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# Maha·bhárata

Book Three

The Forest

Volume Four



Translated by  
W. J. JOHNSON

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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MAHĀBHĀRATA  
BOOK THREE  
THE FOREST  
VOLUME FOUR

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W. J. JOHNSON



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A *sandhi* grid is printed on the inside of the back cover

JANAMEJAYA uvāca:

300.1

Y AT TAT TADĀ MAHAD|BRAHMAN Lomaśo vākyaṃ abravīt  
Indrasya vacanād eva Pāṇḍu|putraṃ Yudhiṣṭhiram:  
«Yac c' āpi te bhayaṃ tīvraṃ na ca kīrtayase kva cit  
tat c' āpy apahariṣyāmi Dhanamjaya ito gate»—  
Kiṃ nu taj japatām śreṣṭha Karṇaṃ prati mahad|bhayam  
āsīn? na ca sa dharm'ātmā kathayām āsa kasya cit?

VAISAMPĀYANA uvāca:

Ahaṃ te rāja|śārdūla kathayāmi kathām imām  
pṛcchato Bharata|śreṣṭha, śuśrūṣasva giraṃ mama.  
5 Dvādaśe samatikrānte varṣe prāpte trayodaśe  
Pāṇḍūnām hita|kṛc Chakraḥ Karṇaṃ bhikṣitum udyataḥ.  
Abhiprāyam atho jñātvā mah"Ēndrasya vibhā|vasuḥ  
kuṇḍal'ārthe mahā|rāja Sūryaḥ Karṇam upāgataḥ Mah"  
ārhe śayane vīraṃ spardhy"āstarāṇa|samvrte  
śayānam ativiśvastaṃ brahmaṇyaṃ satya|vādinam.  
Svapn'ānte niśi rāj'ēndra darśayām āsa rāsmivān  
kṛpayā paray"āviṣṭaḥ putra|snehāc ca Bhārata.  
Brāhmaṇo veda|vid bhūtvā Sūryo yoga'rddhi|rūpavān\*  
hit'ārtham abravīt Karṇaṃ sāntva|pūrvam idaṃ vacaḥ:  
10 «Karṇa! mad|vacanaṃ tāta śṛṇu satya|bhṛtām vara  
bruvato 'dya mahā|bāho sauhṛdāt paramaṃ hitam.  
Upāyāsyati Śakras tvām Pāṇḍavānām hit'ēpsayā  
brāhmaṇa|cchadmanā Karṇa kuṇḍal'ōpajihīṣayā.  
Viditaṃ tena śīlaṃ te sarvasya jagatas tathā  
yathā tvam bhikṣitaḥ sadbhir dadāsy eva na yācase.  
Tvam hi tāta dadāsy eva brāhmaṇebhyaḥ prayācitaḥ

JANAM·EJAYA said:

SO, GREAT BRAHMIN, when, at Indra's request, Lómasha 300.1  
said to Pandu's son, Yudhi·shthira: "Once Dhanam·ja-  
ya has gone, I shall remove that bitter fear you keep to  
yourself"—what exactly was that great fear concerning Ka-  
rna, best of brahmins? And was there none to whom that  
spirit of the Law could tell it?

VAISHAM·PÁYANA said:

Since you ask about it, tigerish king, I shall tell that story.  
Listen, best of Bháratas, to what I have to say. Twelve years 5  
had passed, and the thirteenth begun, when Shakra, want-  
ing the best for the Pandus, was prepared to beg from Karna.  
Then, realizing what great Indra intended in the matter of  
the earrings, radiant sun-god Surya came to Karna, mighty  
king. The hero—confident, brahminic, true-spoken—was  
lying on a splendid couch covered with a priceless throw. O  
chief among kings, O Bhárata, at night in a dream the Sun  
showed himself, filled with great compassion, for love of his  
son. Through his yogic power, Surya became a Veda-versed  
brahmin, and coaxingly uttered this speech to Karna, for  
his own good.

