Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of “Virāta,” Book Four of the Maha·bhārata.

“Virāta” details the Pándavas’ thirteenth year in exile, when they live disguised at King Virāta’s court. The brothers suffer the humiliation of becoming servants, a topic explored through both comedy and pathos. They manage to maintain their disguise until the very end of the year, when their troubles really begin.

Bhima is forced to come to Dráupadi’s rescue after King Virāta’s general Kíchaka sets his sights on her. Later Duryódhana and the Tri·gartas take advantage of Virāta’s fall to invade his kingdom, unaware the Pándavas are hidden there. In battle the Pándavas play a crucial role and after saving Virāta, they reveal to him their true identities.

“Virāta” ends in celebration with the Pándavas set to return from exile and reclaim their kingdom. The book’s battles, however, foreshadow the horrendous war to come.

With the timeless themes of humor and humiliation that dominate it, “Virāta” is one of the most accessible books of the Maha·bhārata, the Everest of the ancient literary world.
# CONTENTS

Sanskrit alphabetical order 7  
CSL conventions 7  

**MAHA-BHÁRATA IV – VIRÁTA**  

Introduction 13  

| 1–13 | Disguises for Viráta’s Court | 23 |
| 14–24 | Kíchaka’s Lust and Death | 103 |
| 25–30 | The Káuravas’ Scheme | 191 |
| 31–39 | Two Cattle Raids | 217 |
| 40–52 | The Recognition of Árjuna | 273 |
| 53–65 | Battle Begins | 333 |
| 66–69 | The Káuravas’ Humiliating Defeat and Úttara’s Triumphant Return | 425 |
| 70–72 | The End of the Pándavas’ Exile | 461 |

Notes 485  
Proper Names and Epithets 487  
Index 499  

*Sandhi* grid 518
1–13
DISGUISES FOR VIRÁTA’S COURT
1.1 

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaśkṛtya
Nāraṁ c’ āiva nar’ottamam
devīṁ Sarasvatīṁ c’ āiva
tato «Jayam» udīrayet.

JANAMEJAYA uvāca:
kathāṁ Virāṭanagare mama pūrva-pitāmahāḥ
ajñāta-vāsam uṣitā Duryodhanabhay’ārditaḥ?
pāti-vrata mahābhāgā satataṁ brahma-vādini
Draupadī ca kathāṁ, brahmaṁ, ajñāta duḥkhit’ āvasat?

VAIŚAMPAṆANA uvāca:
yathā Virāṭanagare tava pūrva-pitāmahāḥ
ajñāta-vāsam uṣitās tace chṛṣṭuṣva, nar’ādhipa.

1.5 tathā sa tu vaśā labdhvā Dharmād dharmābhṛṭaṁ varāḥ
gatv’ āśramaṁ brahma-ṛṇāḥ ācakhyaṁ sarvam eva tata.
kathayitvā tu tat sarvam brahma-ṛṇāḥ Yudhiṣṭhirāḥ
araṇīṣaḥitaṁ tasmai brahma-ṛṇāya nyavedaṁ.
tato Yudhiṣṭhirō rāja Dharmāputro mahā-jātakaṁ
samvartya’ anuvaṁ sarvam iti h’ ovāca, Bhārata:
«dvādaś’ emāni varṣaṁ rājya-viprositā vāyaṁ.
trayoidaṁ ‘yaṁ samprāptaḥ kṛchṛtā paramāduḥkvaṁ.
sa, sādhu Kaunteya, ito vāsam, Arjuna, rocaya
saṁvatsaram imaṁ yatra vasemb’ āviditaḥ paraṁḥ.»

ARJUNA uvāca:

1.10 tasy’ āiva varādānena Dharmasya, manuṣjādhipa,
ajñāta vicārisyaṁ naraṁ n’ ātra saṁśayaḥ,
tatra vaśaya rāṣṭrāṇi kirtayīśyāmi kāṁ cit
raṇaṁyāni, guptāni. teṣāṁ kiṁ cit sma rocaya.
HAVING PAID homage to Naráyana, to Nara, the best of men, and to the goddess Sarásvati, let the word “Victory” be uttered.

JANAM-ÉJAVA said:

How did my ancestors, afflicted by fear of Duryódhana, pass their time undiscovered in Viráta’s city? And how did the illustrious Dráupadi, who always refers to the Veda, devoted to her husbands, though grief-stricken, remain undiscovered, o brahmin?

VAISHAMPÁYANA said:

Hear, lord of men, how your ancestors passed their time unrecognized in Viráta’s city. When the greatest of virtuous men had taken gifts from Dharma, he went to the hermitage and told the brahmins everything that had happened. When he had told the entire story to the brahmins, Yudhi-shthira presented the gathered drilling sticks to the brahmin.

