Kathleen Garbutt translates Sanskrit literature for the JJC Foundation, co-publishers (with NYU Press) of the Clay Sanskrit Library. She has also translated Volume One of Maha·bhárata Book Five, “Preparations for War”, as well as Book Four, “Virāta.”

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Interwoven with these somber acts are beautiful accounts of divinities, magical realms and legendary marvels, parables and tales which serve to balance the narrative’s cynicism and dread.

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MAHĀBHĀRATA
BOOK FIVE
PREPARATIONS FOR WAR
VOLUME TWO
TRANSLATED BY
Kathleen Garbutt

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SHIKHĀNDINI BECOMES SHIKHĀNDIN
DURYODHANA uvāca:

188.1 KATHĀM ŚIKHAṆḌĪ, Gāṅgeya,
  kanyā bhūtvā purā tadā
  puruṣo ‘bhūd, yudhi śreṣṭha?
  tan me brūhi, pitāmaha.

BHĪṢMA uvāca:

  bhāryā tu tasya, rājēṇḍra, Drupadasya mahīpateḥ
  mahiśi dayitā hy āśid, alputrā ca, viśāṃ pate.
  etasminn eva kāle tu Drupado vai mahīpateḥ
  apatya’lārthe, mahārāja, tōṣayām āsa Śaṅkaram.
  asmad‘vadh’ārtham niścītya tapo ghoram samāṣṭhitaḥ,
  «ṛte kanyāṃ, mahālēva, putro me syād! iti» bruvaŋ.

188.5 «bhagavan, putram icchāmi Bhīṣmaḥ pratikīrtayāḥ»
  ity ukto deva[devena «strīpumāṁs te bhaviṣyatī.]
  nivartasa, mahīpāla, n’ āita jātv anyathā bhavet.»
  sa tu gatvā ca nagaram bhāryām idam uvāca ha:
  «kṛtto yatno mayā, devi, putr’ārthe tapasā mahān†
  ‘kanyā bhūtvā pumān bhāvī, iti: ć’ ṣaktro ‘smi Śambhunā.
  punah punar yācyamāno ‘diṣṭam, ity: aṛavič Chivaḥ;
  ‘na tāḍanyac ca bhavita, bhavitavyaṃ hi tat tathā.»
  tataḥ sa niyatā bhūtvā ṛtu kāle manasvinī
  patnī Drupadārājasya Drupadaṃ praviveśa ha.

188.10 lebhe garbham yathākālāṃ vidhiḥdrṣṭena karmanā
  Pāṛṣātasya, mahīpāla, yathā māṃ Nārado ‘bravit.
  tato dadhāra sa devi garbham rājivalocanā;
  tāṃ sa rājā priyāṃ bhāryāṃ Drupadaha, Kurujandana,
  putraśnehān mahābhūhū sukhaṃ paryacarat tadā.

664
DURYÓDHANA said:

HOW DID SHIKHÁNDIN, born originally as a girl, then become a man, son of the Ganges, greatest fighter in war? Tell me, grandfather.

BHISHMA replied:

Lord of kings and earth, King Drúpada’s beloved queen had no sons. During this time King Drúpada appeased Shánkara for the sake of children, great sovereign, and, resolved upon my destruction, he practiced horrifying asceticism and prayed, “Great god, may I have a son rather than a daughter! Blessed lord, I want a son to take revenge upon Bhishma!”

But he was told by the god of gods, “You will have a child who is male and female. Go back, earth-protector, for it will certainly not be otherwise.” So he went back to his city and told his wife: “I have made great effort for a son though asceticism, my queen, and Shambhu told me that I will have a daughter who will become a man. I begged Shiva over and over again, but he said, ‘It is fated. What must be will be just so, and not otherwise.’”