"Karna! Son! Greatest of truth-tellers, listen to my words. 10  
I speak now, Strong Arm, from love, and in your best in-  
terest. Wanting to benefit the Pándavas, Shakra will come  
to you, Karna, disguised as a brahmin, hoping to steal your  
earrings. Like the whole world he knows your practice: that  
when begged by the good, you simply give, you do not so-  
licit. For they say that you, my son, when requested, give  
to brahmins, refusing neither goods nor anything else from



vittaṃ yac c' ânyad apy âhur na pratyākhyāsi kasya cit.  
Tvāṃ tu c' âivaṃ|vidhaṃ jñātvā svayaṃ va Pāka|śāsanaḥ  
āgantā kuṇḍal'ârthāya kavacaṃ c' âiva bhikṣitum.

- 15 Tasmai prayācamānāya na deye kuṇḍale tvayā.  
anuneyaḥ paraṃ śaktyā śreya etadd hi te param.  
Kuṇḍal'ârthe bruvaṃs tāta kāraṇair bahubhis tvayā  
anyair bahu|vidhair vittaiḥ sannivāryaḥ punaḥ punaḥ  
Ratnaiḥ strībhis tathā gobhir dhanair bahuvidhair api  
nidarśanaīś ca bahubhiḥ kuṇḍal'êpsuḥ Puram|daraḥ.

Yadi dāsyasi Karṇa tvam sahaḥ kuṇḍale śubhe  
āyuṣaḥ prakṣayaṃ gatvā mṛtyor vaśam upaiśyasi.  
Kavacena samāyuktaḥ kuṇḍalābhyāṃ ca mānada  
avadhyas tvam raṇe 'rīṇām iti viddhi vaco mama.

- 20 Amṛtād utthitaṃ hy etad ubhayaṃ ratna|sambhavam,  
tasmād rakṣyaṃ tvayā Karṇa jīvitaṃ cet priyaṃ tava.»

KARṆA UVĀCA:

«Ko mām evaṃ bhavān prāha darśayan sauhṛdaṃ param?  
kāmayā bhagavan brūhi, ko bhavān dvija|veṣa|dhṛk?»

BRĀHMAṆA UVĀCA:

«Ahaṃ tāta sahasr'âṃśuḥ sauhṛdāt tvāṃ nidarśaye.  
kuruṣv' âitad vaco me tvam, etac chreyaḥ paraṃ hi te.»

KARṆA UVĀCA:

«Śreya eva mam' âtyantaṃ yasya me go|patih prabhuḥ  
pravakt' âdya hit'ânveṣī śṛṇu c' êdaṃ vaco mama.

any of them. So, knowing you to be like that, the conqueror of Paka will come himself to beg your armor and earrings. When he begs the earrings of you, you shouldn't give them. 15  
 Conciliate him as best you can—that's your safest course. When, my son, he speaks of the earrings, you should repeatedly fend off, with all types of reasons and many other sorts of wealth—such as gems, women, cattle, all kinds of riches—and with many examples—that ring-obsessed Sacker of Cities.

If, Karna, you give up the beautiful earrings you were born with, your life will be cut off and you will fall into the power of death. Honor-giver, when you have the armor and the earrings, enemies cannot kill you in battle. Remember my words. For both these, bejewelled, have come from the 20  
 elixir of immortality, so guard them, Karna, if you value your life."

KARNA said:

"Tell me, sir, who are you to show me such extraordinary friendship? Be kind enough, lord, to tell me who you are—you who look like a brahmin."

The BRAHMIN said:

"I am the thousand-rayed Sun, my son, and I instruct you because I love you. Do as I say. It's in your very best interest."

KARNA said:

"It's certainly the best thing that could have happened to me, that the powerful lord of rays should speak to me today, seeking my benefit. Now hear my reply.

Prasādaye tvāṃ varadaṃ praṇayāc ca bravīmy aham  
na nivāryo vratād asmād ahaṃ yady asmi te priyaḥ.