Then high-minded King Yudhi-shthira, the son of Dharma, was sent back to his younger brothers, and said this, Bharata:

“For twelve years we have been banished from our kingdom. The thirteenth miserable year, which will be the hardest to get through, has now arrived. So then, excellent Árjuna, son of Kunti, choose a home for this year, where we may live undiscovered by our enemies.”

ÁRJUNA said:

Due to Dharma’s gift, king of men, there is no doubt that we will wander among men without being recognized. So I will run through some kingdoms that are pleasant and secluded, as options for us to live in. Choose one.
santi ramyā jana·padā bahvānnāḥ parītaḥ Kurūn:
Pāncalāi, Ārsatṣaśa ca, Śūrasenāḥ, Paṭaccaraḥ,
Daśārīṇa, navajrāṣṭrāś ca Mallāḥ, Śālva, Yūgandharaḥ,
Kunḍiśāstrasca vitulaḥ, SurāṣṭrāĀ vantyas tathā.
eteṣāṃ katamo, rājan, nivāsas tava rocate
yatra vatsyāmahe, rājan, saṁvatsaram imaṃ vayam?

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca:

1.15 śrutam etan, mahābhāho, yathā sa bhagavān prabhuḥ
abravīt sarvabhuḥśēsas, tat tathā, na tad anyathā.
avaśyam tv eva vāśārthaḥ ramaṇīyaṃ, śīvaṃ, sukham
sammantrya sahitaiḥ sarvair vastavyam ākuto bhayaiḥ.

Matsya Viśvāno balavaḥ, abhirakto ṭha Pāṇḍavān,
dharmaśīlo, vadānyaś ca, vṛddhiḥ ca satataṃ priyāḥ.
Viṣṇuḥ āgare, tāta, saṁvatsaraḥ imaṃ vayam
kurvanta tasya karmāṇi vihariṣyāma, Bhārata.
yāni yāni ca karmāṇi tasya śaksyāmahe vayam
kartuṃ yo yat, sa tat karma brāvītu, Kurūṇandaṃnaḥ.

Arjuna uvāca:

1.20 naraṇeṇa, kathāṃ tasya rāṣtre karma kariṣyasi?
Viṣṇuḥ āgare, sādio, raṃṣyate kena karmāṇaḥ?
mdūr, vādānyaḥ, hrimaṃś ca, dhārmikāḥ, satyaśikramāḥ,
rājas, tvam āpadā kaṣṭāḥ! kim kariṣyasi, Pāṇḍava?
na duḥkhāṃ ucitaṃ kiṃ cid rājā veda yathā janaḥ
sa imaṃ āpaḍaṃ prāpya kathām ghorāṃ tariṣyasi?
DISGUISES FOR VIRĀTA’S COURT

There are agreeable and pleasant nations, rich in food all around the land of the Kurus: the Panchālas, the Chedi, the Matsyas, the people of Shura-sena, the Patāccharas, the people of Dashārṇa, the new Malla kingdom, the Shalvans, the Yugen-dharas, the extensive realm of Kunti, the Surāśtrans, or the Avánatayas. So which of these places pleases you, my king, for us to spend this year, lord?

YUDHISHTHIRA said:

Long-armed man, what we heard is true. It will be just as the powerful, blessed lord of all creatures said, and not otherwise.* By all means let us all decide together on a pleasant, happy and auspicious place in which to live without fear from any quarter.

The old king of the Matsyas, Virāta, is mighty, munificent and virtuous in his conduct. Furthermore, he is devoted to the Pāndavas and dear to all. So we will pass our time this year in Virāta’s city, working in his service, Bhārata. So tell me, descendants of the Kurus, in what capacities will we each be able to serve the King of Matsya?

ĀRJUNA said:

Godlike man, what service will you perform for him in the kingdom? In what capacity will you dwell in Virāta’s city, excellent man? You are tender, charitable, modest, virtuous and truly valiant, but alas for your misfortune, king! What will you do, Pāndava? A king is unfamiliar with the misery normal to his people. How will you survive the terrible misfortune that has befallen you?
Yuddhiṣṭhira uvāca:
śṛṇudhvam yat kariṣyāmi karma vai, Kuruṇandanaḥ,
Virātaṁ anusamprāpya rājānaṁ, puruṣaṁṛṣabhaḥ.
sabhāṣṭāro bhavisyāmi tasya rājñō mahā'atmanāḥ
Kanakaṁ nāma dvījo bhūtvā matāksaḥ, priyaḥdevanāḥ.

