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Maha·bhārata

Book Two

The Great Hall



Translated by
PAUL WILMOT

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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ŚAKUNIR uvāca:

- 56.1 «YĀM TVAM ETĀM śriyaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā Pāṇḍu|putre Yudhiṣṭhire
 tapyase, tām hariṣyāmi dyūtena jayatām vara!
 āhūyatām param, rājan, Kuntī|putro Yudhiṣṭhiraḥ!
 a|gatvā saṃśayam, aham a|yuddhvā ca camū|mukhe,
 akṣān kṣipann a|kṣataḥ san, vidvān a|viduṣo jaye!
 glahān dhanūṃṣi me viddhi,
 śarān akṣāṃś ca, Bhārata,
 akṣāṇām hṛdayam me jyām,
 ratham viddhi mam' āsphuram!»

DURYODHANA uvāca:

- 56.5 «ayam utsahate, rājañ, śriyam āhartum akṣa|vit
 dyūtena Pāṇḍu|putrebhyas. tad anujñātum arhasi!»

DHRTARĀṢṬRA uvāca:

«sthito 'smi śāsane bhrātur Vidurasya mah"ātmanah;
 tena saṃgamyā vetsyāmi kāryasy' āsya viniścayam.»

DURYODHANA uvāca:

- «vyapaneṣyati te buddhiṃ Viduro mukta|saṃśayaḥ,
 Pāṇḍavānām hite yukto, na tathā mama, Kaurava.
 n' ārabhet' ānya|sāmarthyāt puruṣaḥ kāryam ātmanah;
 mati|sāmyam dvayor n' āsti kāryeṣu, Kuru|nandana.
 bhayaṃ pariharan manda, ātmānam paripālayan,
 varṣāsu klinna|kaṭavat* tiṣṭhann ev' āvasīdati.
 56.10 na vyādhayo, n' āpi yamaḥ śreyaḥ|prāptiṃ pratīkṣate.
 yāvad eva bhavet kalpas, tāvac chreyaḥ samācaret!»

THE DICE GAME

SHÁKUNI said:

“THAT FORTUNE you saw at Yudhi-shthira’s sacrifice and 56.1
so yearn for—I shall win it for you at dice, great victor!
Summon Yudhi-shthira, son of Kunti! I shall court no risk
fighting before any army. With my skill in throwing dice, I
shall defeat the fools! Think of the bet as my bow, the dice
as my arrows, the heart of the dice my bowstring, and the
dice board my chariot!”

DURYÓDHANA said:

“This expert dice player stands ready, O king, to seize 56.5
the Pándavas’ fortune in a game! You should give him your
approval!”

DHRITA-RASHTRA said:

“As I said before, I always follow the counsel of my great-
souled brother; I shall consult Vídura and then tell you how
we shall proceed.”

DURYÓDHANA said:

“Vídura will destroy your resolve, without doubt, Káura-
va! He is more concerned with the Pándavas’ welfare than
with mine. No man should undertake a matter guided by
someone else’s views—and no two men are of the same
mind in any affair, noble Kuru! The weakling who shuns
any risk and seeks only to shield himself shrivels like a wet
mat in the rains. Neither sickness nor death wait on one’s 56.10
fortunes. You have to improve our lot while you can!”

DHṚTARĀṢṬRA uvāca:

«sarvathā, putra, balibhir vighrahaṃ me na rocate.
vairamaṃ vikāraṃ sṛjati, tad vai śastraṃ anāyasaṃ.»
«anartham arthaṃ manyase, rāja|putra,
saṃgranthaṃ kalahasy' ātiyāti.
tad vai pravṛttaṃ tu yathā kathaṃ cit,
sṛjed asīn, niśitān sāyakāṃś ca!»

DURYODHANA uvāca:

«dyūte purāṇair vyavahāraḥ praṇītas;
tatr' ātyayo n' āsti, na saṃprahāraḥ.
tad rocatāṃ Śakuner vākyam adya
sabhāṃ kṣipraṃ tvam ih' ājñāpayasva!
svarga|dvāraṃ dīvyatāṃ no viśiṣṭaṃ,
tad|vartināṃ c' āpi tath" āiva yuktam.
bhaved evaṃ hy ātmanā tulyam eva
durodaraṃ Pāṇḍavaḥ tvam kuruṣva!»

