was led to believe that the heads of his hated kinsmen were before him; and forgetting his wounds and losses, he rejoiced in the completeness of his revenge. He took the supposed skull of his murderer, and crushed it between his hands; and then the truth suddenly flashed upon him. The light of the rising sun fell upon the countenances of the dead, and he saw that the heads were those of the sons and not of the fathers. Thus his joy was turned to the deepest grief, and he leaned upon the knees of Kritavarman, and expired in an agony of sorrow.

Pleasure of gratified revenge as displayed in the dying hour of Duryodhana.

The concluding portion of the narrative of Aswattháma's revenge has been so hopelessly falsified by the Brahmanical compilers that it is wanting not only in poetical justice but in human interest. The story of Aswattháma's jewel or amulet appears

Mythical character of the fable of Aswattháma's amulet.



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to be a myth. Probably in the original tradition Bhíma pursued Aswattháma to the death, and brought his head to Draupadí. As, however, Aswattháma is said to have been a Bráhmaṇ, the fable of the jewel has apparently taken the place of the story of the murder; as the slaughter of a Bráhmaṇ would be especially offensive to the Brahmanical compilers.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE RECONCILIATION OF THE LIVING AND BURIAL
OF THE DEAD.

A NEW scene now opens in the story of the Mahá Bhárata, namely, the reconciliation between the blind Mahárája and the men who had murdered his sons. This reconciliation is said to have been previously effected by Krishna during his night visit to Hastinápur; but, as already indicated, this portion of the narrative appears to be an interpolation of modern date. Like most of the mythical accounts of Krishna it contains some beautiful expressions of sympathy; but at the same time it is evident that such a mission would be ill-timed and useless. It is also worthy of remark that a similar visit is ascribed to the officious Vyása, and is of course equally mythical in its origin and character. Indeed, the language of both Krishna and Vyása is strained and artificial. It is impossible to conceive that parents, whose sons were still lying dead upon the field of battle, could be consoled by the assurance that those sons had perished in consequence of their injustice; or by the still more extravagant assurance that the murderers would take the places of those sons, and would prove themselves to be even more loyal and

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PART II.Attempts to
reconcile the
Mahárája with
the Pándavas.
Mythical efforts
of Krishna and
Vyása.Impossibility of
a real reconcilia-
tion between
parents and the
murderers of
their sons.



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Want of family
sympathy on the
part of the
Brahmanical
compilers.

Interview be-
tween the Pán-
davas and the
Mahárajá on the
day after the
war.

Necessity for a
feigned recon-
ciliation.

Real feelings of
the Mahárajá
and Rání.

Narrative of the
reconciliation.

The Pándavas,
accompanied by
Krishna, go out
and meet the
Mahárajá.

obedient. Such an idea may be justly regarded as the ignorant conception of some Brahmanical compiler, who had led a life of celibacy, and who was utterly unable to realize that enduring affection and unreasoning devotion which the true mother feels for the worst of her sons. But the story of the interview between the Mahárajá and the Pándavas on the day after the battle seems to fall under a different category. The Pándavas were victors who had established their claim to the Raj against the sons of the Mahárajá by force of arms, but who were yet desirous of appearing to be on good terms with the Mahárajá whose sovereignty they would be expected to acknowledge. The Mahárajá, on the other hand, although nominally the Sovereign, was virtually the representative of the defeated party, and his very life was at the mercy of the conquerors. Thus whilst a real reconciliation was perhaps impossible, a feigned reconciliation was absolutely indispensable to both parties. Accordingly, it will be seen that the Pándavas prostrated themselves in turns at the feet of the Mahárajá and the Rání, and that some sort of explanation or apology was offered and accepted; but the real feelings of the bereaved parents will be readily perceived from an attempt of the Mahárajá to crush Bhíma in his embrace, and from the sudden shriek of the Rání that the smell of her son was upon them.

The narrative of this reconciliation, real or feigned, is as follows:—

Meantime Yudhishthira had heard that Mahárajá Dhritarashtra had left the city of Hastinápur for the field of battle; and he went forward to meet him, accompanied by his brethren and by Krishna, and by Draupadí, and by all the



women of Dhṛishta-dyumna. And after a while, Yudhishthira saw the Mahārāja approaching; and all the women of the Kauravas accompanied the Mahārāja, and rent the air with their lamentations; and Yudhishthira passed by the women, and went on to the Mahārāja, and fell at his feet. Then the other Pándavas, each one declaring his name to the blind Mahārāja, fell at his feet in like manner. And Dhṛitaráshtra embraced Yudhishthira, and said:—"Where is Bhíma?" Now as it was well known that Bhíma had slain Duryodhana, as well as a great number of the sons of Dhṛitaráshtra, Krishna had been fearful of introducing him, lest the aged Mahārāja should vent his wrath upon him. And it so happened that in former days Duryodhana had ordered to be made an image of Bhíma, upon which image he was accustomed to try his strength; and when the Mahārāja called for Bhíma, Krishna gave him this image, and said:—"Here is Bhíma." Then the Mahārāja opened his arms, and under pretence of embracing Bhíma, he crushed the image to pieces; and he then fell down exhausted and fainting, with blood issuing from his mouth. After a long time he came to himself and began to weep; and when those around him asked why he wept, he replied:—"Bhíma was as one of my own sons, and his death has not brought any of my other sons to life, and I have slain him to no purpose." Then Sanjaya, his charioteer, who stood by, told him what Krishna had done, and how it was not Bhíma that he had crushed, but the iron image which Duryodhana had made. And Dhṛitaráshtra turned to Krishna, and said:—"O Krishna, you have done excellently well." He then called for the five brethren one by one, and again embraced them; and when Bhíma presented himself, the Mahārāja laughed, and said:—"What if I should now give you another squeeze?" Bhíma replied:—"I am your slave, and if you order me I will be my own executioner." Dhṛitaráshtra said:—"You are now all my sons, and the only remaining children of my brother Pándu: All that has happened to my sons was of their own seeking, and arose from their envy against you." And Dhṛitaráshtra began to weep again, and Yudhish-

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Prostrate themselves at the feet of the Mahārāja.

The Mahārāja calls for Bhíma, and receives his image in his stead.

Crushes the image to pieces in his wrath against the murderer of his sons.
Repents the deed, and weeps.

Undeceived by Sanjaya.

Embraces the five Pándavas in turn.

The reconciliation.



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Affecting scene
between the
Pándavas and
the Rani Gánd-
hári.

Yudhishtira's
excuses.

Gándhári's re-
signation.

She reproaches
Bhíma for hav-
ing drank the
blood of Duhsá-
sana.

Bhíma's denial.

Yudhishtira
takes all the
blame upon him-
self.

Gándhári sends
the Pándavas to
their mother
Kuntí.