1.25 vaidūryān, kāścanān, dāntān phalair jyotirasaṁ saha
kṛṣṇākṣaṁl, lohitākṣaś ca nirvatsyaṁi mano'ramān.
Virātaśrajaṁ rāmayan s'āmātyaṁ saha'ebhādhaṁ,
na ca māṁ vetsyate kaś cīt, toṣayīye ca taṁ nṛpam.
«āsāṁ Yuddhiṣṭhirsy' ahaṁ purā prāṇaśaṁca sakhā.»
iti vakṣyāmi rājanaṁ yadi māṁ so 'nyuokyate.
ity etad vo maya' akhyātaṁ vihariṣyāmy ahaṁ yatāh.
Vṛkodara, Virate tvaṁ raṁṣyaṁ kena hetunā?

Bhīmasena uvāca:
2.1 Paurogavavo bruvāno 'haṁ Ballavo nāma, Bhārata,
upasthāsyāmi rājānaṁ Virātaṁ, iti me maṭiḥ,
sūpān asya kariṣyāmi, kuśalo 'smi mahānase,
krṣaṁpurvāni yānī asya vaṉjanāni suśīkṣitaṁ,
tāṇy apy abhibhāvīṣyāmi pritiṁ saṅjanayann aham.
āhaṁṣyāmi dārūnāṁ nīcīyān mahato 'pi ca
tat prekṣya vipulām karma rājā saṁyokṣyate sa māṁ.
amānuṣāṁ kurvānas tāṁ karmāṁi, Bhārata,
2.5 rājās tasya pare presyā maṁśyatante māṁ yathā nṛpam,
bhakṣyā'ānnarasaṁpānāṁ bhavisyāmi tathā 'śvaraḥ.
dvīpā vā balino, rājān, vṛṣabhā vā mahābalaṁ
vinigrāhya yadi mayā, nigrāhyāṁi tāṁ api.
ye ca ke cīn niyotsyantī samājeṣu niyodhakaṁ,
tāṁ ahaṁ hi niyotsyāmi ratim tasya vivardhayaṁ.

28
Yudhiṣṭhira said:

Listen to what I will do, bull-like descendants of the Kuruś, once I have reached King Virāta. I will become “Kanka,”* a brahmin fond of gambling and reveling in dice, and I will be the high-hearted king’s games-playing courtier. I will set down cat’s-eye gem, gold and ivory game pieces on a gemstone gaming board, and cast beautiful black and red dice. I will entertain King Virāta along with ministers and relatives, and no one will recognize me as I amuse the king. If the king should question me, I shall say to him: “I was Yudhiṣṭhira’s friend, as dear to him as life itself.” So I will pass the time as I’ve told you, but by what means will you reside in Virāta’s realm, Vrikṣodara?

Bhima-sena said:

My intention, Bhārata, is to announce myself to King Virāta as a head chef, calling myself Bāḷava. I shall make curries and whatever dishes his highly trained cooks made in the past, since I am skilled in the kitchen. Moreover, I shall surpass them, for I am intent on favor.

I will carry heaped loads of harsh wood, even if they’re huge. When he sees that monumental task, the king will be pleased with me, and when they see me perform supernatural feats, Bhārata, the other servants of his palace will think of me as a king. I will be in charge of what food is to be eaten and what drink is to be drunk.

Or if powerful elephants and mighty bulls need restraining I will restrain even them, my king. I will fight whichever wrestlers will take me on in conflicts, putting an end to their fun, but I will not kill anyone who fights me. I will merely...
Maha-bhara-ta IV — Virata

na tv etan yudhyamanaṃ vai hanisyāmi kathaḥ cana;
tathā ātān pāṭayisyāmi, yathā yasyanti na kṣayaṃ.
«ārāliko, gojvikartā, sūpakartā, niyodhakaḥ
āsaṃ Yudhiṣṭhiras yāham, itī» vakyāmi prccchataḥ.
ātmānam ātmānaḥ raksasyāmi, viśāṃ pate.
ity etat pratijānāmi, viharisyāmy aham yathā.

Yudhiṣṭhira uvāca:

yam Agnir brāhmaṇo bhūtvā samāga-cchan nṛṇāṃ varam,
didhakṣuḥ Khāṇḍavaḥ dāvaṃ Dāśarhaḥ-sahitaṃ purā,
maheśālaṃ maheśāhum ajitaṃ Kuru naṃ vandanam,
so 'yaṃ kim karma Kaunteyaḥ kariṣyati Dhanāṅjayah?
yo 'yaṃ āsādyā taṃ dāvaṃ tarpayāṃ āsa Pāvakam,
vijity' āika-rathen 'Endraṃ, hatva pannagārikṣasān,
Vāsukeḥ sarpārājasya svasāraṃ hṛtavāṃ ca yaḥ,
śreṣṭo yaḥ pratiyodhānāṃ so 'rjunah kim kariṣyati?