The spirited wife of King Drúpada purified herself properly when her time came, and went to Drúpada. She conceived a child by Párshata, king, at the proper time in the manner prescribed by custom, so Nárada told me. The lotus-eyed queen bore her child in the womb, and long-armed King Drúpada happily fussed over his dear wife, descendant of the Kurus, out of affection for his son.
sarm abhiprayajkritan bhary’ alabhata, Kaurava, 
aputrasaya sato rajjna Drupadasya mahipateh, 
yathakalam tu s devi mahisi Drupadasya ha 
kanyam pravara[rupam] tu prajyata, nar’[adhipa, 
aputrasya tu rajjah sa Drupadasya manasvini

khapyayam asa, rajjendra, ‘putro hy esa mam’ eti’ vai. 
tatah sa rajja Drupadah pracchannayah, nar’[adhipa, 
putra putrajaryani sarvani samakaryat, 
rasananta c’ aiva mantrasya mahisi Drupadasya sa 
cakara sarvalatnena, bruva[na] putra ity uta, 
na ca tam vedava nagare ka’s cid anyatra Pashyat.

sraddhahono hi tat vakya devasy ‘acyuta[tejasah, 
chadayam asa tam kanyam, pumam iti ca so ‘bravit. 
jatakarmany sarvani karyam asa parthivah 
pumavad vidhanyuktani; Sikhand ‘iti ca tam viduh.

aham ekas tu cara, vacanNa Nardasya ca, 
jNatavan devavakyena, Ambayah tapasa tath.

BHIISMA UVACA:

189.1  CAkARA YATNA Drupada[th sutaya[th sarvajkarmanu, 
tato lekhya[divsu tath, sile[du ca, param[tapa;
isy[astre c’ aiva, rajjendra, Droga[isyo bahubiva ha. 
tasya mat[ah, mahal[raja, rajjana[th vara[varini 
codayam asa bhary’[jartham kanyaya[th putravat tada. 
tatas tam Pa[ntato drsty[va kanyam samprapaltayuvanam 
striya[th matva tatas cintam prapede saha bharyaya.

666
Káurava, the wife of sonless King Drúpada, the lord of earth, had her every wish granted, and when the time came, Drúpada’s goddess queen gave birth to a beautiful daughter, lord of men. Sonless King Drúpada’s spirited wife announced that her child was a son, lord of kings. King Drúpada, O lord of men, arranged to have all the necessary ceremonies for sons performed for his secret daughter as though she were a son, and Drúpada’s wife protected her counsels, making every effort and proclaiming that her daughter was in fact a son. And no one in the city, barring Párshata, knew that the child was a girl.

Trusting in the word of the eternally glorious god, the king concealed his daughter and claimed she was male. The king had all the proper and customary birth rites for a boy performed, and people knew her as Shikhándin. I alone knew, through a spy, Nárada’s words, the god’s words, and Amba’s asceticism.

BHISHMA continued:

Drúpada took trouble over every matter concerning his daughter, such as writing and so on and the arts, enemy-scorcher, and she was even a pupil of Drona’s in archery, lord of kings. The child’s flawlessly complexioned mother, great sovereign, urged the king to see about getting a wife for his daughter, as though she were a boy. Then, when Párshata saw that his daughter was reaching full maturity, it dawned on him that she was, in fact, a woman; and he and his wife became anxious.
DRUPADA uvāca:

kanyā mam’ āyaṃ sāmprāptā yauvanaṃ sōka-vardhīṇī;  
mayā prachāditā c’ āyaṃ vacanāc chūlāpāṇīnāḥ.

BHĀRY” uvāca:

189.5 na tan mithyā, mahārāja, bhavisyati kathaṃ ca;  
trailokya-kartā kasmād hi vṛtthā vaktum ih’ ārhati?  
yadi te rocate, rājan, vakṣyāmi. śṛṇu me vacah.  
śrūtv” ēdāniṃ prapadyethāḥ svām matim, Pṛṣat’ātmaja.  
niyatāṁ asya yatnena vidhīvad dārāṣamgrāhāḥ.  
bhavitā tad-vacah satyam, iti me niścītā matīh.  
tatas tau niścayam kṛtvā tasmin kārye ’tha dāmpati  
varayaṁ cakratuḥ kanyām Daśāṛṇāḥḍhispatēḥ sutām.  
tato rājā Drupado rājāśimhaḥ  
sarvān rājāḥ kulataḥ sanniśāmya  
Daśāṛṇakasya niśpates tānūjām  
Śikhaṇḍine varayaṁ āśa dārān.