Joy of Kuntí.

thira and Krishna and all the others began to weep with him.

After this Yudhishtira and his brothers, together with Krishna, took leave of the Mahárajá and proceeded to wait upon Gándhári. Yudhishtira advanced and kissed her feet, and she took him in her arms, and they both wept aloud. Gándhári then said :—"The smell of Duryodhana is upon you all;" and screaming out she fell down in a swoon.

When she recovered Yudhishtira said to her :—"O mother, it must be clear to you that we had no alternative in the affair of Duryodhana; for what could we do when he would not allow us bread to eat as the condition of our service?"

Gándhári replied :—"Say nothing, O Raja, about it, for I know that you speak only what is true and right, and that all which has befallen my sons was but the fruit of their refusal to take the advice of myself and my husband; and now that they are gone, may God preserve you to me in the room of Duryodhana." Arjuna then came and kissed her

feet, as did Bhíma also; and Gándhári said to Bhíma :—"You drank the blood of my son Duhsásana." Bhíma replied :—"No, I did not drink it: I took some of it in my hands and rubbed it about my face, but I did not drink it; and I only said that I drank it for the sake of frightening the others." At this moment Raja Yudhishtira stepped

forward, and laid his head at the feet of Gándhári, and said :—"O mother, it was I who killed your sons, and do you lay all the blame upon me, and say nothing to the others." Gándhári then asked for Draupadí, and said to her :—"You and I are in the same affliction, for your sons also are slain; but what can I do? There is no remedy against the behests

of the great god Siva." She then said to Yudhishtira and his brethren :—"It is now nearly fourteen years since your mother Kuntí had the pleasure of seeing you: Go now and see her!" And the five Pándavas went accordingly; and

when Kuntí heard that her sons were coming she fainted for joy; and when Yudhishtira and his brethren came up and found her in that condition, Yudhishtira took hold of his mother's hand, and after a time she came to herself.



And the sons of Kuntí came and laid their heads at her feet one by one, and she embraced and kissed each of them in turn, and wept at seeing the wounds they had received in the great war. Then Draupadí approached her, and Kuntí, knowing that her children had been so lately slain, wept for her; and Draupadí laid her head at Kuntí's feet and fainted away, and when she recovered, both the ladies wept so abundantly that all the bystanders were moved to tears. Meantime Gándhárí came forward with all the widows of her sons who had been slain, and she said to Draupadí:—"Weep not, my daughter, for your sorrows are not greater than mine: We cannot tell what is decreed by fate: Thank God that the war is over, and weep not for the dead: Let us now perform the necessary rites for the souls of the departed."

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Her five sons
lay their heads
at her feet.
Affecting meet-
ing of Draupadí
and Kuntí.

Gándhárí pious-
ly consoles
Draupadí.

The foregoing narrative requires no comment. A general truthfulness to human nature is perceptible throughout. The story of the image said to have been made of Bhíma may appear somewhat apocryphal, but yet is not altogether beyond the bounds of probability.¹

Review of the
foregoing narra-
tive.

The next scene, which comprises the lamentations of the women on the field of battle, and the subsequent burning of the dead, is very affecting. One point however is open to question. If the war really lasted eighteen days, and the general burning of the bodies did not take place until the day after the conclusion of the war, the corpses of those who were slain in the earlier battles must have lain in a state of perfect putrefaction. The question, however, is

Narrative of the
funeral cere-
monies on the
field of battle.

Difficulty as re-
gards the war
lasting eighteen
days.

¹ Duryodhana is said to have made an iron image of Bhíma to try his strength upon it; or he may have made an ordinary figure-head to knock about as a manifestation of his hatred towards the original. In Mr Dickens' novel of "The Old Curiosity Shop," Quilp, the evil character of the story, purchases an old wooden figure of an Admiral, to represent Kit, whom he hates; and he strikes and mutilates the image accordingly. The incident is true to human nature, and merely exhibits the natural force of the imagination. A mob will in like manner burn the effigy of the object of their detestation.



HISTORY OF INDIA. PART II. not an important one, and may be left unsolved. The narrative is as follows:—

Sad procession of the women to the plain of Kurukshetra.

The women sit by the dead bodies of their husbands.

Lamentations of Gándhárí over her son Duryodhana.

Lamentations of the widows.

Performance of the funeral rites for the slain.

Collection of materials for the burning.

After this all the women dishevelled their hair, and offered up loud lamentations, and proceeded to the fatal plain of Kurukshetra; and there they beheld the dead bodies of their husbands and fathers, sons and brothers, who had been slain in the war. And each of the women went and sat down by the remains of him whom she had most loved, and whose death had caused her the greatest affliction. And Gándhárí and Kuntí, accompanied by Yudhishtira and Krishna, went to the dead body of Duryodhana; and when Gándhárí saw that it was her own son, she fell down in a swoon; and after a long interval she revived, and said:—“The wise and the learned always used to sit round this son of mine, and nearly all the Rajas of the earth took their stations near him, and prided themselves on it as a promotion, but this night the jackals alone have been his courtiers.” The widow of Duryodhana likewise came with her hair dishevelled, and placed her husband’s head upon her lap, and seated herself there; and Gándhárí said:—“This woman, whom neither sun nor moon were once worthy to look upon, see how she now sits here bare-headed!” There too was the widow of the son of Duryodhana, and the widow of Karna, and the widow of Abhimanyu, and many others; and Gándhárí and all those widows bemoaned their several relations with so many tears, that none of those who were present could refrain from joining them in weeping.

After this, Mahárajá Dhritaráshtira said to Yudhishtira:—“My son, be pleased now to order that all the dead bodies should be burned.” And Dhritaráshtira and Yudhishtira jointly requested Vidura to superintend the performance of the ceremony. And Vidura, who was the uncle of the Kauravas and Pándavas, and Sanjaya, the charioteer of the Mahárajá, and Yuyutsu, the only surviving son of the Mahárajá, and Dhaumya, the family priest of the Pándavas, all went out together to the field of battle. And they collected a large quantity of sandal and other odoriferous woods, and sweet oils, to form a pile on which to burn the



