

|| Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya ||

1) The Pandavas, due to the blessings of Sri Narayana, completed twelve years of their exile in the forest appropriately. Bidding farewell to Sage Dhaumya, the Brahmanas and the others, they made up their mind to undergo the Ajnatavasa.

2) The Pandavas reached the city of King Virata and, after keeping their weapons in a Shami tree, changed their appearances. They took on the guise of a yati, cook, transgender, horse-keeper, cowherd and a female assistant.

3) All of them went to King Virata. Being adorned with excellent auspicious traits, they were all accorded great respect by him, just as if they were Devatas. They worshipped Sri Hari residing inside of Dharmaraja mainly, and not anyone else.

4) Bhimasena took the guise of a cook as it was not appropriate for a Gruhastha, especially for a Kshatriya, to consume the food of others.

5) Bhima took the guise of a Shudra also because his knowledge would become apparent if he appeared in any Vaidika guise, and people would therefore identify him.

6) When it is said that those who know the Vedas possess ownership over other's wealth, what else needs to be said about the Pandavas, who are the best amongst Devatas? Therefore they stayed there on the basis of their own strength, and not by relying upon anyone else.

7) Due to the curse he had received, Arjuna took on the role of a transgender. Similarly, Nakula took on the guise of a Suta as it was the next *jati* after Kshatriya.

8-9) After the Suta, Vaishyas are the next higher caste. Hence Sahadeva took on the guise of a Vaishya. Amongst Vaishyas, cowherds are the best. Therefore he relied upon the profession of tending to cows. Since a yati is worshipped by all, Dharmaraja took on that guise. He also engaged constantly in gambling to build expertise. His goal was to display his skill in gambling later (at the end of the exile).

10) In order to be known as a *saha-dharmini* to Bhimasena, Draupadi took on the guise of a Sairandhri, belonging to the Shudra varna. Isn't it the Dharma of a wife to be known as one discharging similar duties as the husband?

11) Later a wrestler came there. Due to the boon of Shiva, he had become invincible and used to win (wrestling contests) against everyone. He came there and gave out a loud roar.

**Note:** The name of the wrestler was Jeemuta.

12) Seeing him, all the wrestlers who were under the patronage of King Virata ran away due to fear. Then, Dharmaraja said.

13) "O King! The cook that you have employed can quickly kill this wrestler and increase your fame. Summon him now".

14) When Dharmaraja suggested thus, Virata summoned Bhima. "Due to Sri Hari's grace I shall immediately slay this wrestler" – said the son of Maruti.

15) "Sri Hari, the controller of Brahma and Rudra, is bigger than all the Devatas belonging to various groups. He bears those names by which all Devatas are known. Due to my devotion to him, I possess strength".

**Note:** The names Brahma, Rudra, Indra, Vayu etc are all actually names of Paramatma. The Devatas are actually named after him.

16) "There is a Shruti that goes by 'ya eva devanamadha'. Therefore, Sri Hari is the biggest Daiva (Mahadeva). Hence he alone will grant me victory".

17) "Sri Hari as residing inside of Yudhisthira is known by the name of Yudhishtira. Similarly, Sri Hari inside you is known as Tvam. In this way, it is Sri Hari who is primarily addressed by all names".

18) Stating this way, Bhimasena faced that wrestler. He sent that wrestler, who was invincible by even the strongest, to the loka of Yama.

19) In this way, when the Pandavas were residing there, when only two months remained in the year, Keechaka, the brother of Virata's wife, who was known as the best amongst the powerful, returned there after gaining victories in all directions.

20) Seeing Draupadi, and overcome by lust, he pleaded with her in many ways and was rejected. Even as a month passed by (in his attempts), he requested (his sister) Sudeshna repeatedly seeking Draupadi.

21) Since Keechaka kept requesting her even after she tried to stop him, Sudeshna told Draupadi – "You bring me *Sura* (alcohol) from him immediately". Draupadi was frightened and said – "Not possible".

22) Draupadi went to his place after being forced to do so. He tried to grab her by her hands. She shook off his hands, pushed him down, and rushed to the royal gathering. While running that way, she prayed to Sri Hari, the Supreme lord, as residing inside of Surya.

23) Chasing Draupadi, Keechaka kicked her after pushing her down. Then, Sri Narayana, who was inside of Surya, sent a Rakshasa named Heti. He had come there being invisible all the while.

24) Sri Vayu entered that Rakshasa, hit Keechaka and made him fall down. Seeing Draupadi in that state, Bhima became furious. Noticing Bhima staring at a nearby tree, his older brother Yudhishtira stopped him.

25) That night, Draupadi approached Bhima and encouraged him to kill the sinner Keechaka. As instructed by him, she asked Keechaka to go to the empty dancing school the next night. He (Bhima) too went there.

26) Bhima, having reached there, won against him in a combat and killed him. He then mangled his body, stuffing his head and limbs into his anus.

27) Getting to know that the invincible Keechaka has been killed, a hundred and five brothers of his, who were also invincible due to Shiva's boon, tied up Draupadi, wanting to burn her along with their brother's body.

**Note:** The 105 brothers of Keechaka were known as Upakeechakas.

28) As she was being dragged by those Keechakas, Draupadi let out a loud shout. Hearing the same, Bhimasena immediately uprooted a huge tree and killed all of them with it. He then left for the city, along with Draupadi.

29) In this way, the hundred and six of them, who had through great efforts obtained boons from Shiva for remaining invincible and free from death, were killed by Bhima.