DHṚTARĀṢṬRA uvāca:

56.15 «vākyam na me rocate yat tvay" ōktaṃ;
yat te priyaṃ, tat kriyatāṃ, nar'|ēndra!
paścāt tapsyase tad upākramya vākyam;
na h' īdṛśaṃ bhāvi vaco hi dharmyam.
dṛṣṭaṃ hy etad Vidureṇ' āiva sarvaṃ
vipaścitā buddhi|vidy" |ānugena—
tad ev' āitad avaśasy' ābhypupaiti
mahad bhayaṃ kṣatriya|bija|ghāti.»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

evam uktvā Dhṛtarāṣṭro maṇiṣī
daivaṃ matvā paramaṃ, dustaraṃ ca,
śaśās' ōccaiḥ puruṣān putra|vākye,

THE DICE GAME

DHRITA·RASHTRA said:

“I see no attraction in fighting those who are stronger, dear son. Hostility creates turmoil—it is indeed a weapon, though not made of iron.

You regard this wicked weaving and plotting of feuds as advantageous, dear prince. Once unleashed, whatever the means, it can only lead to swords and arrows!”

DURYÓDHANA said:

“Men of ancient times taught us the rules of this game. There is no wickedness or war in it. Accept Shákuni’s offer today and order a hall to be built, without delay! We shall ascend to heaven’s door if we play, as is the privilege of gamblers. The Pándavas will become our equals—you should approve of our game!”

DHRITA·RASHTRA said:

“I do not like what you are proposing—but do as you wish, king of men! You will suffer afterward, however, for such words are not suitable or righteous, as Vídura foresaw with insight, wisdom and learning. A great catastrophe now hangs over us, which will destroy the seed of all kshatriyas. In its shadow man is powerless.” 56.15

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

Wise Dhrita-rashtra, regarding Fate as supreme and insurmountable, ordered his servants to follow his son’s orders. Disoriented by Fate, he said, “Build, straightaway, a vast and

sthito rājā daiva|saṃmūḍha|cetāḥ:
 «sahasra|stambhāṃ, hema|vaiḍūrya|citrāṃ,
 śata|dvārāṃ, toraṇa|sphāṭik'ākhyāṃ
 sabhāṃ agryāṃ krośa|mātr"āyatāṃ me
 tad|vistārāṃ āśu kurvantu yuktāḥ!»

śrutvā tasya tvaritā, nirviśankāḥ,
 prājñā, dakṣās tāṃ tathā cakrur āśu.
 sarva|dravyāṅy upajahruḥ sabhāyāṃ
 sahasraśaḥ śilpinaś c' āiva yuktāḥ.

56.20 kālen' ālpen' ātha niṣṭhāṃ gatāṃ tāṃ
 sabhāṃ ramyāṃ, bahu|ratnāṃ, vicitrāṃ
 citrair haimair āsanair abhyupetāṃ
 ācakhyus te tasya rājñāḥ pratītāḥ.
 tato vidvān Viduraṃ mantri|mukhyam
 uvāc' ēdaṃ Dhṛtarāṣṭro nar'ġndraḥ:

«Yudhiṣṭhiraṃ rāja|putraṃ ca gatvā
 mad|vākyena kṣipram ih' ānayasva.
 sabh"ēyaṃ me bahu|ratnā vicitrā,
 śayy"āsanair upapannā mah"ġrhaiḥ,
 sā dṛśyatāṃ bhrātr̥bhiḥ sārdham etya,
 suhr̥d|dyūtaṃ vartatāṃ atra c' ēti.»

57.1 MATAM ĀJÑĀYA putrasya Dhṛtarāṣṭro nar'ġdhīpaḥ,
 matvā ca dus|taraṃ daivam, etad rājā cakāra ha.
 a|nyāyena tath"ōktas tu Viduro viduṣāṃ varaḥ
 n' ābhyanandad vaco bhrātur; vacanaṃ c' ēdam abravīt:
 «n' ābhinandāmi, nṛpate, praīṣam etaṃ.
 m"āivaṃ kṛthāḥ! kula|nāśād bibhemi!
 putrair bhinnaiḥ, kalahas te dhruvaṃ syād—
 etac chanke dyūta|kṛte, nar'ġndra.»

splendid hall one *kroscha* long by one *kroscha* wide,* adorned with a thousand tall pillars gleaming with gold and jewels and a hundred great gates sparkling with crystal arches!”