bodies of the principal warriors, such as Duryodhana, Karna, Abhimanyu, Drona, and others; and they also collected many thousand mule-loads of faggots and oil to burn the bodies of those of inferior note. And they ordered all the surviving charioteers of those Rajas who had been slain, to go through the plain and point out the corpses of their respective masters, so that such Rajas might be burned separately according to their rank. And they took with them a thousand cart-loads of cloths, some fine and others coarse, to wrap up the dead bodies before burning. Then Vidura, and those appointed with him, went over the plain of Kurukshetra; and they first took up with all reverence and ceremony the corpse of Duryodhana and burned it. Next the Rajas of the first rank were wrapped in fine linen and burned with perfumes; and amongst these were the other sons of Dhritarashtra, and the sons of Draupadī, and Abhimanyu, and Drona, and Karna, and the greater Rajas, such as Raja Drupada and his son Dhrishta-dyumna, and Raja Virāta, and Raja Jayadratha, and Raja Sālya, and many others. When this burning had been accomplished they kindled a mighty fire and burned all the remaining bodies therein. After this, Yudhishtira and his brethren, accompanied by Krishna, went to bathe in the Ganges according to the rule; and taking up a handful of water for each kinsman that had been slain in the battle, they sprinkled it in the name of the deceased; and Yudhishtira, at the request of his mother Kuntī, sprinkled some water in the name of Karna. And Raja Yudhishtira and his brother Arjuna grieved very much for the death of Karna; and the Raja ordered great charities to be distributed in the name of Karna, and he took under his own protection all Karna's women and young children, and provided for all his remaining dependents. And he called for one of Karna's sons, who was sixteen years of age, and wept in his presence very much for the death of Karna; and he gave him a large separate establishment and estate, and paid more attention to him than he did to his own sons; and he placed him under Arjuna to teach him archery and all other military exercises. And he showed also great tenderness and affec-

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Dead bodies of
the Rajas recog-
nized by their
charioteers.

Burning of the
Rajas of the first
rank.

Burning of the
remaining
bodies.

Bathing in the
Ganges, and
sprinkling of
water.

Sorrow of Yud-
hishtira and
Arjuna for the
death of Karna.

Kindness of
Yudhishtira,
to all the
widows, chil-
dren, and de-
pendents of
Karna.

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INDIA.
PART II.Death of the
chief wife of
Karna.Review of the
foregoing narra-
tive of the burn-
ing of the slain.Refers to an
ante-Brahmanic
period.No reference to
Sati nor satisfac-
tory allusion to
the Brahmans.

tion to the rest of Karna's children, and entertained his widows with all the kindness of a near kinsman. But when the principal wife of Karna, and mother of most of his children, heard of the death of her husband, she heaved a deep sigh and expired; and the rest of Karna's widows were better provided for by Yudhishtira than even his own women, and they had regular appointments for their maintenance.

The picture furnished by the foregoing narrative of the burning of the slain apparently refers to a very ancient period of Hindú history. The prominent features are indicated with a realism which seems to have appertained to the original tradition;—the poor widows, with their long black hair dishevelled over their faces, sitting in an agony of grief by the corpses of those they loved; the charioteers searching over the plain for the remains of their masters; the dead bodies wrapped in cloths and burning with oils and perfumes upon the funeral piles.² But there is no reference to the hateful Sati,

² A more detailed account of the funeral ceremonies of the ancient Hindús will be found in the Rámáyana, and will consequently appear in the second volume of the present work. The whole ceremony bears a remarkable resemblance to the burning of Hector, which has thus been felicitously translated by the Earl of Derby (*Iliad*, Book xxiv.):—

“At length the aged Priam gave command:
‘Haste now, ye Trojans, to the city bring
Good store of fuel.’ * * * *
He said:—and they the oxen and the mules
Yoked to the wains, and from the city thronged:
Nine days they laboured, and brought back to Troy
Good store of wood; but when the tenth day's light
Upon the earth appeared, weeping, they bore
Brave Hector out; and on the funeral pile
Laying the glorious dead, applied the torch.
While yet the rosy-fingered morn was young
Round noble Hector's pyre the people pressed:
When all were gathered round, and closely thronged,
First on the burning mass, as far as spread
The range of fire, they poured the ruddy wine,
And quenched the flames: his brethren then and friends
Weeping, the hot tears flowing down their cheeks,



no burning of the widows with their deceased husbands; and it is somewhat remarkable that the Bráhmans do not appear to have officiated upon the occasion. The only point however which requires explanation, is the extraordinary liberality and kindness displayed by Yudhishtira towards the family of Karna. It should however be remembered that according to the myth already indicated, Karna was the son of Kuntí before her marriage to Pandú; and consequently these details may have been inserted to prove that Yudhishtira was not wanting in duty to the family of his deceased elder brother.

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INDIA.
PART II.

Account of the
liberality and
kindness dis-
played by Yud-
hishtira to-
wards the family
of Karna
ascribed to a
mythical origin.

Collected from the pile the whitened bones;
These in a golden casket they enclosed,
And o'er it spread soft shawls of purple dye;
Then in a grave they laid it, and in haste
With stone in ponderous masses covered o'er;
And raised a mound."

In the historic period a considerable refinement was introduced by the Greeks, inasmuch as the bodies of the slain were not burned but buried. Thus the Athenians who fell at Marathon were interred on the field of battle; whilst the bodies of those who fell in the first year of the Peloponnesian war were preserved, and ultimately arranged in coffins of cypress wood, according to tribes, and publicly buried with every honour in the fairest suburb of the city.—Thucydides, Book ii. c. 34, *et seq.*



CHAPTER XV.

THE INSTALLATION OF RAJA YUDHISHTHIRA.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

Narrative of the
installation of
Yudhishtira as
Raja under the
nominal sove-
reignty of Mahá-
raja Dhritar-
ashtra.

AFTER the burning of the slain, Yudhishtira and his brethren proceeded in triumph from the plain of Kurukshetra to the city of Hastinápura, and there Yudhishtira was inaugurated as Raja in the room of Duryodhana, under the nominal sovereignty of the Mahárajá. The details of this procession, and the subsequent ceremonies of installation demand no preliminary explanation, and may be simply narrated as follows:—

Disinclination of
Yudhishtira to
be appointed
Raja.

Now when Raja Yudhishtira beheld the dead bodies of his kinsmen, who had been slain on the plain of Kurukshetra, his heart failed him, and he said that he would not accept the Raj, but would retire into the jungle, and spend the remainder of his days in religious devotion; but those around him offered many topics of consolation to him, and after a while his grief left him, and he prepared himself to undertake the duties of Raja under his uncle, Mahárajá Dhritarashtra. So when all things had been made ready for his progress from the field of Kurukshetra to the city of Hastinápura, he ascended a chariot which was drawn by sixteen white mules. And Bhíma took the reins and seated himself as his charioteer, and bards and eulogists surrounded his chariot on all sides and recited his praises; and Arjuna held the royal umbrella over his head, and his two younger brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva, walked one on each side of his

Triumphant
procession from
the plain of
Kurukshetra.



chariot, and fanned him with chámaras of fine hair. And Yuyutsu, the only surviving son of Dhritaráshtra, followed in another white chariot; and Krishna and Sátyaki accompanied the procession in like manner in a chariot of gold. And the blind Mahárajá and the Rání Gándhári went before Yudhishtira in a vehicle carried by men; and Kuntí, Draupadí, and all the other ladies betook themselves to different vehicles, and followed the procession under the protection of Vidura.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