189.10 Hirānyavarm’ ēti nṛpo yo ‘sa Dāśāṛṇakaḥ śṛtah,  
sa ca prādān mahālpaḥ kanyām tasmai Śikhaṇḍine,  
sa ca rājā Daśāṛṇēṣu mahān āsīt sudurjayāḥ  
Hirānyavarmā durḍhārṣa, mahāśeno, mahāśimhaḥ.  
kṛte vivāhe tu tadā sā kanyā, rāja-sattama,  
yauvanaṃ samanuprāptā sā ca kanyā Śikhaṇḍinī.  
kṛta-dārāḥ Śikhaṇḍi ca Kāmpilyaṃ punar āgamaṃ  
tataḥ sā veda tām kanyām kañ cit kālāṃ striyaṃ kilā.  
Hirānyavarmanaḥ kanyā jñātvā tām tu Śikhaṇḍinīm,  
dhāṛiniḥ ca sakhīnām ca vriṣṭyānāḥ nyavedayat  
kanyām Pañcāla-jājasya sutām tām vai Śikhaṇḍinīm.
DRÚPADA said:
My daughter has matured into a woman, increasing my grief, and I have concealed her at the command of Shiva who carries his trident in hand.

HIS wife replied:
It can in no way whatsoever be wrong, great king, for why would the creator of the three worlds speak deceitfully? If it pleases you, king, I will speak. Listen to what I have to say, and when you have heard it you should then do what you think right, son of Príshata. Let our child's marriage duly and carefully be arranged. The god's words will come true. I am sure of it in my heart.

So, when those two, the master and mistress of the house, had made up their minds on this task, they chose the maiden daughter of the king of Dashárna. Lion-like King Drúpada found out about the lineages of all kings, and chose the daughter of the king of Dashárna to be Shikhándin's bride.

Now, the Dashárnaka king was called Hiránya-varman, 189.10 and the earth-protector bestowed his daughter upon Shikhándin. King Hiránya-varman was a mighty king in the Dashárna lands: invincible, unassailable, possessed of an enormous army, and high-minded. Once the marriage had taken place, greatest of kings, the girl reached full maturity, as did the lady Shikhándini.

Once he had married, Shikhándin returned once more to Kampílya, and the wife, so they say, found out after a while that her husband was in fact a woman. When the daughter of Hiránya-varman realized that Shikhándin was in fact Shikhándini, she ashamedly revealed to her nurses...
189.15 tatas tā, rājaśārdūla, dhātryo Dāśānikās tadā
gajmur ārtīṃ parāṃ presyāḥ, presayāṃ āsur eva ca.
tato Daśāṇa'jādpateḥ presyāḥ sarvā nyavedayan
vipralambhaṃ yathāvṛttam; sa ca cukrodha pārthivāḥ.
Śikhandy api, mahāśrīja, puṇvad rājakule tadā
vijahāra mudā yuktaḥ, strītvam n’ āiv’ ātirocayan.
tataḥ katipay’āhasya tac chrutvā, Bharata’ṛṣabhā,
Hiranyakavarmā, rāj’ṛendra, roṣād ārtīṃ jagāma ha.
tato Daśāṇako rājā tivrajkopāsamanvitaḥ
dūtaṃ prasthāpayām āsa Drupadasya niveśānam.
189.20 tato Drupadam āsādyā dūtaḥ Kāncanavarnaṇāḥ
eka ek’āntam utsārya raho vacanam abravīt:
«Dāśāṇa’rājo, rājaṁ, tvām idaṃ vacanam abravīt,
abhisaṅgat prakupito, vipralabdhas tvayā, ‘nāgha:
‘avamanyase māṃ, nṝpate, nūṇām durjmantritaṃ tava,
yan me kanyāṃ svajanyā’årthe mohād yācitavān asi!
tasy’ ādyā vipralambhasya phalaṃ prāpnuhi, durjman!e
esa tvām sajan’jāmātyam uddharāmi! sthīro bhava!»

