

senā, Ugrasena and Bhīmasena. Chapters 3, 4, 5, Ādi Parva).

3). *Curse of a sage.* Parikṣit was greatly interested in hunting. Once he went to a big forest with his large retinue to hunt. While hunting he followed a deer which the king had struck with his arrow and he separated from the rest and went a long way deep into the forest. It was midday and the king was tired. Then he saw a sage sitting there and the king went in and asked him about the deer. The sage engrossed in his meditation did not hear that. The king mistook his silence to be arrogance and taking the dead body of a cobra lying nearby with the tip of his bow threw it round the neck of the sage and went his way. The sage did not know even that. The king returned to the palace after the hunting.

The sage had a son named Gavijāta (In many places the name Śṛṅgī is used for Gavijāta). He was playing with the sons of other sages. One munikumāra (son of a sage) said, "Oh Gavijāta, your father is equal to Śiva. Both have a serpent round their necks. But there is only one difference. The serpent round your father's neck is a dead one." Gavijāta was greatly disturbed by this jeer and he immediately went to the āśrama to make enquiries. When he knew that an unknown person had done that foul deed he took water in his hand and said "Whoever be the person who put this dead snake round the neck of my father will die being bitten by the fierce cobra Takṣaka within seven days." Only after pronouncing this horrible curse did he find out that the perpetrator of that crime was none other than the most noble and charitable king, Parikṣit. Gavijāta repented greatly and immediately sent word to the king about his curse through Gauramukha, a munikumāra. The king was a bit frightened first but then he started thinking about the way to escape from the curse. (Chapter 40, Ādi Parva, and 2nd Skandha, Bhāgavata).

4.) *Takṣaka gets ready.* As soon as the messenger Gauramukha departed from the palace Parikṣit called the ministers to his side and conferred with them to find a way to escape from the cobra Takṣaka. They built a building on a huge pillar and gave all protections to the building. Brahmins well-versed in all the mantras and Viśvavidyas (physicians in the treatment of snake-poisoning) of fame were asked to sit around the pillar and the place was well-guarded. The King sat in a room tightly closed. Six days went by. On the seventh day the celebrated Viśvavidya Ka'yapamaharṣi was on his way to the palace at the summons of the king. Takṣaka was also on his way to the palace in the guise of a brahmin. They met on the way and though Kaśyapa did not know him first Takṣaka introduced himself when he knew that Kaśyapa was going to the palace to treat the king if anything happened. He said "Oh Kaśyapa, I am Takṣaka and none of your wits would be able to fight against the effects of my poison. If you want to know it we shall make a trial." Saying so Takṣaka went and bit a big banyan tree standing nearby, and lo! the whole tree was burnt to ashes by the strength of the poison. Kaśyapa smilingly recited the Viśahāri mantra and sprinkled some water on the ashes and lo! the tree stood in its place again with not a single mutilation anywhere. Takṣaka was astounded. He then bribed Kaśyapa. He said he would give him more than what could be expected of the king and

requested him to return home. Kaśyapa returned and Takṣaka went to the palace.

5) *Death of Parikṣit.* Takṣaka went and inspected the palace of Parikṣit. There was no way to step in and Takṣaka was astonished at the perfect protection given to the king. Takṣaka called all his relatives to his side and asked them to go to the King in the guise of brahmins carrying several kinds of fruits as presents. Takṣaka crept inside a beautiful fruit in the shape of a worm and was carried along with the fruits taken to the king. The servants of the king took the fruits brought by the brahmins to the king and the king struck by the size and beauty of a fruit among them took it and cut it open. He saw a worm inside red in colour with two black spots as eyes. The king took it in his hand and at that instant it changed into Takṣaka and bit the king. After that it rose up into the air and disappeared. (Chapters 42 to 49, Ādi Parva and 2nd Skandha, Devī Bhāgavata).

6) *Parikṣit as a king.* Many researches have been made to fix the period of the reign of Parikṣit.

"Saptarṣayo maghāyuktāḥ

Kale Pārikṣite śbhavan //

(Chapter 271, Matsya Purāṇa),

"Te tu Pārikṣite kāle

Maghāsvāsan dvijottamāḥ"

(Chapter 24, Amśa 4, Viṣṇu Purāṇa)

Following these statements in the Purāṇas, astronomers and astrologers searched for the year or years in which the Saptarṣi maṇḍala (the constellation of a group of seven stars) and the month of māgha came into the same zodiac. It came in B.C. 3077 and then in B.C. 477. This would again occur in 2223 A.D. Parikṣit, according to other facts, also must have lived in B.C. 3077.

Pāṇḍavas went for their mahāprasthāna after entrusting the administration to the care of Parikṣit. The Mahābhārata battle was fought in the year 3138 B.C. Dharmaputra ruled for 36 years and so Parikṣit must have taken charge of the administration in 3102 B.C. Parikṣit ruled for 60 years and his son Janamejaya became king in 3042 B.C. It was this Janamejaya who conducted the famous Sarpasatra.

7) *Parikṣit attained Svarga.* Parikṣit did not enter heaven as soon as he died. So Janamejaya at the advice of Nārada conducted a yāga called Ambāyāga for the salvation of the spirit of his father. It was during the navarātri period that this was done. Many eminent sages took part in the ceremony. All were received well and given gifts in plenty. He made pure brahmins read the Devībhāgavata with devotion in the presence of the deity to please Jagadambikā (mother goddess), queen of all queens (Rājarājevarī). When it was over, a divine brilliance like burning fire was visible in the sky and Nārada appeared before Janamejaya and said "Oh Janamejaya, King of Kings, your father was lying bound by the shackles of his life on earth. But today he acquired a divine form and wearing divine apparels and ornaments went to the divine seat of Devī in a sacred Vimāna from Indrapura while Indra, devas and the celestial maidens stood praising him (Skandha 12, Devī Bhāgavata).

8) *Other details.*

(i) Parikṣit ruled the country for sixty years, with all virtues and goodness. (Chapter 49, Ādi Parva).