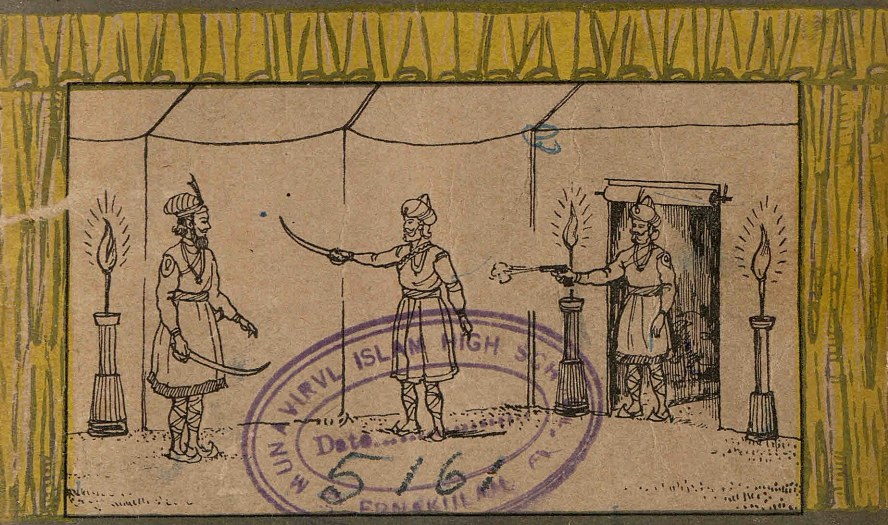
READ AND ACT

BOOK FIVE

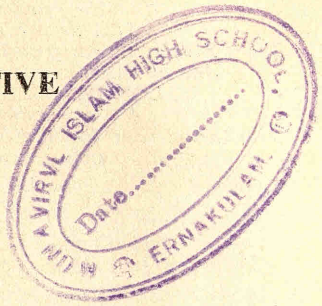


MUNAVIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
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ERNAKULAM

Orient Longmans

READ AND ACT

BOOK FIVE



by
C. S. Bhandari
J. M. Ure
J. S. Bhandari

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PREFACE

The READ and ACT series consists of five books each of which contains ten scenes. The scenes have been based upon well-known stories from history, mythology, legend and folk literature. Most of the stories are known to the boys and girls in our schools and so they have been presented without any introduction; those that are not so widely known have, however, been prefaced with short introductory notes. These introductory notes describe the setting of the scenes and are a help in the right understanding and appreciation of what is said and done by the characters.

The scenes included in this series of books are, however, not meant merely to be read, understood and appreciated. They are also meant to be acted. This can be done on certain days and special occasions as part of an institution's extra-curricular activities; and this can also form a part of the regular English teaching programme of a progressive school or college. To act these scenes in the classroom it will not be necessary to make any special preparations. Their purpose will be served if the pupils are able to read out the parts of the different characters in them with appropriate gestures and feeling.

The books have been graded both in respect of grammatical structure and content vocabulary, and all care has been taken to avoid the use of out-of-the-way words. A few of the words used in these books may at first appear to be difficult but they will be understood easily when they are read in the contexts in which they are presented. It will, however, be useful to explain such words in similar other contexts before the pupils are asked to act a particular scene. Sometimes it may also be necessary to acquaint the pupils with the story of the scene before they act it.

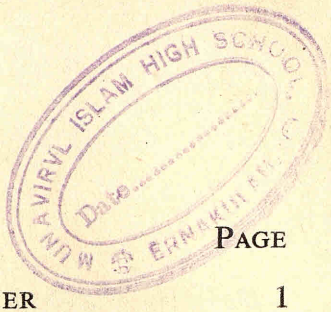
In order that the pupils may read out their parts correctly and effectively, they *must* first read the whole scene silently and get their language difficulties, both of meaning and pronunciation, removed. Then the teacher should read out the different parts to set a model before the pupils. This, it may be stressed, puts a heavy responsibility on the teacher, for the pupils will always try to imitate him.