30) Even as he was being thought of as a Gandharva, Bhima enjoyed killing all of them. Draupadi too became happy. Later, Sudheshna, out of fear, asked Draupadi to leave. "Let me be under your care for thirteen more days" – replied Draupadi. Sudeshna, still reeling with fear, said yes to her. In this way, Pandavas completed the one year period of disguise.

31) Around that time, the soldiers of Duryodhana, who had searched the entire world for the in-disguise Pandavas, returned to him without having spotted them. They gave him the news that Keechaka had been killed for a woman.

32) Then, Duryodhana said – "Keechaka has been killed by Bhima because of Draupadi". Later, Duryodhana and the others, along with Bhishma and the rest, and with Karna, left for the city of Virata.

33) At first, Susharma went to the city of Virata to wage a war. There, he captured the cows of Virata. Hearing this, Virata left along with his army. The Pandavas, apart from Arjuna, followed him.

34) Susharma defeated Virata and captured the King. Then, Bhima went against him. He destroyed the army (of Susharma), released Virata and captured Susharma.

35) Yudhishtira got Susharma released. Later that night, the Pandavas camped outside the city.

36) The next day, Bhishma, Drona and the others decided it would be easy to win against a Virata army that does not have Keechaka, and proceeded.

37-38) It had not been possible for even Bhishma and the others to bring under control Keechaka, Hidimba, Baka, Kirmeera, King Jarasandha, Kamsa and the rest. Therefore, knowing Keechaka to be dead, they proceeded for war against Virata.

39) In order to make true his assurance that he would protect the Kauravas against Bhima, Drona proceeded for war with them, taking along his son.

40) "If the Pandavas come out to help them, they would be identified. Else, we can defeat Virata who has been invincible till date" – thinking thus, they caught Virata's cows from all directions.

41) Then, Uttara proceeded towards getting the cows released, appointing Arjuna as his charioteer. Seeing the Kauravas, however, he immediately became scared. Arjuna then stopped him with great difficulty and, after making him his charioteer in turn, proceeded against the Kauravas.

42) Retrieving the Gandiva, putting on the Hanuman mast and holding the Devadatta conch, Arjuna at first got the cows released. He then started fighting the Kauravas. One by one, they engaged with him in battle from their chariots.

43) When the Kauravas again came after him together, he rendered everyone apart from Bhishma unconscious by using the *Sammohana* astra and picked up all of their upper garments. Only Bhishma knew of the counter astra to the *Sammohana* astra.

**Note:** The *Sammohana* was a divine weapon that would cause the enemy to fall unconscious.

44) Arjuna rendered Bhishma chariot-less and returned. Hearing the news of the defeat of all Kauravas, King Virata assumed that it was due to his son and felt elated. Yudhishtira then told him that their defeat was due to the transgender (Brihannala – Arjuna).

45) King Virata then got angry and assaulted Yudhishtira with the dice used for gambling. Bhima and Arjuna became furious after getting to know of this. Dharmaraja stopped them.

46) “If he doesn’t bow to us and apologize when we appear in our original form, then he qualifies to be killed” – said Dharmaraja. The next day, all of them put on their original forms and stood there.

47) Then, Virata saw Dharmaraja sitting on his throne and asked them – “What is this?”. Prince Uttara told him that they were the Pandavas and narrated all that happened during the *go-grahana*.

48) King Virata started shivering with fear and fell at the feet of the Pandavas and took refuge. He gave his daughter Uttara to Arjuna. He accepted her for his son (i.e. as his daughter-in-law).

49) In this way, for having released Virata and the cows, and for having sent the Keechakas to Andhantamas, Bhimasena accumulated a lot of excellent punya. After him, Arjuna gained a lot of punya for having freed the cows.

50) After that, the Pandavas sent messengers to Sri Krishna. Along with Balarama, Sri Krishna, the personification of knowledge and bliss, came there bringing with him Abhimanyu. Later the wedding of Abhimanyu took place.

51) That occasion became a great festival for the Pandavas, Panchalas and the brave Yadavas. They finished the *Ajnatavasa* and felt great joy being accompanied by Sri Krishna.

52) Having been troubled greatly by Arjuna in the war, Duryodhana and the others got together with Karna, Shakuni, Bhishma and the others at Hastinapura and engaged in a discussion.

53) When the Kauravas claimed “We saw Arjuna today during the period of exile. Therefore, the Pandavas must go back to exile once again”, Bhishma replied – “The *Ajnatavasa* is over”. Drona too said the same thing.

54) Ignoring the words of those two, the evil Kauravas sent messengers to the Pandavas and said – “You must go back to the forest once again”. Dharmaraja, in reply, said – “The Brahmanas know this”.

55) The Kauravas made the claim based on the solar calendar, as per which the period (of exile) had not yet completed. However, according to the lunar calendar, the said period had been completed.

56) Surya is the lord of the day. When it comes to the *paksha*, *masa* and *varsha*, Chandra is the lord. Therefore, the knowledgeable ones say that the lunar year is the important (relevant i.e.) one for calculating years.

57-58) Therefore, in Yajnas, it is the lunar calendar that is considered and not the solar one. Without considering all this, the Kauravas, seized by greed, did not hand over the Kingdom to the Pandavas. Getting the Brahmanas to declare that the Ajnatavasa had been completed successfully, the Pandavas left for Upaplavya.

59) The Pandavas, accompanied by Sri Vasudeva and all the Yadavas, Panchalas and Matsyas, stayed at Upaplavya for a few days, along with their wives, while receiving instructions from Sri Krishna.

|| End of chapter 23, known as 'Pandava Ajnatavasa Samapti', from the Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya, composed by Srimadanandatirtha Bhagavatpada ||

|| Sri Krishnarpanamastu ||