In this grand array Raja Yudhishtira entered the city of Hastinápur; and he was accompanied by all his friends and kinsmen, whilst the bards and eulogists marched before him and sounded his praises. Meantime the people of the city decorated the road with flags and garlands, and came out in their best attire to receive the new Raja; and thousands of people thronged the entrance of the palace to welcome the approach of Yudhishtira, whilst all the ladies of the palace in like manner welcomed Draupadí. And Yudhishtira acknowledged the acclamations of the multitude, and received the blessings of the Bráhmans; and he then descended from his chariot, and went into the inner apartments, and worshipped the family gods with offerings of sandal, garlands, and jewels. Having thus performed his thanksgivings to the household deities he returned to the palace gate, and with the assistance of Dhaumya and the Mahárajá, he distributed suitable presents of jewels, cows, and cloths amongst the Bráhmans. Now a Rákshasa, named Chárváka, had disguised himself as a mendicant Bráhman, and mingled with the crowd; and having been a warm friend of Duryodhana he was desirous of reviling the Pándavas. And when the acclamations of the multitude had ceased, Chárváka arose and said:—"O Yudhishtira, listen to me! These Bráhmans have made me their spokesman to reproach you for your ignominious deeds in killing your nearest and dearest kinsmen: I cannot discover what advantage you have derived from committing such crimes; your life must be now a burden to you, and the sooner you die the better will it be for all." At this speech all the as-

Grand entry
into the city of
Hastinápur.

Yudhishtira
arrives at the
palace.

Worships the
family gods.

Distributes
gifts amongst
Bráhmans.

Reviled by
Chárváka, a
Rákshasa dis-
guised as a
Bráhman.

Rage of the real
Bráhmans, who
declare their
allegiance to
Yudhishtira.



HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

sembled Bráhmans were enraged, but they hung down their heads with shame and said nothing. And Raja Yudhishtira was very much dejected at what Chárváka had said, and in very mild terms he asked the Bráhmans for forgiveness, and requested them not to put him to shame, and even offered to put an end to his own life if they desired it. The Bráhmans replied :—" O Raja, we have said nothing against you, but wish you all joy and happiness : This person is not a Bráhman ; he is a wicked friend of Duryodhana in disguise : His name is Chárváka, and he is a Rákshasa by birth : Listen not to him, for he has spoken falsehoods ! "

Chárváka burnt to death by the angry eyes of the Bráhmans.

So saying, the Bráhmans looked upon Chárváka with angry eyes, and he fell upon the ground like a tree struck by lightning, and was burnt to ashes upon the spot.

Gratification of Yudhishtira at the acquiescence of the Bráhmans in his inauguration.

Enthroned facing the East.

Presence of his relations and friends at his inauguration.

Now when Yudhishtira saw that the Bráhmans were truly desirous that he should rule the Raj, he was much pleased ; and he cast aside all melancholy, and seated himself upon the golden throne with a cheerful heart, and with his face turned towards the east. And in front of him sat Krishna and Sátyaki upon seats of gold ; whilst upon either side of him sat Bhúna and Arjuna upon golden carpets. At a little distance off sat his mother Kuntí upon a throne of ivory, with Nakula and Sahadeva on each side of her. And Mahárajá Dhritaráshtra and his younger brother Vidura, and the priest Dhaumya, took their seats upon carpets as bright as flame ; and near the Mahárajá sat his Rání Gándhári, and his only surviving son Yayutsu. And when they were all seated, Yudhishtira was solemnly inaugurated Raja by Dhaumya the Bráhman, who was the family priest of the Pándavas. And rice, which had been burnt by the sun, and white flowers, and pieces of earth, and gold, silver, and precious stones, were all brought before the new Raja, and he touched them according to the custom. And fire, and milk, and honey, and ghee, and the sacred shell, and leaves and twigs of sacred trees, were all brought in like manner, and duly placed before Raja Yudhishtira. And golden pots, and silver pots, and copper pots, and earthen pots, and pots made of precious stones, were all filled with

Ceremony of inauguration performed by Dhaumya the Bráhman.

Symbolical rites.

Pots of water from the sacred rivers.



water from all the sacred places, and arranged for the ceremony. And Dhaumya, the family priest of the Pándavas, solemnly performed all the rites of inauguration under the direction of Krishna. And Dhaumya prepared a high place on which to offer sacrifice, and he kindled the fire for the offerings. And a tiger's skin was opened out before the sacrificial fire, and Yudhishthira and his wife Draupadī took their seats thereon; and Dhaumya prepared the homa for the propitiation of the gods, and poured it upon the sacred fire. After this the five purifying articles which are produced from the sacred cow, namely, the milk, the curds, the ghee, the urine, and the ordure, were brought up by Krishna, and the Mahārāja, and by the four brethren of Yudhishthira, and poured by them over the heads of Yudhishthira and Draupadī: and then, in like manner, they all brought up the pots of sacred waters, and poured the waters over the heads of the new Raja and his wife. And when this was done the music began to sound, and fill the air with harmonious strains, and the bards and eulogists raised their voices and chaunted aloud the praises of Raja Yudhishthira and the glory of his mighty forefathers.

Now all this while Raja Yudhishthira was in no way moved by all the honours thus bestowed upon him. Neither did he exult in his inauguration, nor was he elevated by the praises of the bards and eulogists. He underwent all the ceremonies with calmness and patience, and manifested neither signs of sorrow nor signs of joy. And when the rites had all been performed, he rose up and distributed without stint, and in the greatest profusion, the richest and most valuable presents to all the Bráhmans who had assembled at his inauguration.

In this manner Yudhishthira was installed Raja in his ancestral Raj of Bhárata; and when the installation was over, and the gifts had been distributed, he addressed the Bráhmans in the following language:—"The sons of Pándu, whether they possess any good qualities or not, must still consider themselves very fortunate, O Bráhmans, at being so much praised by you; and it is proper that you

HISTORY OF INDIA. PART II.

High place prepared for sacrifice.

Yudhishthira and Draupadī seated upon the tiger's skin.

Offering of the homa.

The five purifying articles poured upon Yudhishthira and Draupadī.

Pots of sacred water poured over Yudhishthira and Draupadī.

Music sounded.

Bards and eulogists chaunt the praises of Yudhishthira.

Perfect equanimity of Yudhishthira.

His patience during the ceremonies.

Distributes large gifts to the Bráhmans.

Yudhishthira's address to the Bráhmans.

Entreats the Bráhmans to accept the rule of Mahārāja Dhritarashtra.