2.15 sūryaḥ pratapatāṃ śreṣṭho, dvipadāṃ brāhmaṇo varaḥ,
āśivisaḥ ca sarpānāṃ, agnis tejasvināṃ varaḥ,
āyudhānāṃ varaḥ vajraṃ, kākumā ca gavāṃ varaḥ,
hṛdadāṃ udadhīḥ śreṣṭaḥ, parjanyo varṣatāṃ varaḥ,
Dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ ca nāgānāṃ, hariṣṭu Airvāṇo varaḥ,
putraḥ priyānāṃ adhiko, bhāryā ca suḥrdām varaḥ.
yaḥ” ātāni viśistāni jātyāṃ jātyāṃ, Vṛkodara,
evam yuvā Guḍakeśaḥ śreṣṭaḥ sarvaidhanuṣmatām.

30
disguises for virāta’s court

throw them down in such a way that they do not meet their end.

And when asked I will say, “I was Yudhi·shthira’s cook, cow-slaughterer, sauce-maker and wrestler.” This is the disguise I will adopt to protect my identity, lord of the earth. So I am reborn, and will pass my time in this manner.

yudhi·shthira said:

And what of that hero who was with Krishna when Agni, in brahmin form, eager to burn the Khândava forest, met him long ago? What of Dhanan·jaya, the son of Kuntí, the mighty descendant of the Kurus, that long-armed and invincible man—what will he do? What of the man who reached the forest and satisfied Agni, who vanquished Indra with a single chariot, who killed serpents and demons, and who seized the sister of Vâsuki, the king of the naga·s, taking her as his wife? That Arjuna who is the greatest of warriors, what will he do?

Just as the sun is the greatest of all blazing, celestial bodies, the brahmin is the best of all bipeds, the cobra the greatest of all serpents, fire the most excellent of all things possessing brilliance, the thunderbolt the best of all weapons, the humped bull the best of all bovine creatures, the ocean the greatest of all masses of water, the rain cloud the best of the monsoon, Dhrita·rashtra the best of the naga·s, Air´avata the greatest of elephants; just as the son is superior to all beloved things and the wife the best of friends, so, just as it is with these distinct examples, each of their own type, so too the young Guda·kesha is the greatest of all bowmen, Vrikódara.
so 'yaṁ Indrād anāvavo, Vāsudevaṁ mahādyutiṁ
Gāṇḍivaḍhanvā Bibhatsuḥ śveṭāśivaṁ kim kariṣyati?

2.20 uṣṭivā paṅca vaṁśaṁ saharājāśasya veśmanī,
astrayogom samāśādyā svāvīryān mānuṣādbhutam,
divyānā astrāṇi c’āptāni devajrūpeṇa bhāsvataṁ.
vaṁ manye dvādaśaṁ Rudram, Ādityāṇāṁ trayōdaśam,
Vasūnāṁ navamaṁ manye grahāṇāṁ daśamaṁ tathā,
yasya bāhū samau, dirghau, ājñātākaṭhinaṁtvacau,
dakṣiṇe c’āiva, savye ca gavāṁ iva vahāḥ kṛtaṁ.

Himavāṁ iva śailāṁ, samudrāḥ saritāṁ iva,
triḍaśānāṁ yathā Śacro, Vasūnāṁ iva havyavāṁ,

mṛgaṇāṁ iva śārdūlo, Garudāḥ patatāṁ iva
varaḥ sannāhyamānānāṁ, so 'ṛjunaḥ kim kariṣyati?

ARJUNA UVĀCA:

2.25 pratijñāṁ ‘ṣaṇḍhako ’sm’, iti kariṣyāmi, mahīpate.

jñāṇaṁ hi mahāntau me, saṁvartum, nṛpa, duṣṭakarau.
valayaś c’āhāsiṣāyāmi bāhū kinākrṭāv imau,
kaṇayaḥ pratimucy’ āhaṁ kuṇḍale jvalana-prabhāe.
pinaddhakambuḥ pāṇjibhyām, tṛṭhyāṁ prakṛtīṁ gataḥ,
veṅṭikaṭsiṁrā, rājaṁ, nāmna c’āiva Bhṛhannalā.

paṭhaṁnām kāhyāyikāś c’āiva striḥbhāvena punaḥ punaḥ
ramaiṣye mahāpālam, anyāṁś c’āntahpure janāṁ.

gītām, tṛṭhyāṁ vicitraṁ ca, viḍitaṁ vividhāṁ tathā
śikṣāṣīṣyāmy ahaṁ, rājaṁ, Virātasya puraṣṭriyaṁ.
DISGUISES FOR VIRĀTA’S COURT