So instructed, thousands of artisans of intelligence, industry and fearlessness set to work and the palace was soon built, filled with every object imaginable. Very little time had passed before the palace craftsmen happily informed the king that his ravishing jewel-studded hall was complete, and furnished with brilliant thrones of gold. Whereupon Dhritarashtra, learned king of men, addressed his chief minister Vidura:

“Go to Yudhishtira and beg him to come immediately. Tell him that he and his brothers must see this splendid gem-encrusted hall, richly furnished with costly seats and couches, and that we shall all join in a friendly game of dice.”

DHRITA-RASHTRA, king of men, accepting his son’s wish, felt that Fate could not be avoided and acted as I have described. Vidura, however, wisest of the wise, did not at all approve of his brother’s words and said, “I do not welcome, noble king, this command of yours. Do not go ahead! Our line will face ruin! When brothers no longer work together, a quarrel is sure to follow—and it is this which troubles me about this game of dice.”

DHĀRṬARĀṢṬRA uvāca:

«n' ēha, kṣattaḥ, kalahas tapsyate mām,
na ced daivam pratilomaṃ bhaviṣyat.
dhātrā tu diṣṭasya vaśe kil' ēdaṃ
sarvaṃ jagac ceṣṭati, na svatantram.

57.5 tad adya, Vidura, prāpya rājānaṃ mama śāsanāt,
kṣipram ānaya durdharṣaṃ Kuntīputraṃ Yudhiṣṭhiram.»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

58.1 TATAḤ PRĀYĀD Viduro 'śvair udārair,
mahājjavair, balibhiḥ, sādhu|dāntaiḥ,
balān niyukto Dhṛtarāṣṭreṇa rājñā
manīṣiṇāṃ Pāṇḍavānāṃ sakāśam.
so 'bhipatyā tad adhvānam, āsādyā nṛpateḥ puram,
praviveśa mahā|buddhiḥ pūjyamāno dvi|jātibhiḥ.
sa rāja|gṛham āsādyā Kubera|bhavan'ōpamam,
abhyagacchata dharm'|ātmā Dharmā|putraṃ Yudhiṣṭhiram.
taṃ vai rājā satya|dhṛtir mah"ātmā
Ajātaśatrur Viduraṃ yathāvat
pūjā|pūrvam pratigrhy' Ājamīḍhas
tato 'pṛcchad Dhṛtarāṣṭraṃ sa|putram.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

58.5 «vijñāyate te manaso 'praharṣaḥ.
kac cit, kṣattaḥ, kuśalen' āgato 'si?
kac cit putrāḥ sthavirasy' ānulomā?
vaś'ānugās c' āpi viśo 'pi kac cit?

VIDURA uvāca:

«rājā mah"ātmā kuśalī sa|putraḥ,
āste vṛto jñātibhir Indra|kalpaḥ.
prīto, rājan, putra|gaṇair vinītaiḥ*

THE DICE GAME

DHRITA-RASHTRA said:

“I do not fear any quarrel, steward, or otherwise Fate would not have ordained this game. The world yields to the Creator’s design; it is not independent of his will. So go today as I command to the invincible Yudhi-shthira, child of Kunti, without delay, and invite him here.” 57.5

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

VÍDURA YIELDED to Dhrita-rashtra’s orders against his will, departing for the Pándavas’ dwelling in a chariot drawn by magnificent, swift horses, obedient and strong. He flew along the road and soon reached the son of Dharma’s city, where he was honored by brahmins. 58.1

The dutiful envoy entered the king’s palace, a match for Kubéra’s abode, and approached Yudhi-shthira. That great-souled king, Ajáta-shatru, steadfast in the truth, duly welcomed Vídura with reverence and inquired after Dhrita-rashtra and his sons.

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“I see no joy in your heart. Steward, I trust that you come in good health? I trust that Dhrita-rashtra’s sons are obedient to their aging father, and the people to his rule?” 58.5

VÍDURA said:

“The great-souled king and his sons are well; surrounded by his relatives he reigns like Indra himself. He rejoices in his sons’ good conduct and enjoys happiness without a care. He wished me to inquire after your health and prosperity,

víśoka ev' ātma|rātir mah" |ātma.
 idaṃ tu tvāṃ Kuru|rājo 'bhyuvāca,
 pūrvam pṛṣṭvā kuśalam c' āvyayaṃ ca,
 <iyaṃ sabhā tvat|sabhā|tulya|rūpā
 bhrātṛñāṃ te dṛśyatām etya, putra.
 samāgamyā bhrātṛbhiḥ, Pārtha, tasyāṃ,
 suhṛd|dyūtaṃ kriyatām, ramyatām ca.
 prīyāmahe bhavatām saṃgamena
 samāgatāḥ Kuravaś c' āpi sarve.
 durodarā vihitā ye tu tatra
 mah" |ātmanā Dhṛtarāṣṭreṇa rājñā
 tān draksyase kitavān saṃniviṣṭān.>
 ity āgato 'ham, nṛpate. taj juṣasva!>

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

58.10 «dyūte, kṣattaḥ, kalaho vidyate naḥ!
 ko vai dyūtaṃ rocayed budhyamānaḥ?
 kiṃ vā bhavān manyate yukta|rūpaṃ?
 bhavad|vākye sarva eva sthitāḥ sma.»