- 25 Vrataṃ vai mama loko 'yaṃ  
vetti kṛtsnaṃ vibhāvaso  
yathā 'haṃ dvija|mukhyebhyo  
dadyāṃ prāṇān api dhruvam.

Yady āgacchati māṃ Śakro brāhmaṇa|cchadmanā vṛtaḥ  
hit'|ārthaṃ Pāṇḍu|putrāṇāṃ khe|car'|ōttama bhikṣitum  
Dāsyāmi vibudha|śreṣṭha kuṇḍale varma c' ōttamam  
na me kīrtiḥ pranaśyeta triṣu lokeṣu viśrutā.

Mad|vidhasya yaśasyaṃ hi na yuktaṃ prāṇa|rakṣaṇam,  
yuktaṃ hi yaśasā yuktaṃ maraṇaṃ loka|sammataṃ.

- So 'ham Indrāya dāsyāmi kuṇḍale saha varmaṇā.  
yadi māṃ Vala|Vṛtra|ghno bhikṣ'|ārtham upayāsyati  
30 Hit'|ārthe Pāṇḍu|putrāṇāṃ kuṇḍale me prayācitum  
tan me kīrti|karaṃ loke tasy' ākīrtir bhaviṣyati.  
Vṛṇomi kīrtiṃ loke hi jīviten' āpi bhānuman.  
kīrtimān aśnute svarge hīna|kīrtis tu naśyati.  
Kīrtir hi puruṣaṃ loke sañjīvayati mātṛvat  
akīrtir jīvitaṃ hanti jīvato 'pi śarīraṇaḥ.  
Ayaṃ purāṇaḥ śloko hi svayaṃ gīto vibhāvaso  
dhātṛā lok'|ēśvara yathā kīrtir āyur narasya ha:  
«Puruṣasya pare loke kīrtir eva parāyaṇam  
iha loke viśuddhā ca kīrtir āyur|vivardhanī.»

- 35 So 'haṃ śarīra|je dattvā kīrtiṃ prāpsyāmi śāśvatīm  
dattvā ca vidhivad dānaṃ brāhmaṇebhyo yathā|vidhi.  
Hutvā śarīraṃ saṅgrāme kṛtvā karma suduṣkaram  
vijitya ca parān ājau yaśaḥ prāpsyāmi kevalam.  
Bhītānām abhayaṃ dattvā saṅgrāme jīvit'|ārthinām  
vṛddhān bālān dvijātīmś ca mokṣayitvā mahābhayaṭ

I propitiate you, giver of gifts, and out of love I say, if I  
 am dear to you, don't deflect me from this vow. O Lord of 25  
 boundless light, this world knows my whole vow: I would  
 certainly give my life itself to the first of the twice-born.  
 If, O greatest of those who walk the sky, Shakra comes to  
 me disguised as a brahmin to beg on behalf of the sons of  
 Pandu, I shall, greatest of gods, give him my earrings and  
 my excellent mail, so that my fame, which is spread across  
 the three worlds, may not disappear. Fame, for such a man  
 as me, doesn't come with saving one's life; rather, a proper  
 death is rewarded by the world with proper fame.

So I shall give the earrings and armor to Indra. For if the  
 killer of Vala and Vritra approaches me, begging, soliciting 30  
 my earrings for the welfare of Pandu's sons, that shall make  
 me famous throughout the world and redound to his in-  
 famy. Sun, I choose fame in the world, even at the cost of  
 my life. One is famous and goes to heaven, but without  
 fame one is lost. For fame, like a mother, gives life to a man  
 in the world; but infamy kills the life, even of the embodied  
 and living. Sun, Lord of the world, the Creator himself has  
 sung this ancient verse—how fame is the life of a man: 'In  
 the next world, fame alone is for man the final aim; in this  
 world, untainted fame enlarges life.'