What will glorious Bibhátsu do, he who is not inferior to Indra or Vasudéva himself, who carries the bow Gandiva, and has white horses? He dwelled for five years in the home of Indra of a thousand eyes, attained the discipline of inhuman, supernatural weapons by his own strength and obtained divine arms by means of his luminous celestial form. I think of him as the twelfth Rudra, the thirteenth Aditya, and I regard him as the ninth Vasu and the tenth graha. His arms are long and equal, hardened by the strokes of the bowstring, and lumpy calluses have formed like the humps of bulls on both the left and right arm. He is like the Himalaya among mountains, the ocean among lakes, Shakra among heaven-dwellers, the fire among Vasus, a tiger among deer and Gáruda among creatures of flight. What will Árjuna, the best of warriors, do?

ÁRJUNA said:

I will claim that I am a eunuch, earth-king. My arms, king, are scarred by the bowstring, large and difficult to conceal. I will cover my long, calloused arms with bracelets and fasten beautiful radiant earrings to my ears. So, with conch bracelets decked on my wrists, I will become a member of the third sex, and with a braid of hair falling down from my head, my king, I will call myself Brihan-nala—the large-reeded lady.

By living as a woman, I shall regularly entertain the king and others inside the palace’s inner complex by giving short narrative recitals. I shall teach the women of Virāta’s palace singing, my king, diverse dances and various musical instruments. I will hide myself, Kauntéya, through illusion.
2.30 prajānāṁ samudācāraṁ bahuḥkarma kṛtaṁ vadān,
chādayisyāmi, Kaunteya, māyaye ātmānaṁ ātmanā.
«Yudhiṣṭhirasya gehe vai Draupadyāḥ paricārīkā
uṣīṣu āsma, iti vaksyāmi pṛṣṭo rājā ca, Pāṇḍava.
etena vidhīnā channāḥ kṛtakena, yathā Nalaḥ,
vihariṣyāmi, rājėndra, Virāṭabhavane sukham.

VAIṢĀMpAYANA UVĀCA:

3.1 ity evam uktvā puruṣaṇaṃ pravīrā

tathā Ārjuna dharmabhṛṭam variṣṭhah
vākyam, tathā āsau virarāma bhūyo.
nṛpo ‘param bhṛtraram ababhāye.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA UVĀCA:

kim tvam, Nakula, kurvāṇas tatra, tāta, cariṣyasi
karma tat tvam samācakṣya, rājye tasya mahīpateḥ,
sukumāraś ca, śūraś ca, darśanīyaḥ, sukhīcitaḥ?

NAKULA UVĀCA:

aśvaḥ bandho bhaviṣyāmi Virāṭajñaptī pater aham,
sarvathā jñānāṃ sampannāḥ, kuśalāḥ parirākṣaṇe.
Granthikā nāma nāṃ ca āham. karmā ātate suṣūpyāma mama.
kuśalo ’smi aśvājaṇkṣayaṃ, tathā āiv āśvaḥcikṣaṇe,
priyāś ca satato me śvāḥ, Kurukṛṣṇa, yathā tava!

3.5 ye mām āmantrayiṣyanti Virāṭaṅgaye janāḥ,
tebhya evam pravakṣyāmi, vihariṣyāmī aham yathā:
«Pāṇḍavena purā, tāta, aśveṣv adhikṛtaḥ purā.»
Virāṭaṅgaye channaḥ cariṣyāmi, mahīpate.

34
entertaining them by telling tales of the heroic deeds of men.

Pándava, when the king asks me I will say, “I lived in Yudhiṣṭhira’s palace as a servant girl to Dráupadi.” Concealing myself by this method, just as Nala did,* I will spend my time happily in Virāta’s palace, lord of kings.

VAISHAMPĀYANA said:
Upon saying this, Ājīvina, the most excellent and foremost of virtuous men, came to the end of his speech, and the king again addressed another of his brothers.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA said:
What will you do? You are very tender, brave, handsome and used to luxury, Nākula, so tell me what service you will perform in the king’s realm.

NĀKULA said:
I will be King Virāta’s horse-keeper. I am wholly conversant with this field of knowledge, and skillful in caring for horses. I will go by the name of Grānṭhika. I really enjoy this task and I am skilled in training horses and equally so in curing them. I have always liked horses as much as you do, Kuru king!

This is how I will pass my time, and to whomever should talk to me in Virāta’s city I will say: “Previously, Pándava made me master of his horses.” That is how I will act, hidden in Virāta’s city, great king.
YUDHIṢṬHIRA UVĀCA:
Sahadeva, katham tasya samīpe viharisyasi? kim vā tvam karma kuruṇaḥ praccchano vihariṣyasi?