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PART II.

should grant to myself and my brethren any favour which we may ask of you: Mahárajá Dhritaráshtra is our father, and we adore him as we do our most superior gods: If, therefore, you wish to serve me or my brethren, you cannot do that better than by placing yourselves under the rule of the Mahárajá, and endeavouring to promote his welfare: I myself live only for that purpose, now that I have slain all my kinsmen; and if you have any regard for me or my party, you will show the same respect to the Mahárajá as you did whilst the Kauravas were alive: He is our superior lord, and the ruler of the Pándavas and their Raj: Forget not my special request that you should serve him." So saying Yudhishtira dismissed the Bráhmans.

Review of the foregoing narrative.

Two events distinct from each other.

The foregoing narrative refers to two distinct descriptions, which may perhaps be best considered separately; namely, first the procession from the field of battle to the royal palace at Hastinápur; and, secondly, the inauguration of Yudhishtira as Yuvaraja, or as a Raja ruling the people in the name of the Mahárajá.

First, the triumphant procession of the Pándavas.

Description of the umbrella and chámara as emblems of sovereignty.

The description of the return of Yudhishtira to the palace will be readily realized by all who are familiar with the Courts of Hindú Rajas. The especial emblems of Hindú sovereignty are the umbrella and the chámara. The umbrella may be called a canopy; but it in no way resembles the canopy which is raised over the throne in European Courts; but may be described as a large umbrella, richly decorated with gold and jewels, and often exceedingly beautiful in design and workmanship. The chámara is the tail of a Thibet ox, which is fixed into a handle, and employed to drive away flies. The picture is now complete. The Raja sitting in state in a chariot or car drawn by sixteen white horses. The royal umbrella held over his head,

Picture of an ancient Hindú procession.



glittering and sparkling in the bright light of an Indian sun. A *chámara* of white hairs waving on either side to keep off the flies, and at the same time adding pomp and significance to the scene. The bards and eulogists accompanying the chariot, chaunting in barbarous strains the praises of the new Sovereign, as the Raja of Rajas, the descendant of the gods, the wise, the mighty, and the victorious. Other Chieftains follow in chariots, or in nondescript seats borne on the shoulders of men. Glittering flags of every variety are adding to the gaiety of the scene; and garlands of flowers are hanging from every house and tree, as special signs of popular rejoicing.¹

HISTORY OF
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PART II.

The protest of *Chárváka* after *Yudhishthira*'s arrival at the palace is somewhat curious. He is said to have been a *Rákshasa* in disguise, and a warm friend of *Duryodhana*, but he also stands as the representative of a later heterodox sect, known as the *Chárvákas*. It seems, therefore, not improbable that the reference to *Chárváka* is an interpolation of the Brahmanical compilers, introduced for the controversial purpose of exhibiting the heretic as the ally of *Duryodhana* and enemy of *Yudhishthira*, who was justly destroyed by the angry glance of the *Bráhmans*.

Story of *Chárváka* a later interpolation intended as a side blow against the sect of *Chárvákas*.

¹ Such scenes as those described above are frequent at Hindú Courts, or at audiences granted to Rajas by the Viceroy of India. The Raja and his attendant Chieftains are arrayed in cloth of gold, and radiant with jewels. The old Hindú car, or rath, may be replaced by an elephant or a European barouche; but the *chámara*s, the eulogists, and the banners are all there. Other insignia seem to have been added in modern times, such as *Chobdars* or silver sticks, and above all a large *hookah*. The *hookah* indeed is regarded as a special emblem of dignity, and is kept alight, and occasionally smoked during the progress; the *hookah*-bearer carrying the bowl on the seat by the side of the coachman, whilst the Raja sits in the carriage and smokes through a long and richly ornamented tube.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.Secondly, the
installation of
Yudhishthira.Doubtful an-
thenticity of the
details.Apparent origin
of the various
ceremonies.

The description of the inauguration of Yudhishthira is very suggestive. Most of the ceremonies are still performed at the installation of modern Rajas; and indeed the Mahá Bhárata is generally regarded as an authority upon the subject. It is, however, difficult to say whether the ceremonies were actually performed in the case of Yudhishthira, or whether they are not to be treated as later interpolations, introduced for the purpose of bringing the old tradition into conformity with modern Brahmanical rites. The enthroning of Yudhishthira with his face towards the east, or sunrise, may probably be a relic of the old worship of the Sun. The introduction of Krishna appears mythical for reasons already stated. The touching of rice, flowers, earth, gold, silver, and jewels seems to be an assertion of sovereignty. The offering of milk, honey, and ghee is Vedic. The sacred shell is an emblem of the god Vishnu. The leaves and twigs of trees, and the pots of water from sacred rivers, appear to belong to some old fetische rites which have been adopted by the Bráhmans. The tiger's skin is a reference to the god Siva, who is generally represented as sitting or lying upon the skin in question. The offering of the homa, and the pouring of the five purifying articles produced from the cow upon the heads of the Raja and Rání, are Brahmanical rites, but of very ancient origin, being connected with the primitive worship of the cow as the giver of milk, butter, and curds. The description of the patience of Yudhishthira, his perfect tranquillity, and his profound respect for the Bráhmans, may perhaps be treated as interpolations of the Brahmanical compilers. The significance, however, of these several rites can only be fully explained by



reference to the different religions, and will accordingly be discussed hereafter.¹

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

¹ The following description of the ceremonies to be performed at the inauguration of Rajas is taken from the Agni Purāna.

"A Raja should appoint a family priest and astrologer, wise counsellors, and a Rāni possessed of due accomplishments; at the period appointed by the astrologer or upon the death of his predecessor, he should make preparations for his coronation. The person to be crowned should be bathed with Tila (sesimum orientale) and white mustard (that is, with water in which these have been steeped), and the astrologer and Purohita should proclaim his title when he should be seated on an auspicious throne; he should then hold out hopes of prosperity to his subjects, and set prisoners at liberty. Previous to the coronation the family priest should perform the Ain-drīanti, a sacrifice made in honour of Indra to secure prosperity. The Raja should fast the day before the coronation, and on the next offer oblations upon the fire which is upon the altar, attended with the recitation of mantras sacred to Vishnu, Indra, Surya, Viswadeva, and Chandra. This ceremony tends to prolong the life, and is productive of religious merit and prosperity. The golden water-pot called Aparāgita, or tending to render one invisible, which is placed on the right side of the sacrificial fire, and receives the remains of the oblations of ghee, should be worshipped with flowers and sandal-paste. Good fortune attends the Raja if the flame turn round to the right, if it appear like pure gold when heated, occasion a sound like that of a number of cars, or of the clouds; when there issues no smoke, but a fragrant vapour, and when it is of the form of a swastika (particular kind of temple, etc.); if the flame be clear and raging, without emitting any sparks; and if no cats, deer, or birds, pass between the fire and the performer of the ceremony.