BHĪṢMA UVĀCA:
190.1 evam uktaśa dūtena Drupadasya tadā, nṝpa,
coraśy’ ēva grhitasya na prāvarata bhārati.
sa yatnām akarot tivraṃ sambandhiny anumānée,
dūtaimadhuraṃsambhāsair ‘na tad ast’ iti saṃdīśan.
and friends that the child of the Panchála king was in fact a girl, Shikhándini. Tiger-like king, the Dashárnika nurses were then extremely distressed, and they sent word of the subterfuge.

The messengers all explained the whole deception, just as it had occurred, to the Dashárna king; and he became furious. For his part, O great king, Shikhándin happily behaved like a man in the royal palace, and did not overly highlight his womanhood. But when Hiránya-varman heard a few days later, bull of the Bharatas, he was terribly afflicted with fury, lord of kings.

The Dashárnaka king, filled with acute rage, assigned a messenger to Drúpada’s house. Hiránya-varman’s messenger approached Drúpada alone, and, taking him aside, he said these words privately:

“The Dashárna king has been deceived by you and is furious about his humiliation, so he sends this message to you, sinless sovereign:

‘You have insulted me, king, and I surely received bad advice from you, for you foolishly begged me for my daughter for the sake of what turns out to be your own daughter! Now reap the fruit of your subterfuge, wicked-minded man! I will annihilate you and your family and advisors! Be ready!’”

BHISHMA continued:

Addressed by the messenger in this way, Drúpada didn’t say a word, king, as though he were a thief caught red-handed. Instead, he made a great effort to conciliate his relation by sending sweet-speaking messengers to assure him...
sa rájá bhúya ev’ átha jñátvā tattvam ath’ ágamat, kany’ ēti Pañcálaśuytāṁ tvaramāno vinirvayau.

tataḥ sampresayām āsa mitrānām ālmit’āuajasām
duhiṣṭur vipralambhaṁ taṁ dhātrināṁ vacanāt tada.

190.5
tataḥ samudayaṁ kṛtvā balānāṁ rájaśattamaḥ,
abhiyāne maṭiṁ caṅktre Drupadaṁ prati, Bhārata.
tataḥ saṁmantryāṁ āsa mantrabhīṁ sa maḥiḥpatiṁ
Hiranyavarmā, ráj’ēndra, Pañcálaṁ pārthivaṁ prati.
tatra vai niṣcitaṁ teśām abhūd rájāṁ mah’jāmanām:
«tathyaṁ bhavati ced etat, kanyā, rájaṁ, Śikhaṇḍīni,
baddhā Pañcálaṁjānanāṁ anaṁśyāmahe gṛham
anyaṁ rájānam ādhāya Pañcáleṣu nār’ēśvaram
ghātasyāmaṁ nṛpataṁ Pañcálaṁ sa Śikhaṇḍīnām.»

190.10
tat tad’ āṇṛtām ājñāya punar dūtan nār’ādhipaṁ
prāsthāpayat Pārṣatāya, «nīḥam’ ēti sthīro bhava!»

BHĪŚMA UVĀCA:

sa hi prakṛtyā vai bhītaḥ, kīlbīśi ca nār’ādhipaḥ,
bhayaṁ tīvram anuprāpto Drupadaḥ prthivipatiḥ,
visvijya dūtan Dāśārne Drupadaḥ śokaṁrucchitaḥ
sametva bhāryāṁ rahite vākyam āha nār’ādhipaḥ
bhayena mahat’ āviṣṭo, hrdi śokena c’ āhataḥ
Pañcálaṁrajo dayitāṁ mātaraṁ vai Śikhaṇḍināḥ:
«abhiyāyati māṁ kopāt sambhādhi sujmahāpālāḥ
Hiranyavarmā nṛpataṁ kaṛṣṭaṁ ca varūthināṁ!