SAHADEVA UVĀCA:
gojaśaṅkhyaṭā bhaviṣyāmi Virāṭasya mahāpateḥ, pratiśeddhā ca, dogdhā ca, saṅkhyaṃ kuśalo gavāṃ.
Tantipāla iti khyāto nāmīn’ āham viditas tv atha, nipuṇaṃ ca carisīmi. vyetu te mānaso jvaraḥ.

3.10 āham hi satataṃ goṣu bhavatā prahitaḥ purā. tatra me kauśalaṃ sarvam avabuddhaṃ, viśāṁ pate, lakṣaṇaṃ, caritaṃ c’ āpi gavāṃ, yac c’ āpi maṅgalam. tat sarvam me suviditam, anyac c’ āpi, mahāpate. vṛṣabhān api jānāmi, rājaṇ, pujitaḥlakṣaṇān, yeṣām mūtram upāghṛṣṭā api vandhyā prasūyate. so ’ham evaṃ carisīmi, prītir atra hi me sadā. na ca māṃ vetsyate kaś cit, toṣayiṣye ca pārthivam.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA UVĀCA:
iyam hi naḥ priyaḥ bhāryaḥ prāṇeṣbhyaḥ ’pi garīyaḥ, māt’ eva paripālayaḥ ca, pūjyaḥ jyeṣṭh’ eva ca svasā.

3.15 kena sma Draupadī Krṣṇā karmanā vicariṣyati? na hi kiṃ cid vijānāti karma kartoṃ yathā striyaḥ. suṣumārī ca, bālā ca, rājaṃpurī yaśasvinī, pāṭijrataḥ, mahābḥāgā, katham nū vicariṣyati? mālyagandhān, alaniṃkāraṃ, vastraṃi vividhāni ca—etāṃ ev’ abhijānāti yato jātā hi bhāmīni.
DISGUISES FOR VIRÁTA’S COURT

YUDHISHTHIRA said:  
Saha-deva, how will you spend your time in his proximity? What service will you perform to pass the time in disguise?

SAHA-DEVA said:  
I will be King Viráta’s cowherd, for I am skilled in milking and skilled in herding cattle. I will be called Tanti-pala by name, and since I am properly trained, I will conduct myself capably. Abandon the fever in your mind. In the past, you yourself always put me in charge of your cattle. I’ve learned thoroughly all about their health, lord of earth, their markings and even their behavior, as well as what makes them happy. Consider that I know all this very well, earth-lord. I also recognize bulls with the recommended markings, my king, the scent of whose urine can even cause a barren cow to produce young. I will always work happily. No one will recognize me, and furthermore I will please the king.

YUDHISHTHIRA said:  
This is our dear wife, more precious to us than our lives, who should be cared for as a mother and honored as an eldest sister. What task will Dráupadi Krishná undertake, since she doesn’t know how to perform any women’s work? She is a very tender and powerful princess of wide fame, loyal to her husbands and illustrious, but how will she live? Garlands, perfumes, ornaments and various clothes—these are the only things that the passionate lady has known since she was born.
MAHA-BHÂRATA IV – VÍRÁTA

DRAUPÂDÎ UVÂCA:

sairandhryo rakṣita loke bhujisyaḥ sanī, Bhârata.

n’ āvam anyāḥ striyo yānti, iti lokasya niścayaḥ,
s’ āhaṁ bruvâṇâ sairandhri kuśālā keśaṁkarmanî.

«Yudhisṭhirasya gehe vai Draupadyâḥ paricārika
uṣiṁ ’āṣmî, iti vaksyāmi prīṣṭā rajāṇa ca, Bhârata.

ātmaguptâ carisyāmi, yan māṁ tvaṁ paripr̥ṣchasi,
Sudeśnâṁ pratypaṭhāye rájaṁbrâyaṁ yāśasvinimī,
sā rakṣiyati māṁ prāptām. mā bhūt te duḥkhām idṛṣām.

YUḌIṢṬHIRA UVÂCA:

dvajasūryasya gehe, Kṛṣṇe, kule jat’ āsi, bhamini,
na pāpam abhijānāsī sādhvi, sādhuvraṭe sthirā.
yathā na duḥṛdaḥ pāpā bhavanti sukhīnaḥ punaḥ,
kuryās tat tvaṁ hi, kalyāṇi, laksāyeyur na te tathā.

4.1 KARMAṆY UKTĀṆI USMABHĪR YĀṆI, TĀṆI KARISYATHA,
mama c’ āpi yathābuddhi rucītāṁ vinisīcayāt,
puroḥito ’yam asmākam agniḥottrāṇi rakṣatu
sūḍā-paurogavaiḥ sārdham Drupadaśya nivesāne.
Indraśeṣmukhāś c’ ēme rathān ādāya kevalān
yāntu Dvāravatīṁ śīghram, iti me vartate matiḥ,
imāś ca nāryo Draupadyâḥ sarvāś ca paricāriṇaḥ
Pāṇḍalān’ ēva gacchantu sūḍā-paurogavaiḥ saha.