VIDURA uvāca:

«jānāmy ahaṃ dyūtam an|artha|mūlam;
 kṛtaś ca yatno 'sya mayā nivāraṇe.
 rājā tu māṃ prāhiṇot tvat|sakāśam
 śrutvā vidvañ śreya ih' ācarasva!»

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«ke tatr' ānye kitavā dīvyamānā
 vinā rājño Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putraiḥ?
 pṛcchāmi tvāṃ, Vidura, brūhi nas tān
 yair dīvyāmaḥ śataśaḥ saṃnipatyā!»

and invite you and your brothers to see their new assembly hall, much like your own.

He hopes that you will repair to their palace, Partha, and enjoy a friendly game of dice; they would all be pleased if you would join them. All the Kurus are already assembled there. You will also meet the gamblers and gamesters whom the great-souled Dhrita-rashtra has summoned to the hall. It is with this message that I have come; approve of it!”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“If we play a game of dice, steward, we shall surely quarrel! 58.10
Bearing this in mind, who would consent to a game? What do you think is right? We shall follow your advice.”

VÍDURA said:

“I know the game is a source of wickedness and have tried to dissuade the king from it—however, he sent me to you. You must do what you think is best, learned one!”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“Who else will be gambling there besides the sons of King Dhrita-rashtra? Tell us, Vídura, what dice players we shall be up against?”

VIDURA uvāca:

«Gāndhāra|rājaḥ Śakunir, viśāṃ|pate,
rāj” ātidevī|kṛta|hasto mat’|ākṣaḥ;
Viviṃśatiś, Citrasenaś ca rājā,
Satyavrataḥ, Purumitro, Jayaś ca.»

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«mahā|bhayāḥ kitavāḥ saṃniviṣṭā
māy”|ôpadhā devitāro ’tra santi.
dhātrā tu diṣṭasya vaśe kil’ êdam
sarvaṃ jagat tiṣṭhati, na svatantram.
58.15 n’ āhaṃ rājño Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya śāsanān
na gantum icchāmi, kave, durodaram.
iṣṭo hi putrasya pitā sad” āiva;
tad asmi kartā, Vidur,’ āttha māṃ yathā.
na c’ ā|kāmaḥ Śakuninā devit” āhaṃ,
na cen māṃ dhṛṣṇur āhvayitā sabhāyām.
āhūto ’haṃ na nivarte kadā cit
tad āhitam śāśvataṃ vai vrataṃ me.»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

evam uktvā Viduraṃ dharma|rājaḥ,
prāyātrikaṃ sarvaṃ ājñāpya tūrṇam
prāyāc chvo|bhūte sa|gaṇaḥ s’|ānuyātraḥ
saha strībhir Draupadīm ādi|kṛtvā.
«daivaṃ prajñāṃ tu muṣṇāti, tejaś cakṣur iv’ āpatat.
dhātuś ca vaśam anveti pāsair iva naraḥ sitaḥ.»
ity uktvā prayayau rājā saha kṣattrā Yudhiṣṭhiraḥ,
a|mṛṣyamāṇas tasy’ ātha samāhvānam arim|damah.
58.20 Bāhlikena rathaṃ yattam āsthāya para|vīra|hā
paricchanno yayau Pārtho bhrātr̥bhiḥ saha Pāṇḍavaḥ.

THE DICE GAME

VÍDURA said:

“Shákuni, the King of Gandhára, will be there, skillful and dexterous—even more than the gods—at dice, as well as Vivínshati, Chitra-sena, Satya-vrata, Puru-mitra and Jaya.”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“It sounds like the most dangerous dice players will be there, those sure to resort to tricks and deceit. This world, however, yields to the Creator’s design; it is not independent of his will. Thus, O poet, I shall not refuse to play dice at 58.15 Dhrita-rashtra’s command; a son must respect his father. I shall come as you bid. I am not unwilling to play Shákuni, who is sure to challenge me to dice in that hall. Once challenged, I shall not be able to refuse; that is my eternal vow.”