190.15
kim idāniṁ kariyāvo mūḍhau kanyāṁ imāṁ prati?
Śiṅkaṇḍi kīla putras te kany’ ēti pariṣāṅkitaḥ.
that it was not true. But when the king had the truth confirmed again—that the Panchála prince was in fact a girl—he set out in a hurry.

He sent word to his immeasurably energetic friends about the subterfuge played upon his daughter, trusting the testimony of her nurses. Then, raising his troops, the greatest of kings resolved to attack Drúpada, O Bhárata, and King Hiránya-varman debated with his advisors over means with which to deal with the Panchála king, lord of kings.

Finally the high-souled kings came to a decision: “If Shikhándin really is a girl, king, then we will tie up the Panchála king and lead him home. We will install another king to be lord over the Panchálas, and we will kill the Panchála king and Shikhándin.”

When he was made aware of their true decision, the lord of men sent messengers to Párshata once more, saying, “I will kill you! Be ready!”

BHISHMA continued:

Since King Drúpada was both fearful by nature and, in this instance, culpable, the lord of earth was exceptionally scared. King Drúpada, stupefied by grief, sent messengers to Dashárna, and meeting his wife privately the Panchála king, filled with great fear and crushed by the grief in his heart, said to his dear wife, the mother of Shikhándin:

“My incredibly powerful in-law, King Hiránya-varman, is marching against me in fury, dragging an army with him! What will we do about this girl now, fools that we are? Rumor has it that it is suspected that your son Shikhándin is really a girl. Apparently Hiránya-varman, with his allies,
iti sañcintya yatnena sañmitraḥ sa[bal]ānumaḥ

vāñceito 'sm' iti manvànō mām kil' óddhartum ichati!
kim atra tathyaṃ, suṣṭroṇi, mithyā kim? brūhi, śobhane.
śrutvā tvattaḥ śubhaṃ vākyoṃ sāṃvidhāśāmy ahaṃ tathā.
aḥaṃ hi saṃśayaṃ prāpto, bālā c' ēyaṃ Śikhāndinī, tvam ca, rājī, mahat kṛcchraṃ samprāptā, varā[van]niṇi.
sā tvam sarva[vimokṣaya] tattvam ākhyāhi pṛcchataḥ;
tathā vidadhyāṃ, suṣṭroṇi, kṛtyāṃ āśu, śucīṣmīte.

Śikhāndinī ca mā bhais tvam, vidhāṣye tatra tattvataḥ
kṛpayā' āhaṃ, var'[ārohe, vañcitaḥ putra[dharmataḥ;
mayā Dāśāṅako rājā vañcitaḥ sa mahilpatiḥ.
tad ācakṣya, mahālībāge, vidhāṣye tatra yadd hitam."
jānatā hi nar'[ēndreṇa khyāpan'ārthaṃ parasya vai
prakāsaṃ cōditā devi pratYuVāca mahilpatim.

BHĪSHMA UVĀCA:

191.1 tataḥ Śikhāndino mātā yathā[tattvam, nar'[ādhīpa,
ācācaṣṭe, mahābāho, bhatre kanyāṃ Śikhāndinīṃ.
'ālputrāya mayā, rājan, saṃpatnīnāṃ bhayād idam
kanyā Śikhāndinī jātā puruṣo vai niveditā.
tvayā c' āiva, naraśīreṣṭha, tan me prīty' ānumoditam,
putralkarma kṛtam c' āiva kanyāyāḥ, pāthiva'[ṛṣabha.
bhāryā c' ōdhā tvayā, rājan, Daśāṅ[ādhīpateḥ sutā,
mayā ca pratyaabhīhitam deva/vākyā'ārthaḍarśanāt,

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forces, and followers, is utterly convinced and wants to kill me, believing that he has been tricked!

What is true and what is false, shapely-hipped lady? Tell me, beautiful lady. When I have heard your fine words I will implement your advice. I am certainly in danger, and so too is the child Shikhándini. You, my queen, are also plunged into great misfortune, flawlessly complexioned lady.