The themes of most of the scenes in these books are inspirational, and they should have an uplifting effect on the minds of young students. It may, however, be mentioned that the books do not aim at preaching any moral lessons. They only present some noble deeds or some admirable qualities of character and the young readers are left alone to 'receive' what they will. The humorous scenes provide a lot of laughter but the laughter is not born of any malice or ill-will. It is simple and innocent.

The READ and ACT series can be profitably used as supplementary readers both in the English medium and non-English medium Secondary Schools. In those schools where the teaching of English starts in class VI, Book I can be used in class VIII and Books II, III, IV and V in classes IX, X, XI and XII respectively; but in those schools where English is taught from an earlier stage, the first two books can be used in the Junior High School classes. In English medium schools the first book can be introduced in the third or fourth year when the pupils are 8-9 years old.

Activity methods have proved a great success everywhere in teaching all school subjects including languages, and it is hoped that the READ and ACT series will make some small contribution to the effective teaching of English in our schools.

Twelve of the scenes included in the last two books of the series have been translated and adapted from the late Sri Dwijendra Lal Rai's plays, and the debt is gratefully acknowledged.



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1. LAV, THE FEARLESS FIGHTER

HIGH SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

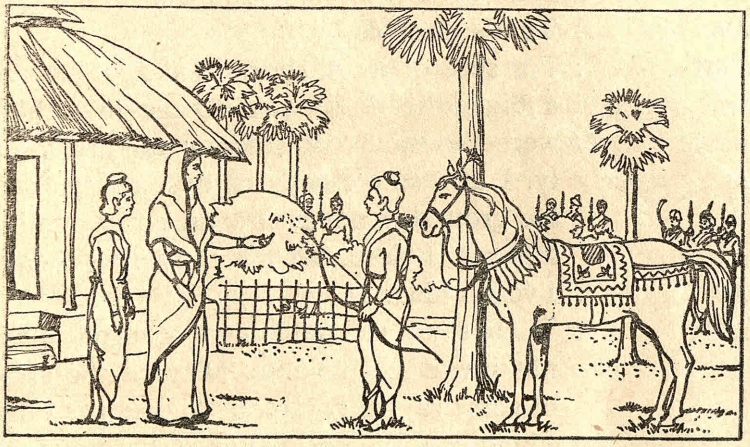
After spending fourteen years in the forest Sri Ramchandra returned to Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshman. The kingdom was handed over to him by Bharat and he started ruling over it. He gave most of his time to the affairs of the kingdom and everybody seemed to be happy. But one day a spy called Durmukh brought the news that some people in Ayodhya were saying unpleasant things against Sita. They did not like Sri Ramchandra to keep her with him. Sri Ramchandra put this matter before the sage Vashistha who advised him to send Sita away from Ayodhya.

Sri Ramchandra was most unhappy but he had to obey the orders of his guru, and Sita was sent to the *ashram* of the sage Valmiki in Dandak Forest. There the twins, Lav and Kush, were born to her, and the sage looked after their education. They were also trained in the art of fighting.

After some years, Sri Ramchandra was advised by Vashistha to perform the 'Ashwamedh Yagyna' and declare himself the emperor of Bharat. Sri Ramchandra agreed, and the chosen horse was sent out with a huge army under Prince Shatrughna. For some weeks they had no trouble. Nobody challenged them on their way.

Everybody recognised Sri Ramchandra as the emperor of Bharat. Then they entered Dandak Forest where Lav, a young lad of only fifteen, caught hold of the horse and tied him to a tree.

LAV, THE FEARLESS FIGHTER



Characters

LAV AND KUSH : sons of Sri Ramchandra
SITA : wife of Sri Ramchandra
A SOLDIER

[*Inside Dandak Forest. The time is early morning. Lav and Kush are seen talking.*]

LAV : Brother, I've caught a white horse.
KUSH : Where is it ?
LAV : There, under the palm tree. Can't you see it? I've tied it to the tree.
KUSH : Whose is it?

LAV : How do I know?

KUSH : Let's go and have a look at it. (*going close to the horse*) It's not a wild horse. It must belong to some soldier.

LAV : That's possible.

KUSH : I'm sure of it. A short time ago I heard a big noise. It seemed to me that there were thousands of soldiers talking loudly. I also saw clouds of dust rising from the ground. I never saw an army coming this way before. Why is it coming today?