"The Raja should cleanse his head with earth brought from mountain-tops; his two ears with earth from the tops of white ant-hillocks, and his face with that of a Vishnu Maridapa, or a house in which that deity is worshipped. He should cleanse his neck with earth from Indra's temple; his bosom with that from the court-yard of the palace; his right hand with that raised by the tusks of elephants; his left hand with that raised by the horns of bulls; his back with the earth of a tank; his belly with that of a place where two rivers meet; his two sides with that of the two opposite sides of a river; his buttocks with that of the door of a brothel; his thighs with the earth of the spot on which the sacrifice has been performed; his knees with that of a cow-house; his legs with that of a stable; and his feet with that from the wheels of a car.

"The Raja being then seated on a splendid throne, his head should be washed with Pancha Gavya (milk, curds, ghee, and the urine and dung of a cow). The four ministers of the Raja belonging to the four classes shall afterwards bathe the Raja, viz. the Brāhman with ghee filled in a golden pot, standing on the east side; the Kshatriya with milk filled in a silver pot, standing on the south side; the Vaisya with curds filled in a copper pot, standing on the west side; and the Sudra with water filled in an earthen pot, standing on the north side. An eminent Brāhman should then bathe the Raja and Rāni with honey; a Brāhman, who sings the Sama Veda, should bathe them with water and some kusa grass; and the family priest, having entrusted the preservation of the sacrificial fire to the care of a Sadasya (a bystander, who has to notice and correct mistakes), and repairing to the golden pot in which the remains of the oblations of ghee have been received, should bathe the Raja, repeating the incantations which secure the good



HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

fortune of Rajas. The priest should then return to the altar, and a Bráhmaṇ, who sings the Yajur Veda, should bathe the Raja with water in a golden pot, having a hundred holes, mixed with Sarvaṇshadi and Mahāṇshadi (certain classes of drugs), ghee, sandal-paste, flowers, the common citron, gems, and kusa grass. The water is to be purified by mixing it with the above articles one by one, attended with the recitation of their respective mantras from the Yajur Veda. A Bráhmaṇ, who sings the Atharva Veda, should afterwards mark the head and throat of the Raja with the yellow pigment, called Gorachana.

"After this a great number of Bráhmaṇs having assembled together should place a pot filled with Sarvaṇshadi (a class of drugs), and water brought from all the Tirthas (places of pilgrimage), before the Raja, whilst he shall be fanned with the tails of the Bosgrannies, and music and singing be carried on. The Raja shall behold the pot, a looking-glass, some ghee, and some other fortunate omens. He should then worship Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, and other gods; also the planets and elephants. The Purohita being seated on a bed covered with a tiger's hide, the Raja should present him with a dish of curds and honey, and have his turban bound. The turban of the Raja, seated on a bed covered with the hides of a bull, cat, elephant, lion, and tiger, should then be bound. The door-keeper is to point out to him his ministers, etc. The Raja should offer cars, goats, sheep, houses, and other gifts to his Purohita and the astrologer, and give away various other things to other Bráhmaṇs. Having gone round the sacrificial fire, made obeisance to his spiritual tutor, and touched the back of a bull, he is to present his Guru with cows and clothes. Let him then proceed along the main street on a horse or an elephant, attended by his forces, and having circumambulated the city re-enter its limits. He is to entertain all the persons present, and then dismiss them."—Wilson's MSS. in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE HORSE SACRIFICE OF RAJA YUDHISHTHIRA.

WHEN Yudhishthira was established in the Raj of Bhárata, he attempted the celebration of a great sacrifice known as the Aswamedha, or sacrifice of a horse. This extraordinary rite bore some resemblance to the Rajasúya sacrifice, which he had already performed when he and his brethren had cleared the jungle of Khándava-prastha and founded the Raj of Indra-prastha. But whilst the Aswamedha seems to have been an assertion of sovereignty over conquered Rajas, it was invested with an importance and significance which were wanting in the Rajasúya. Indeed the performance of an Aswamedha was a task of peculiar difficulty, whilst it was the greatest rite that a Raja could perform. By the Rajasúya a Chieftain seems to have asserted his sovereignty over a new and independent Raj. But by the Aswamedha he was popularly supposed by an ignorant and childlike people to have asserted his sovereignty over the whole earth; and by the successful performance of a hundred Aswamedhas, it was implicitly believed that a mortal Raja would overthrow the celestial Raj of Indra, and become at once the ruler of the universe and the sovereign of the gods.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.Performance of
an Aswamedha
contemplated
by Yudhish-
thira.The Aswamedha
a more import-
ant rite than
the Rajasuya.

HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.Idea involved in
the Aswamedha.Loosening of a
horse, and wars
against the
Rajas whose
territory he
might enter.Failure of an
Aswamedha if
the horse was
not recovered.Grand sacrifice
and feast at the
close of a suc-
cessful Aswa-
medha.Renown of
every Raja who
performed an
Aswamedha.

The idea involved in this imposing ceremonial was at once primitive and warlike. An ambitious Raja who desired to establish his supremacy over friends and enemies without the formality of declaring war, and without perhaps the danger of encountering a formidable confederacy, would perform an Aswamedha in the following fashion. He would procure a horse of a particular colour, and let it run loose in public with certain ceremonies; and from that day, and for an entire year, the horse would be permitted to wander into whatever territory it pleased, followed by the Raja and his whole army. The wanderings of the horse were thus left entirely to chance, whilst its entrance into a foreign Raj was virtually a challenge to the Raja of that country; for every Raja was bound either to carry away the horse and offer battle, or else to tender his submission by restoring the horse and joining his army to that of the invaders. Moreover, if the Raja who attempted the Aswamedha and followed the horse, failed in any one case to secure the restoration of the animal by the force or terror of his arms, the Aswamedha was brought to an untimely close, and the Raja who had attempted it was disgraced in the eyes of his subjects and neighbours. If, on the contrary, he succeeded in reducing to submission every Raja who carried away the horse, and thus at the end of the year brought the horse triumphantly home to his own city, the animal would be sacrificed to the gods in the presence of the whole assembly of conquered Rajas; and the Aswamedha would be brought to a close by a grand feast, at which the roasted flesh of the horse would be regarded as the imperial dish. Henceforth the performer of the Aswamedha would be held in the highest honour.



The fame of his power and majesty would be spread abroad by bards and eulogists throughout all lands, and be handed down in song and ballad to all future generations; whilst every descendant for countless ages would preserve the memory and exult in the glory of his mighty ancestor.