So, by giving away what was born with my body, and 35  
 giving gifts properly to brahmins, just as prescribed, I shall  
 acquire undying fame. By offering my body in war, by doing  
 the difficult deed, by conquering my enemies in combat, I  
 shall acquire nothing but fame. By securing the safety of the  
 fearful who cling to their lives in battle; by liberating youths,  
 old men and brahmins from great danger, I shall attain the

Prāpsyāmi paramaṃ loke yaśaḥ svargyam anuttamam.  
 jīvitena' āpi me rakṣyā kīrtis tad viddhi\* me vratam.  
 So 'haṃ dattvā Maghavate bhikṣām etāṃ anuttamām  
 brāhmaṇa|cchadmane deva loke gantā parāṃ gatim.»

SŪRYA uvāca:

- 301.1 «M” āhitaṃ Karṇa kārṣīs tvam ātmanaḥ suhr̥dām tathā  
 putrāṇām atha bhāryāṇām atho mātur atho pituḥ.  
 Śarīrasy' āvirodhena prāṇinām prāṇa|bhṛd|vara  
 iṣyate yaśasaḥ prāptiḥ kīrtiś ca tri|dive sthirā.  
 Yas tvam prāṇa|virodhena kīrtim icchasi śāśvatīm  
 sā te prāṇān samādāya gamiṣyati, na saṃśayaḥ.  
 Jīvatām kurute kāryaṃ pitā mātā sutās tathā  
 ye c' ānye bāndhavāḥ ke cil loke 'smin puruṣa'|rṣabha  
 5 Rājānaś ca nara|vyāghra pauruṣeṇa; nibodha tat.  
 kīrtiś ca jīvataḥ sādhvī puruṣasya mahā|dyute.  
 Mṛtasya kīrtiyā kiṃ kāryaṃ bhasmī|bhūtasya dehinaḥ?  
 mṛtaḥ kīrtim na jānīte jīvan kīrtim samaśnute.  
 Mṛtasya kīrtir martyasya yathā mālā gat'|āyuṣaḥ.  
 ahaṃ tu tvām bravīmy etad bhakto 's' īti hit'|ēpsayā.  
 Bhaktimanto hi me rakṣyā ity eten' āpi hetunā  
 bhakto 'yaṃ parayā bhaktyā mām ity eva mahā|bhuja.  
 Mam' āpi bhaktir utpannā. sa tvam kuru vaco mama  
 asti c' ātra paraṃ kiṃ cid adhyātmaṃ deva|nirmitam.  
 ataś ca tvām bravīmy etat; kriyatām aviśaṅkayā.  
 10 Deva|guhyaṃ tvayā jñātuṃ na śakyaṃ puruṣa'|rṣabha  
 tasmān n' ākhyāmi te guhyaṃ, kāle vetsyati tad bhavān.

greatest fame in the world, and highest heaven. Even at the cost of my life, my fame shall be shielded. Know that's my vow. And once I have given Indra Mághavat, disguised as a brahmin, this peerless gift, I shall attain, O god, the highest state in the world."

The SUN said:

"Karna, don't damage yourself, your friends, sons, wives, 301.1  
 mother and father. O best of those that breathe, the living  
 want glory, and enduring fame in heaven, but not at the  
 risk of their bodies. You, who desire eternal fame at the cost  
 of your life, will lose your life pursuing it, beyond all doubt.  
 A father, a mother, sons and any relatives, of whatever kind,  
 do the work of the living in this world, bull of a man—and 5  
 kings too, through manly valor, tigerish man. Learn from  
 that, shining one: only the fame of the living man holds  
 good. What's the good of fame for a mortal, whose body is  
 ash? A dead man knows nothing of fame—fame is for the  
 living. Fame for a dead man is like a wreath on a corpse.  
 I'm telling you this because you are my devotee and I want  
 to protect you.

I should protect those devoted to me, for this reason too:  
 I think, Great Arm, that this man is devoted to me with a  
 supreme devotion. So, if you are truly devoted to me, do  
 as I say. There is here something profound in your inner  
 self that has been made by a god. And so I tell you this: act  
 without hesitating. Bull of a man, because you haven't the 10  
 power to know a god's secret, I shall not tell you that secret,  
 but in time you will come to know it.