4.5 sarvāpyi ca vaktavyāṃ, “na prājñāyanta Pāṇḍavāḥ,
gatā hy asmān apāhāya sarve Dvaitavanād īti.”

38
DISGUISES FOR VIRĀTA’S COURT

DRĀUPADI said:

Bhārata, there are women in this world who are protected as menial servants and called sairāndhri—indiscrete maids—but there is no such certainty concerning other women of the world. I will say I am a sairāndhri, skilled in hairdressing. When asked by the king, I will say, “I lived in Yudhiṣṭhira’s palace as Drāupadi’s servant girl,” Bhārata. I will protect myself and do what you ask of me, and I will serve Sudēsna, the king’s illustrious wife. She will protect me once I have reached her, so do not be so miserable.

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

O Krishná, you speak excellently, but you were born into a good family, passionate lady, so you have no comprehension of sin. You are virtuous and engaged in observing strict vows. So don’t allow wicked, sinful men to become happy again as they stare at you, because of the way you behave, lovely girl.

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

Well, you shall undertake the jobs that you have described. I, too, definitely find them attractive as far as I can judge. Let our family priest guard the Agni-hotra fires and enter Drūpada’s dwelling with the cooks. Let Indra-sena and the men he leads go quickly to Dvāravati, taking the empty chariots with them. This is my decision. Let all Drāupadi’s servant girls go to the Panchálas, along with the cooks. Everyone must say, “We do not know where the Pándavas have gone. They all left us at Dvaita-vana.”
Maha-Bharata IV — Virata

Vaisampayana uvaca:

evaṁ te 'nyonyam āmantrya,
karmān uktvā prthak prthak,
Dhaumyam āmantrayām āsuḥ,
sa ca tān mantram abravit.

Dhaumya uvaca:

vihitaṁ, Paṇḍavāḥ, sarvāṁ brahmaṇeṣu, suhṛtṣu ca.
yāne, praharaṇe c’ āiva tath” āiv’ āgniṣu, Bhārata,
tvaya rakṣā vidhātavyā Kṛṇāyāḥ Phalgunena ca.
viditaṁ vo yathā sarvaṁ lokaśṛṇītim idaṁ tava,
vidite c’ āpi vaktavyaṁ suhṛdbhir anurāgataḥ.

eṣa dharmaṁ ca, kāmaṁ ca, arthaṁ c’ āiva saṅkānaḥ

4.10 ato ’ham api vakyāmi, hetum atra nibodhata.
hant’ ēmāṁ rājaivasatiṁ, rājaputra. bravīmy aham
yathā rājaśaktum prāpya sarvāṁ doṣāṁ tarisyaṁtha,
durvaśaṁ c’ āva, Kauravya, jānatā rājaśvesmāni
ajmānitaṁ mānitair vā ajjñātāṁ parivatsaram.
tataṁ caturdaśe varṣe cāriśyatha yathā sukhāṁ.

dṛṣṭaṁdvāro labhīd draśṭum rājas esu na viśvāsata.
tad ev’ āsamāṁ anviçched, yatra n’ ābhīpatet paraḥ.
ayo na yānaṁ, na paryāṅkaṁ, na pīṭhaṁ, na gajaṁ, ratham
ārohet, ‘sammata ’sm’ iti,’ sa rājaivasatiṁ vaset.

4.15 yatra yatr’ āinam āśinaṁ śāṅkeraṁ duṣṭacārināḥ,
na tatr’ ṭopaviṣed yo vai, sa rājaivasatiṁ vaset.
Disguises for Virāta’s Court

Vaishampāyana said:

Having consulted with each other in this manner, and told each other their jobs, each one in his turn, they consulted Dhaumya, and he gave them this advice:

Dhaumya said:

Pāndavas, everything that has been arranged for the brahmans, your friends, the chariots, weapons and fires is fine, Bhārata, but you and Phālguna must arrange Krishnā’s protection.

You two both know how this whole world works. Yet, even though you know, friends should repeat it out of affection.

It is known that law, desire and profit are eternal. For that reason I will say this, so listen. Alas for living with a king, my princes! I will tell you how you will avoid all mistakes once you’ve reached the king’s palace. O Kāuravas, you must spend a full year in the king’s palace, unrecognized by those who know you, who will either treat you honorably or not. Then, in the fourteenth year, you will live happily.