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

The Dharma King, having told Vídura how he felt, ordered preparations for an immediate journey. He departed the following day, surrounded by his relatives, attendants and the women of the household, led by Dráupadi. “As a brilliant light blinds the eye, Fate robs us of our reason, and, as if bound with ropes, man obeys the Creator’s will,” quoted King Yudhi-shthira, unable to resist the challenge, as he set out with the steward.

Ascending the chariot attended to by Báhlika, the son of 58.20 Pandu, that slayer of hostile heroes, set out with Pritha and all his brothers, decked in full regalia. Compelled by the

rāja|śriyā dīpyamāno yayau brahma|puraḥsarah,
Dhṛtarāṣṭreṇa c' āhūtaḥ, kālasya samayena ca.
sa Hāstinapuram gatvā Dhṛtarāṣṭra|grhaṃ yayau.

samiyāya ca dharm'|ātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭreṇa Pāṇḍavaḥ.
tathā Bhīṣmeṇa, Droneṇa, Karṇena ca, Kṛpeṇa ca
samiyāya yathā|nyāyaṃ, Drauṇinā ca vibhuḥ saha.
sametya ca mahā|bāhuḥ Soma|dattena c' āiva ha,
Duryodhanena, Śalyena, Saubalena ca vīryavān.

58.25 ye c' ānye tatra rājānaḥ pūrvam eva samāgatāḥ,
Duḥśāsanena vīreṇa, sarvair bhrātr̥bhir eva ca,
Jayad|rathena ca tathā, Kurubhiś c' āpi sarvaśaḥ.

tataḥ sarvair mahā|bāhur bhrātr̥bhiḥ parivāritaḥ
praviveśa grhaṃ rājño Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya dhīmataḥ.
dadarśa tatra Gāndhārīm devīm patim anuvratām,
snuṣābhiḥ saṃvṛtām śāsvat, tārābhir iva Rohiṇīm.
abhivādya sa Gāndhārīm, tayā ca pratinanditaḥ
dadarśa pitaraṃ vṛddhaṃ prajñā|cakṣuṣam īsaram.

58.30 rājñā mūrdhany upāghrātās te ca Kaurava|nandanāḥ—
catvāraḥ Pāṇḍavā, rājan, Bhīmasena|puro|gamāḥ.
tato harṣaḥ samabhavat Kauravāṇām, viśāṃ|pate,
tān dr̥ṣṭvā puruṣa|vyāghrān Pāṇḍavān priya|darśanān.
viviśus te 'bhyanujñātā ratnavanti grhāṇy atha;
dadṛśús c' ōpayātās tān Draupadī|pramukhāḥ striyaḥ.
Yājñasenyāḥ parām ṛddhiṃ dr̥ṣṭvā prajvalitām iva,
snuṣās tā Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya n' ātipramanaso 'bhavan.

tatas te puruṣa|vyāghrā gatvā strībhis tu saṃvidam,
kṛtvā vyāyāma|pūrvāṇi kṛtyāni pratikarma ca,
58.35 tataḥ kṛt'|āhnikāḥ sarve divya|candana|bhūṣitāḥ
kalyāṇa|manasaś c' āiva, brāhmaṇān svasti|vācyā ca,

challenge and the fated time, he set out in a blaze of royal majesty, with brahmins leading the way. He proceeded to Hástina-pura and headed straight for Dhrita-rashtra's residence, where the illustrious Pándava met Dhrita-rashtra.

He embraced Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripa and Drona's son with due courtesy, as well as Soma-datta, Duryódhana, Shalya, mighty Sáubala, and the numerous kings who had arrived before him. He proceeded to meet heroic Duhshásana and his brothers, Jayad-ratha, and all the remaining Kurus one after another. 58.25

The mighty-armed hero and his brothers then entered Dhrita-rashtra's inner apartments, where he saw Queen Gandhári, famous for her devotion to her husband and surrounded by her sisters-in-law like Róhini by the stars.* Having greeted Gandhári and received her blessings, he beheld his aged uncle, the lord whose eyesight was his insight.