- Punar uktaṃ ca vakṣyāmi tvam Rādheya; nibodha tat.  
 m” āsmāi te kuṇḍale dadyā bhikṣite vajra|pāṇinā.  
 Śobhase kuṇḍalābhyāṃ ca rucirābhyāṃ mahā|dyute  
 Viśākhayor madhya|gataḥ śaś” īva vimale divi.  
 Kīrtiś ca jīvataḥ sādhvī puruṣasy’ ēti viddhi tat.  
 pratyākhyeyas tvayā tāta kuṇḍal’|ârthe sur’|ēśvaraḥ.  
 Śakyā bahu|vidhair vākyaīḥ kuṇḍal’|ēpsā tvay” ân|agha  
 vihanuṃ deva|rājasya hetu|yuktaiḥ punaḥ punaḥ.  
 15 Hetumad|upapann’|ârthair mādhyura|kṛta|bhūṣaṇaiḥ  
 Puraṃ|darasya Karṇa tvam buddhim etām apānuda.  
 Tvam hi nityaṃ nara|vyāghra spardhase savya|sācinā  
 savya|sācī tvayā c’ ēha yudhi sūraḥ sameṣyati.  
 Na tu tvām Arjunaḥ śaktaḥ kuṇḍalābhyāṃ samanvitam  
 vijetuṃ yudhi yady asya svayam Indraḥ śiro bhavet.  
 Tasmān na deye Śakrāya tvay” āite kuṇḍale śubhe  
 saṅgrāme yadi nirjetuṃ Karṇa kāmāyase ’rjunam.»

KARṆA UVĀCA:

- 302.1 «Bhagavantam ahaṃ bhakto yathā māṃ vettha go|pate  
 tathā parama|tigm’|âṃśo n’ āsty adeyam kathaṃ cana.  
 Na me dārā na me putrā na c’ ātmā suhṛdo na ca  
 tath” êṣṭā vai sadā bhaktyā yathā tvam go|pate mama.  
 Iṣṭānāṃ ca mah”|ātmāno bhaktānāṃ ca, na saṃśayaḥ,  
 kurvanti bhaktim iṣṭāṃ ca jānīṣe tvam ca bhāskara.  
 †Iṣṭo bhaktaś ca me Karṇo na c’ ānyad daivatam divi  
 jānīta iti‡ vai kṛtvā bhagavān āha madd|hitam.  
 5 Bhūyaś ca śirasā yāce prasādyā ca punaḥ punaḥ  
 iti bravīmi tigm’|âṃśo tvam tu me kṣantum arhasi:

I'll repeat what I've said to you, Karna Radhēya—pay it heed: don't give your earrings to the thunderbolt-wielder when he comes begging. Great glorious man, with your lustrous earrings you shine like the moon in a clear sky between the two stars of Vishákha. Realize that fame is good only for the man alive. So, my son, refuse the lord of the gods when he comes for the earrings. Blameless one, time after time, with many arguments based on logic, you can ward off the king of the gods' desire for the earrings. Kar- 15  
na, repudiate this design of the sacker of cities with graceful figures of speech whose purport is upheld by argument. For, tigerish man, you always vie with the left-handed archer,\* and here the hero, the left-handed archer, will meet you in battle. But even were Indra himself at the head of his army, Árjuna cannot defeat you in battle while the earrings are yours. So, Karna, if you want to subdue Árjuna in battle, you shouldn't give Shakra those beautiful earrings."

KARNA said:

"Lord of the rays, god of the supremely fiery rays, just as 302.1  
you know I am your devotee, so you know there is nothing at all that cannot be given. Neither my wives, nor my sons, nor myself, nor my friends are as honored with my incessant devotion as you, lord of rays. You know, bright Sun, that the great-souled invariably return the devotion and honor of their dear worshippers.

Thinking, 'Karna is my chosen devotee and acknowledges no other god in heaven,' your lordship has offered me good advice. Once more, and again, I entreat you, and 5  
again, with bowed head, Lord of the fiery rays, but I say the