It is easy to conceive that under such circumstances the performance of an Aswamedha would be particularly fascinating to a warlike race like the ancient Kshatriyas. It would combine all the excitement of war with that of high play. If the horse entered the territory of too powerful a Raja, before the army which followed had been reinforced by the retainers of weaker Rajas who had been conquered, the Aswamedha might be brought to a disastrous termination. If, on the contrary, the horse confined himself to the territories of weaker Rajas, or deferred entering the territory of a stronger Raja until his followers had swelled into an overwhelming force, the Aswamedha might be brought to a triumphant conclusion. Probably in times still more remote the loosening of the horse may have been a mere festival held for the purpose of deciding the supremacy between the military settlers in a particular neighbourhood, and lasting perhaps only a few days or a lunar month, instead of an entire year. But whether on a large or a small scale, the greatest interest would be excited, and a general agitation would prevail. Every Chieftain in the neighbourhood would speculate as to whether the horse would enter his Raj, and whether in such a contingency he should hazard a battle or tender his submission.

Great attractions of the Aswamedha.

Combination of war and gambling.

General excitement.

Every spot where the horse was caught, or where a battle ensued, would be eagerly remembered and

Memory of Aswamedhas preserved in local tradition.



HISTORY OF
INDIA.
PART II.

Sacrifice of the
horse at the
close of an As-
wamedha asso-
ciated with the
worship of the
Sun.

Greek concep-
tion of the Sun
god.

Horse sacrifice
of the Massa-
getæ.

Disappearance
of the Aswamed-
ha in India.

pointed out to the inquisitive inquirer, and doubtless would be long preserved in local tradition.

The Aswamedha thus originally combined the idea of conquest and sovereignty with that of a national banquet at which the roasted horse might have been regarded as a national or imperial dish. But, at the same time, the sacrifice was undoubtedly invested with a religious significance, which is wanting in the Rajasúya. It was connected with the worship of the Sun, which, like the worship of the serpent, appears to have been one of the most ancient of all religions. The idea that the Sun god was carried through the firmament, from his rising to his setting, in a golden chariot drawn by fleet and invisible steeds, was a favourite conception of the Greek bards. Again, Herodotus states explicitly, that the Massagetæ of High Asia sacrificed horses to the Sun, under the idea that the swiftest of animals should be offered to the swiftest of deities.¹ In the two Aswamedha hymns in the Rig-Veda, the horse is regarded as the type of the Sun, and also of Agni, or the deity of fire.² At a later, but still ancient period, the Aswamedha appears to

¹ Herodotus, Book i. c. 216.

² See Rig-Veda, Suktas clxii. and clxiii., Wilson's *translation*, vol. ii. pp. 112—125. It must be confessed that the two hymns in question are exceedingly obscure. They are undoubtedly ancient, but still they appear to have been composed in an age of mysticism, long after the primitive age of horse sacrifice, and possibly during some temporary revival of the ancient rite. They are replete with mysticism, and are wholly wanting in that exultation in victory, and joyous anticipation of a feast, which are likely to have found expression in a more primitive and barbarous period, of which relics are to be found in the legendary narrative preserved in the Mahá Bhārata. Indeed, in the opening verse of the first of the Aswamedha hymns, the worshipper positively deprecates the wrath of certain Vedic deities for thus paying reverence to the horse:—"Let neither Mitra nor Varuna, Aryaman, Ayu (i. e. Vayu), Indra, Ribhukshin (? Prajāpati), nor the Maruts censure us, when we proclaim in the sacrifice the virtues of the swift horse sprung from the gods."—Wilson's *translation*.



have fallen into disuse; and during the successive ages of Buddhism and Brahmanical revival, it must have been virtually abolished as altogether opposed to the enlightened ideas of more civilized times. But still the institution lived in oral tradition, and was so deeply rooted in the memories and minds of the Hindús, that it even yet finds expression in the Mahá Bhárata and Rámáyana, and is frequently referred to in the other sacred books of the Hindús. An interpretation, however, has been generally placed upon the ceremonial, which was wholly unknown in primitive times, and which will form the subject of future discussion. In the Mahá Bhárata the Aswamedha is said to have been performed as an atonement for sin; in the Rámáyana it is said to have been performed for the purpose of obtaining a son; whilst in both poems, and in the Puránas generally, the sacrifice is said to have been frequently effected by ancient Bráhman sages for the acquisition of religious merit, and for the attainment of a supernatural power which should render them superior even to the gods.³

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Brahmanical
interpretations
of the ceremoni-
al.

The description of the Aswamedha of Raja Yudhishtira, as it appears in the Mahá Bhárata, contains distinct references to the old primitive custom of loosening the horse, and fighting every Raja who opposed its progress, which has already been described. At the same time it is loaded with Brahmanical details and mythical references which are entirely at variance with this original idea. These

Brahmanical
interpolations in
the tradition of
the Aswamedha
of Yudhishtira.

Objections
against elimin-
ating the inter-
polations.

³ In the Yajur-Veda, which is much later than the Rig-Veda, the sacrifice was performed without any slaughter, the animals being tied to the posts whilst the invocations were being chaunted, and then let loose without injury.—Colebrooke on the Vedas. A legend is preserved in the Mahá Bhárata of a similar bloodless Aswamedha having been performed by the sage Vrihaspati.



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Three stages in
the perform-
ance of an Aswa-
medha.

interpolations however are too closely interwoven with what appears to be the original and authentic tradition, to be altogether eliminated; and moreover are more suggestive and amusing than the ordinary run of Brahmanical additions. Accordingly the legend will be exhibited as it stands in the Mahá Bhárata, although in a greatly abridged form; the whole being divided into three distinct narratives, corresponding to the three stages in the performance of an Aswamedha, viz.—

1st, The capture of the horse.

2nd, The loosening of the horse.

3rd, The sacrifice of the horse.

1st, Narrative of
the capture of
the horse.

The narrative of the capture, or, in other words, the stealing of the horse, may now be related as follows:—

Melancholy of
Yudhishtira.

Now after Yudhishtira had been established in the Raj, he again began to grieve very bitterly over the men who had been slain on his account in the great war; and the Mahá-
raja and Krishna tried to arouse him from his sorrow, and Krishna counselled him to perform sacrifices, and to entertain many guests, by which means he might cast aside his

Krishna advises
him to perform
sacrifices.