King Dhrita-rashtra kissed the noble Káuravas on the head—the four Pándavas, beginning with Bhima-sena. Elation took hold of all Káuravas at the sight of the splendid countenance of the Pándavas, those tigers among men. Dismissed by the king, they entered their jewel-studded apartments, where Dráupadi and her women, who had arrived separately, saw them. Seeing the immense fortune of Yajna-sena's daughter, which seemed ablaze, Dhrita-rashtra's daughters-in-law looked none too cheerful. 58.30

Those tigers among men informed the women of their intentions and then left their quarters to set about their daily physical exercises and rituals. When they had completed these, the virtuous-minded Pándavas, adorned with celestial

manojñam aśanaṃ bhuktvā viviśuḥ śaraṇāny atha.
 upagīyamānā nārībhir asvapana Kuru|nandanāḥ
 jagāma teṣāṃ sā rātriḥ puṇyā rati|vihāriṇām.
 stūyamānās ca viśrāntāḥ kāle nidrām ath' ātyajan.
 sukh' |ôṣitās tāṃ rajanīm prātaḥ sarve kṛt' |āhnikāḥ
 sabhām ramyām praviviśuḥ kitavair abhisamvṛtām.

- 59.1 PRAVIŚYA TĀM sabhām Pārthā Yudhiṣṭhira|purogamāḥ
 sametya pārthivān sarvān, pūj' |ārhan abhipūjya ca,
 yathā|vayaḥ sameyānā upaviṣṭā yath' |ārhataḥ
 āsaneṣu vicitreṣu spardhy' |āstaraṇavatsu ca.
 teṣu tatr' ôpaviṣṭeṣu sarveṣv atha nrpeṣu ca
 Śakuniḥ Saubalas tatra Yudhiṣṭhiram abhāṣata.

ŚAKUNIR uvāca:

«upastīrṇā sabhā, rājan, sarve tvayi kṛta|kṣaṇāḥ.
 akṣān uptvā devanasya samayo 'stu, Yudhiṣṭhira!»

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

- 59.5 «nikṛtir devanaṃ pāpaṃ, na kṣātro 'tra parākramaḥ;
 na ca nītir dhruvā, rājan. kim tvam dyūtaṃ praśamsasi?
 na hi mānaṃ praśamsanti nikṛtau kitavasya ha.
 Śakune, m' āiva no jaiṣir amārgeṇa nṛśamsavat.»

ŚAKUNIR uvāca:

«yo vetti samkhyām, nikṛtau vidhi|jñās,
 ceṣṭāsv a|khinnaḥ, kitavo 'kṣajāsu,
 mahā|matir yaś ca jānāti dyūtaṃ,
 sa vai sarvaṃ sahate prakriyāsu.

sandalwood, received the blessings of brahmins. Then those 58.35
 Kuru heroes enjoyed a pleasing meal and returned to their
 apartments, where, serenaded by women, they entered their
 beds and passed a lovely night savoring the delights of love
 play. At dawn those happy sleepers—conquerors of hostile
 cities by day—left their couches refreshed and flattered with
 attention, to attend to their rituals. They entered the great
 hall to the greetings of the dice players.

THE PARTHAS, starting with Yudhi-shthira, worshipped 59.1
 all the kings present, honoring those to whom honor was
 due by virtue of age, and took their seats on splendid seats
 covered in costly carpets. Seeing all the kings seated, Shá-
 kuni, son of Súbala, addressed Yudhi-shthira:

SHÁKUNI said:

“The hall is full, great king; we have all been waiting
 for you. Let the dice be cast, Yudhi-shthira—what is your
 wager?”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“Deceitful play is wicked, devoid of all kshatriya valor. 59.5
 It is a poor way to behave. Why do you praise dice play?
 Who values a cheating gambler? Shákuni, do not try base
 trickery on us.”

SHÁKUNI said:

“The great-minded player who knows his numbers and
 has an eye out for the artful ploy, who never tires of throwing
 the dice and understands their subtleties, can achieve any-
 thing in a game. Gambling can defeat an enemy, Partha,
 which is why people say it is wicked. Let us play! Great

akṣa|glahaḥ so 'bhibhavet paraṃ nas;
 ten' âiva doṣo bhavat' îha, Pārtha.
 dīvyāmahe! pārthiva, mā viśaṅkāṃ.
 kuruṣva pāṇaṃ ca, ciraṃ ca mā kṛthāḥ!