Tell me the truth when asked, so that everyone may escape their doom. I will do what must swiftly be done, shapely-hipped and sweet-smiling lady. Don't worry about Shikhándin, for I will act upon the truth of the matter, and with compassion. I was deceived by means of the lawful rights performed for a son, shapely-hipped lady, and so I inadvertently deceived the Dashárnaka king and earth-lord. So tell me, noble lady, how I may act for the good.”

Though the lord of men did, in fact, know, he urged her publicly in order to denounce someone else. The queen answered the king.

**Bhishma continued:**

Shikhándin’s mother told her husband the precise truth about her daughter Shikhándin, long-armed lord of men.

“Since I had no sons, king, and I was afraid of the other wives, I had it made known that Shikhándin of dubious gender was a boy, though she was born a girl. You approved this because you loved me, greatest of men, and the rituals for a son were performed on a daughter, bull-like king. You married her to the Dashárnaka king’s daughter, and I ap-
<kanyā bhuṭvā pumān bhāv”  ity> evaṁ c’ ātād upakaśitam.»

etac chrutvā Drupado Yaśasenaḥ
sarvaṁ tattvaṁ mantravidbhyo nivedya
mantrāṁ rājā mantrayāṁ āsa, rājan,
yathāyuktāṁ rakṣāṇe vai prajaṇāṁ.
sambandhakaṁ c’ āśva samarthyas tasmin
Dāśāṅake vai niṣptaau, naṁ[endra,
svayaṁ kṛtvā vipralambhāṁ yathāvān
mantrā́śākro niścayāṁ vai jagāma.
svābhāvalgaṁtāṁ nāgarāṁ āpaṭikāle tu, Bhārata,
gopayāṁ āsa, rāj[endra, sarvataḥ samalaṁkṛtam,
āṛtīṁ ca paramāṁ rājā jagāma saha bhāryaya
Daśāṅkalpatinā śārdhaṁ virodhe, Bharata’ṛṣabha.
<kathām sambandhinā śārdhaṁ
na me syād vigraho mahāṁ?»
iti sañcintyā manasaḥ
devāṁ arcayat tadā.

tuṁ tu dṛṣṭvā tadā, rājan, devi devapaṛam tadā
arcāṁ prayuñjānam atho, bhāryā vacanam abravit:
<devānāṁ pratipattiiś ca sataṁ sādhulamatā satāṁ.
kim u duḥkhārṇavaṁ prāpyai? tasmād arcayataṁ gurun,
daivaṁ ca sarvāṁ pūjyantaṁ bhūr[daśināṁ,
agnayaś c’ āpi hūyantaṁ Dāśāṅk[aśedhane.
ayuddhena nivṛttim ca manasa cintaya, prabho.
devatānāṁ prasādena sarvam etad bhavisyati.
mantriḥbhir mantritaṁ śārdhaṁ tvaṁ, prthulajlocana,
purasa’ āṣya ājīvināśaya yac ca, rājaṁś, thāḥ kuru,
daivaṁ hi mānuṣ'[ōpetaṁ bhṛṣaṁ śidhyati, pārthiva,

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proved it, looking to the meaning of Rudra’s prophecy that the girl would become a man. I overlooked the problem.”

Having heard this, King Drúpada Yajña-sena explained the entire truth of the matter to his advisors and took counsel, my king, as to the best course for the protection of his citizens. Lord of kings, he judged that the tie of kinship with the Dashárnaka king remained intact, despite the fact that he himself had cheated him, so he came to a decision, singlemindedly set on his counsel.

Though the city had natural protection for times of disaster, Bhárata, he defended it by girding it all round, lord of kings. The king and his wife fell into the deepest depression over their quarrel with the king of Dashárna, bull of the Bharatas. Drúpada worshipped the gods in his mind as he pondered how he could avoid large-scale hostilities against a relative.

As the queen watched him absorbed with the gods and busy worshipping them, his wife addressed him, king, saying:

“Good men certainly regard observances for the gods as excellent. How much more so when sunk in an ocean of troubles? Therefore worship your gurus, honor all the gods with rich rewards, and make offerings into the fire to ward off Dashárna.