Vyása counsels
an Aswamedha
for the atone-
ment of his sins.

melancholy. After this Krishna returned to Dwáraká, when the sage Vyása appeared to Yudhishtira, and advised him to perform an Aswamedha as an atonement for all his sins; and Vyása told him of a place where he might procure abundant treasure for the ceremony; for that in former times when a Raja of Ayodhyá had performed the same sacrifice, he had given so much treasure to the Bráhmans that they could not carry it all away, and accordingly stored a large quantity in a certain spot in the side of the Himálaya mountain, where it still remained. But Raja Yudhishtira refused for many days to send for the treasure, because it belonged to the Bráhmans; until at length the sage Vyása explained to him that fire, water, earth, and riches belonged to no one, and might be kept by any one who found them. So after

Yudhishtira's
objections to
taking a trea-
sure belonging
to the Bráh-
mans.



much discourse Raja Yudhishtira determined to perform the Aswamedha sacrifice, and to send for the treasure of the Brāhmanas which had been stored in the Himālaya mountain.

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Now it was the rule at Aswamedhas that the horse which was to be sacrificed should be of a pure white colour like the moon, with a yellow tail and a black right ear; or the horse might be all of a black colour. The horse was to be let loose on the fourteenth day after the entrance of the sun into Aries, being the night of the full moon in the month of Choitre; and it was to run loose for a whole year, with a gold plate on its forehead; and on the gold plate was to be inscribed the name of the Raja to whom it belonged, and a proclamation that an army was following the horse, and that all who stopped the horse, or who led him away, would be compelled to accompany the army until the end of the year, and then would be called upon to attend the Aswamedha sacrifice. And Vyāsa, the sage, also told Yudhishtira that the sacrifice was a very difficult one, inasmuch as no Raja could perform it who had not obtained a perfect control over all his passions. Moreover, Vyāsa commanded the Raja that he must not sleep a single night out of his city throughout the entire year; and that he must always sleep on the ground, with his wife by his side, and a naked sword between them; and that he must never once put his hand upon her, or the whole merit of the sacrifice would be turned to guilt. Vyāsa also informed the Raja that a horse bearing all the requisite marks would be found at a very distant city named Badravati.

Rule of the Aswamedha.

Colour of the horse.

Night of the loosening.

Gold plate with inscription.

Necessity for the Raja to control his passions for an entire year.

When Vyāsa had thus spoken, Bhīma offered to go to the city of Badravati and bring away the horse; and Yudhishtira gave him permission, but wished that Krishna had been present to counsel him in the matter. Whilst they were speaking together word was brought that Krishna was standing at the gate of the palace; saying, that he would not enter a house at the request of a doorkeeper, but only at the invitation of the owner. So Yudhishtira and his brethren went out and saluted Krishna, and brought him into the palace, and told him of the Aswamedha sacrifice.

Bhima offers to go to the city of Badravati to bring away a horse for the Aswamedha.

Krishna's sudden appearance at the gate of the palace at Hastinapur.

Krishna brought into the palace by Yudhishtira and his brethren.

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Krishna jealous that Bhíma should be sent to fetch the horse instead of Arjuna.

Krishna's objections to Bhíma on the score of his fondness for eating, and his marriage to an Asura wife.

Bhíma retorts that Krishna's stomach contains the universe.

Refers to Krishna's marriage to the daughter of a Bear.

Mollifies Krishna.

Bhíma proceeds to Badravati to bring away the horse.

that they were about to perform. Now when Krishna heard that Bhíma had been chosen to go to Badravati, rather than Arjuna, he was somewhat jealous, for Arjuna was his friend and near kinsman. And Krishna said :—“ Why send Bhíma to bring away the horse ? Surely such a mission is too great for him : I am aware that he understands everything connected with eating ; but a man can have but a foolish head who is always thinking of his stomach : I know also that he has married a woman of the Asuras, and she will certainly deprive him of any sense he may have remaining : Moreover, it is the rule that if a man marries a woman of inferior rank, or gives himself up to the love of women, or lives in the house of his father-in-law, he may not take any part in the performance of an Aswamedha : Arjuna, on the other hand, is fitted in every way for high deeds.” Bhíma replied :—“ You say, O Krishna, that he who has a large stomach, and is ever intent upon eating, is without understanding ; but who can have a wider stomach than yours in which the whole creation finds a place ? You also say that a great eater has no brains ; who eats more than you, who devour all the rivers, all the demons, and all mankind ? Then you object that I have the daughter of an Asura living in my house, but you have married the daughter of Jámavati who is a Bear ; and is the daughter of a Bear to be preferred to the daughter of an Asura ? As to my giving myself up to the love of women, is it not known unto all men that you are in no wise better than me ? But let this pass : We are all anxious for your aid in the performance of this Aswamedha ; and all my own hopes rest upon you alone.”

At these words Krishna was mollified, and he gave his consent that Bhíma should go to Badravati. And Bhíma set out with two other warriors, and defeated the Raja of Badravati and brought away the horse. And the Raja resolved to accompany Bhíma to Hastinápur, and attend the Aswamedha of Yudhishtira, and to carry with him all his family and treasures. Now this Raja had a mother who was very old, and she was called his great mother, because she had been his father's head wife ; and he was very anxious



to take her with him. And the Raja said to her, that as she was now approaching the end of her days, it would be most proper for her to proceed to the river Ganges and bathe there, and to behold the many holy Rishis and devotees who had taken up their abode there. But his old mother replied :—"What is this Ganges water that you are talking about? Have I not a hundred better springs here? I will never quit this house; for if I stir, all the goods and chattels here will be eaten up: My maids and servants will be every day plundering milk, and grain, and butter, and causing me grievous damage; so that when I return I shall find half my property wasted and stolen." And the Raja's mother was very obstinate, and notwithstanding all that could be said, nothing would persuade her to leave the city of Badravati and proceed to Hastinápúr. So the Minister advised the Raja to carry her by force, and accordingly a litter was prepared, and the old Rání was placed upon it, and she was carried away, crying very loudly, along with the whole camp to the city of Hastinápúr. And when they came nigh unto the city, Bhíma went forward to inform his brother Yudhishtira, who thereupon came out to meet the Raja of Badravati, accompanied by Krishna and all his Chieftains; and Yudhishtira then conducted the Raja and all his party with great ceremony into Hastinápúr.

Now according to the rule of the Aswamedha the horse could not be loosened until the night of the full moon in the month of Choitro.⁴ And Krishna returned to his own city, and dwelt there; for there remained many months before the horse could be loosened and the preliminary rites be commenced. And when it only wanted one month to the ceremony, Raja Yudhishtira sent Bhíma to Dwáraká to invite Krishna to attend the sacrifice. And Bhíma set off for Dwáraká with all speed, and after some days he reached the city in the evening, and proceeded to the palace of

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Obstinate refusal of the old mother of the Raja to leave the Palace.

Old lady carried away by force.

Krishna returns to Dwáraká until the night of the loosening of the horse.

Trick played by Krishna upon Bhíma.

⁴ The month Choitro generally corresponds to the latter half of the month of March and the first half of the month of April. The full moon in the month of Choitro would thus often correspond to the full moon at Easter; and this coincidence has given rise to wild conjectures.