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«evam āh' âyam Asito Devalo muni|sattamaḥ,
 imāni loka|dvārāṇi yo vai bhrāmyati sarvadā:
 59.10 idaṃ vai devanaṃ pāpaṃ nikṛtyā kitavaiḥ saha;
 dharmeṇa tu jayo yuddhe—tat paraṃ, na tu devanam.›
 n' āryā mleccanti bhāṣābhir, māyayā na caranty uta,
 ajjhamam, a|śaṭhaṃ yuddham—etat sat|puruṣa|vratam.
 śaktito brāhmaṇ'|ārthāya śikṣitum prayatāmahe.
 tad vai vittaṃ m' âtidevīr! mā jaiṣṭh, Śakune, parān!
 nikṛtyā kāmāye n' âhaṃ sukhāny, uta dhanāni vā;
 kitavasy' êha kṛtino vṛttam etan na pūjyate.»

ŚAKUNIR uvāca:

«śrotriyaḥ śrotriyān eti nikṛty' âiva, Yudhiṣṭhira,
 vidvān a|viduṣo 'bhyeti. n' āhus tām nikṛtiṃ janāḥ!
 59.15 akṣair hi śikṣito 'bhyeti nikṛty' âiva, Yudhiṣṭhira,
 vidvān a|viduṣo 'bhyeti. n' āhus tām nikṛtiṃ janāḥ!
 a|kṛt'|âstraṃ kṛt'|âstraś ca, durbalaṃ balavattaraḥ—
 evaṃ karmasu sarveṣu nikṛty' âiva, Yudhiṣṭhira,
 vidvān a|viduṣo 'bhyeti. n' āhus tām nikṛtiṃ janāḥ!
 evaṃ tvam mām ih' âbhyetya nikṛtiṃ yadi manyase,
 devanād vinivartasva, yadi te vidyate bhayam!›»

sovereign, do not dither. Let us set the stakes and stop dallying!”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“Ásita Dévala, most eminent of hermits, who wanders the gates between the worlds, once said that it is wicked to cheat while gambling, and honorable to win by fighting righteously. Aryans do not use the language of barbarians or behave deceitfully; all wise men vow to engage in war with honesty and sincerity. To the best of our ability, we strive to help brahmins. Do not exceed the boundaries of decency! Do not cheat to win, Shákuni! I do not want any fortune or happiness gained dishonorably, and gambling, even when played by the rules, is not a praiseworthy game.” 59.10

SHÁKUNI said:

“A scholar may surpass another scholar with trickery, as may a wise man an ignorant one, Yudhi-shtira. Yet people do not give it that name! A dice player who knows how to throw may defeat one who does not by trickery, yet nobody gives it that name! Likewise, one skilled with weapons may defeat one who is not, and a stronger man the weak, Yudhi-shtira. In fact, in any endeavor the more knowledgeable will surpass the less with the tricks he has learned—yet nobody calls them that. You have come for a game, but if you think me dishonest—if you are afraid—you do not have to play!” 59.15

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«āhūto na nivarteyam, iti me vratam āhitam.
vidhiś ca balavān, rājan. diṣṭasy' āsmi vaśe sthitaḥ.
asmin samāgame kena devanaṃ me bhaviṣyati?
pratipāṇas ca ko 'nyo 'sti? tato dyūtaṃ pravartatām!»

DURYODHANA uvāca:

59.20 «ahaṃ dāt' āsmi ratnānām, dhanānām ca, viśaṃ pate!
mad|arthe devitā c' āyaṃ Śakunir mātulo mama.»

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«anyen' ānyasya vai dyūtaṃ viśamaṃ pratibhāti me.
etad, vidvann, upādatsva! kāmam evaṃ, pravartatām!»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

60.1 UPOHYAMĀNE dyūte tu rājānaḥ sarva eva te
Dhṛtarāṣṭraṃ puras|kṛtya viviśus tāṃ sabhāṃ tataḥ.
Bhīṣmo, Droṇaḥ, Kṛpaś c' āiva, Viduraś ca mahā|matih,
n' ātiprītena manasā te 'nvavartanta, Bhārata.
te dvaṃdvaśaḥ, pṛthak c' āiva siṃha|grīvā, mah'āujasaḥ
siṃh'āsanāni bhūrīṇi, vicitrāṇi ca bhejire.
śuśubhe sā sabhā, rājan, rājabhis taiḥ samāgatih,
devair iva mahā|bhāgaiḥ samavetais tri|viṣṭapam.
60.5 sarve Veda|vidah śūrāḥ, sarve bhāsvara|mūrtayaḥ.
prāvartata, mahā|rāja, suhr̥d|dyūtam an|antaram.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

«ayaṃ bahu|dhano, rājan, sāgar'āvarta|saṃbhavaḥ
maṇir hār'|ōttaraḥ śrīmān, kanak'ōttama|bhūṣaṇaḥ.
etad, rājan, mama dhanaṃ pratipāṇo 'sti. kas tava,
yena māṃ tvaṃ, mahā|rāja, dhanena pratidīvyase?»