One should take the opportunity to see the king, once one has appeared at the gate, but one should not be confident in royal matters. Nor should one rush for a seat that another desires. He who would not climb onto the king’s palanquin, couch, seat, elephant or chariot, while thinking to himself “I am highly honored,” should live in a royal palace.

The man who would not sit down in a position that causes evildoers to be alarmed should live in a royal palace.
na c' ānuśīyād rājānam aprcchantaṁ kada cana.
tūṣṇīṁ tv enam upāsita, kāle samabhūpūjayet.
asūyanti hi rājano janān anīṭa/vādinaḥ
tath’ āiva c’ āvamanyante mantriṇaṁ vādinam mṛṣā.
n’ āśaṇa dāreṣu kurvita maitrīṁ prājaḥ kada cana,
antahpurācarā ye ca, dveṣṭi yān, aḥitaḥ ca ye.
vidite c’ aṣya kurvita kāryaṇi sulaghūṇy api.
evaṁ vicarato rājīnī na kṣaṭir jāyate kva cīt.
4.20 gacchann api parāṁ bhūmim apiṣto hy, aṁyojitaḥ,
jātyandha iva manyeta maryādāṁ anucintayan.
na hi putraṁ, na naptāraṁ, na bhrātaram, arin’damāḥ,
samatikrāntaṁmaryādāṁ pūjayaṁ nār’ādhhipāḥ.
yatnāc c’ ṭopaḥred enam Agnivad, devavat tv iha.
anīṭena ṭopaḥīṁo hi hanyād eva na saṃśayaḥ.
yac ca bharta’ ānuṣṭijita, tat tad ev’ ānuvartayet;
pramādāṁ, avalepaṁ ca, kopāṁ ca parivarjayet.
samarthanāśu sarvāśu hitaṁ ca, priyam eva ca
saṃvarṇayet tad ev’ aṣya priyād api hitaṁ bhavet.
4.25 anukūlo bhavac c’ aṣya sarv’ ārtheṣu, kathāśu ca;
apriyam c’ aḥitaṁ yat syāt, tad asmai n’ ānuvarṇayet.
«n’ āham aṣya priyo ’śm’, iti matvā seveta paṇḍitaḥ,
apramattaḥ ca satataṁ hitaṁ kuryāḥ, priyaṁ ca yat.
42
DISGUISES FOR VIRĀTA’S COURT

One should never lecture the king when unasked. Sitting beside him in silence, one should pay homage to the king at the appropriate time only. For kings are displeased with people who speak falsely, and equally they treat an eloquent minister who speaks uselessly with contempt.

The wise man should never conduct a close friendship with his wives, nor with the guardian of the women’s apartments, nor with those who are hated and out of favor.

He should carry out even insignificant tasks with the full knowledge of the king. If he conducts himself in this manner while in the presence of the king, no harm will befall him. Even upon reaching the highest position, when unasked and uncommanded, he should think of himself as one who was born blind, recalling the clear boundaries. Tamers of your foes, kings do not even honor their son, nor their grandson nor brother, if their boundaries are transgressed.

One should serve a king with effort, just as one serves Agni and the gods in this world. He who is attended by a deceitful man without a doubt puts him to death. One should obey whatever one’s master commands, and avoid carelessness, pride and anger. In all deliberations one should recommend what is beneficial and pleasant, and should do this even if it should be beneficial rather than pleasant. One should be well disposed to all the king’s affairs and tales, and not recommend to him something that is unpleasant and disadvantageous. A wise man should serve him, thinking “I am not favored,” and be careful to do whatever is advantageous and pleasing.
For a full list of titles, a searchable corpus of CSL texts and translations, and further information, please visit:

WWW.CLAYSANSKRITLIBRARY.COM

The Clay Sanskrit Library is a unique series that, through original text and English translation, gives an international readership access to the beauty and variety of classical Sanskrit literature.

Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of “Viráta,” Book Four of the Maha·bhárata.

“Viráta” details the Pándavas’ thirteenth year in exile, when they live disguised at King Viráta’s court. The brothers suffer the humiliation of becoming servants; a topic explored through both comedy and pathos. They manage to maintain their disguise until the very end of the year, when their troubles really begin.

Bhima is forced to come to Draupadi’s rescue after King Viráta’s general Kíchaka sets his sights on her. Later Duryódhana and the Tri·gartas take advantage of Viráta’s fall to invade his kingdom, unaware the Pándavas are hidden there. In battle the Pándavas play a crucial role and after saving Viráta, they reveal to him their true identities.

“Viráta” ends in celebration with the Pándavas set to return from exile and reclaim their kingdom. The book’s battles, however, foreshadow the horrendous war to come.

With the timeless themes of humor and humiliation that dominate it, “Viráta” is one of the most accessible books of the Maha·bhárata, the Everest of the ancient literary world.