Lord, ponder in your mind how to keep him back without resorting to war. Everything will turn out fine, by the grace of the gods. Large-eyed king, act according to your counsels with your advisors, to prevent the destruction of the city. Certainly, when fate is assisted by human exertion, success is great, king, but when the two are in opposition...
parasparāvirodhāddhi siddhir asti na c' ātayoḥ.
tasmād vidhāya nagāre vidhānamacivaśāha
arcayasvara yathājāmaṁ daivatāni, viśāṁ pate!
 evaṁ saṁbhāṣaṁaṇau taurāṣṭrā saḥkalparāyaṇau
Śikhaṇḍinī tadā kanyā vṛṛdhitā’ eva tapasvinī.
tataḥ sā cintayāṁ āsā, ‘matākṛte duḥkhiṭāv ubhau
imā, iti’ tataś ca kākār matiṁ prāṇalvināsane.
evaṁ sā niścayaṁ kṛtvā bhṛṣaṁ śokalparāyaṇā
nirjagāma gṛhaṁ tyaktvā gahanaṁ nirjanaṁ vanam
yatāṁvṛddhimātā, rājan, Sthūnakarṇena pālitam.
tadābhayād eva ca jano visarjayaṁ tad vanam.
tatra ca Sthūnakhaṇḍhaṁ sudhāṁśrīttīkaḷeponderam,
lājāūllāpikādhum'ādhyam, uccalāprakāraḷotanam
tat pravīśya Śikhaṇḍi sā Drupadasya ātmaṁ, nṛpa,
anjaśnātā babhujśithāṁ śārīram uḍāśoṣayat.
dāśayāṁ āśā tāṁ yakṣaḥ Sthūno mārdavaśaṁyutaḥ,
‘kim artho ’yamāv’ ārambhāḥ? karisye, brūhi māḍicarṁ’!
'nājāciyam, iti’ sā yakṣaṁ punah punah uvāca ha.
kariskiye’ iti vai kṣipram pratyuvac' atha guhyakaḥ.
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‘dhān’ēśvarasyā anucaro varado ‘smi, nṛpa’ātmaṁ,
ādhayam api dāsyāmi. brūhi yat te vivakṣitam.’
tataḥ Śikhaṇḍi tat sarvaṁ akhileṇa nyavedayat
tasmāi yakṣaḷpradhānāya Sthūnakarṇāya, Bhārata.

maha-bhārata v – preparations for war ii

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to each other then there is assuredly no success. Therefore, worship the gods as much as you wish, lord of earth; but also act appropriately in the best interest of the city with your advisors!"

When the maiden Shikhándini saw her parents talking, filled with grief, the austere girl was ashamed. Thinking it was her fault that they were both miserable, she made up her mind to end her life. With her decision made, she was greatly occupied with her grief, and she left her home and went to the dense, uninhabited forest.

It was protected by a rich yaks has named Sthuna-karna, king, and people deserted the forest for fear of him. Sthuna’s house stood there, smeared with whitewashed clay, with a high wall and gateway, and rich with smoke from toasted rice cakes. Shikhándin, Drúpada’s daughter, entered the forest, king, and, fasting for many days, she desiccated her body.

The yaks ha Sthuna, filled with kindness, revealed himself to the girl, saying, “What goal are you trying to achieve? I will accomplish it. Tell me immediately!” But she kept replying to the yaks ha, time and time again, saying: “It is impossible.” The gubhraka quickly insisted, “I will do it! I am a follower of Kubéra the lord of wealth, and I am a granter of wishes, princess. I will grant the ungrantable. Tell me what you want to say.”

So Shikhándin explained everything in detail to that chief yaks ha, Sthuna-karna, O Bhárata.
Kathleen Garbutt translates Sanskrit literature for the JJC Foundation, co-publishers (with NYU Press) of the Clay Sanskrit Library. She has also translated Volume One of Maha·bhárata Book Five, “Preparations for War”, as well as Book Four, “Viráta.”

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