THE DICE GAME

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“Challenged, I shall not withdraw—so I have vowed. This rule is powerful, O king. I am in the hands of Fate. Whom am I to play in this gathering? Who can match my stakes? Let the game begin!”

DURYÓDHANA said:

“I shall stake my gems and treasures, sovereign of the world! And my uncle here, Shákuni, will throw for me.” 59.20

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“It does not seem right that one man should play for another—as you must know. However, if that is how you want it, let the play begin!”

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

As THE DICE game was laid out, all the kings entered the hall, led by Dhrita-rashtra. Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, and the great-minded Vídura followed, none of them happy with the developments. Those mighty, lion-necked kings sat in pairs, or singly, upon a variety of splendid thrones. The great hall shone with the resplendence of those magnificent rulers as heaven shines with the glory of gods; everyone present was learned in the Vedas, valorous heroes whose bodies were resplendent. It was at this point, great king, that the friendly game began. 60.1 60.5

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“This sumptuous prize, O king, this string of pearls laced with pure gold, flung up from the depths of the ocean, is my stake. What is yours? With what wealth do you wish to play me?”

DURYODHANA uvāca:

«santi me maṇayaś c' âiva, dhanāni su|bahūni ca.
matsaraś ca na me 'rtheṣu. jayasv' âinaṃ durodaram!»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

tato jagrāha Śakunis tān akṣān akṣa|tattva|vit;
«jitam! ity» eva Śakunir Yudhiṣṭhiram abhāṣata.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

61.1 «MATTĀḤ KAITAVAKEN' âiva, yaj jito 'smi durodare!
Śakune, hanta! dīvyāmo gḷahamānāḥ parasparam!
santi niṣka|sahasrasya bhāṇḍinyo bharitāḥ śubhāḥ,
kośo, hiraṇyam, a|kṣayyaṃ jātarūpam an|ekaśaḥ.
etad, rājan, mama dhanam. tena dīvyāmy ahaṃ tvayā!»

VAIŚAMPĀYANA uvāca:

Kauravāṇāṃ kula|karaṃ jyeṣṭhaṃ Pāṇḍavam acyutam
ity uktaḥ, Śakuniḥ prāha, «jitam! ity» eva taṃ nṛpam.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

61.5 «ayaṃ sahasra|samito vaiyāghraḥ, su|pratiṣṭhitaḥ,
su|cakr'ôpaskaraḥ, śrīmān, kiṅkiṇī|jāla|maṇḍitaḥ,
saṃhrādano rāja|ratho ya ih' âsmān upāvahat,
jaitro rathavaraḥ puṇyo, megha|sāgara|niḥsvanaḥ,
aṣṭau yaṃ kurara|cchāyāḥ sad|aśvā rāṣṭra|saṃmatāḥ
vahanti, n' âiṣāṃ mucyeta padād bhūmim upasprśan.
etad, rājan, dhanam mahyam. tena dīvyāmy ahaṃ tvayā!»

THE DICE GAME

DURYÓDHANA said:

“I have many jewels and a great fortune—but I am not worried about losing them. Win this stake!”

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

Shákuni, expert in the subtleties of the game, took the dice, cast them, and cried, “Won!”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“YOU HAVE TRICKED me to win this stake! All right, Shá- 61.1
kuni, let us toss and play again! My splendid coffers are full of thousands of coins; my treasury overflows with undecaying gold. This is my stake, O king. Let us play!”

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

After Yudhi-shthira, Pandu’s eldest son, the imperishable ancestor of the Kurus, had spoken, Shákuni threw and cried out, “Won!”

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

“This magnificent victory chariot, equal to a thousand lesser vehicles, thunderous like oceans and clouds, hung 61.5
with tiger skins and tinkling bells, supported by splendid wheels and a mighty frame, furnished with fine fittings, yoked to eight world-famous osprey-hued horses from whose thunderous hoofs no creature can escape—the very same chariot that brought us here—is my next stake, O king. Let us play!”



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“The Great Hall” is Book Two of the MAHA-BHÁRATA, “The Great Book of India.” This work is but a fraction of the expanse of the whole epic, yet it is a pivotal one: the various changes in fortune set the scene for further conflict between the cousins.

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