LAV : I've no idea.

KUSH : There's no use picking a quarrel. Let's not invite any trouble. May be the army of some raja is going out to conquer other kingdoms. We had better let the horse go.

LAV : Why should we?

KUSH : Brother, the horse belongs to somebody else. We've no right to it.

LAV : That doesn't matter. Why has it been allowed to enter the *ashram?*

KUSH : Won't you listen to me? There is going to be trouble because of this horse. But you won't listen to me. All right, I'm going to tell Mother about it. (*Goes away.*)

LAV : (*going near the horse*) This is a beautiful horse ! Its eyes are bright and big. Its mouth is small. Its ears are big. Its hair is soft and smooth. Its forehead is broad.

Its neck is high. Its shoulders are broad and brawny. Its chest is broad, too. Its legs are long and strong. Its tail is uplifted. Its rump is broad and heavy. The hair on its shoulders is thick. This horse is cool and well-trained, but it's a spirited animal and seems to be getting impatient here. Oh, how grand and strong it is ! Who is that man? Perhaps it's the master of the horse.

(*A soldier enters.*)

SOLDIER : Did you catch this horse ?

LAV : Yes, I did.

SOLDIER : It's the king's horse. Let it go.

LAV : Which king's ?

SOLDIER : It's the horse of the king of Ayodhya.

LAV : (*in surprise*) Is it Ramchandra's ?

SOLDIER : Yes.

LAV : That's good.

SOLDIER : What's good ? Let the horse go.

LAV : Why should I ? Why did Ramchandra's horse enter this *ashram?*

SOLDIER : What a question ! Haven't you heard that Maharaja Ramchandra has begun the *ashwamedh yagyna* ?

LAV : No, I haven't. Is it something very remarkable? What does it matter to me?

SOLDIER : Anyone who catches the horse will be regarded as a rebel.

LAV : Is that so ? All right, let me be regarded as a rebel.

SOLDIER : Who are you ? Mad fellow, do you call yourself a rebel?

LAV : Yes, I do.

SOLDIER : (*smiling*) Will you fight against Maharaja Ramchandra?

LAV : Yes, I will.

SOLDIER : Where is your army ?

LAV : Do I need an army ?

SOLDIER : Will you fight alone against the countless soldiers of Maharaja Ramchandra?

LAV : Of course I will. Why are you surprised ?

SOLDIER : Poor lad, do you know what fighting means?

LAV : Try me and you'll get the answer.

SOLDIER : (*surprised*) Are you the son of some hermit?

LAV : I'm a Kshatriya prince.

SOLDIER : You may be a Kshatriya but you're a child yet.

LAV : No, I'm not a child.

SOLDIER : (*smiling*) If you aren't a child, are you a young man? Well, let's not waste time. Won't you give us the horse without fighting?

LAV : No, never.

SOLDIER : Then fight.

LAV : With whom ?

SOLDIER : With the man in front of you.

LAV : With you? Are you Ramchandra ?

SOLDIER : No, I'm not. Maharaja Ramchandra is my master.

LAV : You aren't a Kshatriya are you ?

SOLDIER : No, I'm not a Kshatriya either.

LAV : I'm a Kshatriya. I shan't fight with anyone except a Kshatriya. Go and bring your master, Ramchandra, here.

SOLDIER : You impertinent fellow, will you fight with Maharaja Ramchandra? Fool, you are still in your early teens. Will you fight Maharaja Ramchandra, the conqueror of Ravan? How dare you say this?

LAV : Did Ramchandra really conquer Ravan ? Of course, I've heard of his wonderful bravery in killing a woman. He hid himself behind a tree in Kishkindha and killed the Vanar king, Bali. This too was an act of wonderful bravery. Then he collected thousands of ill-fed, weak-bodied monkeys and bears and with their help killed Ravan. Your master, Ramchandra, is indeed a very brave man! But I've nothing to do with his bravery. Ramchandra is a Kshatriya and he is proud of his knowledge of the art of fighting. So you had better go and bring

him along. I want to see for myself how brave he is.

SOLDIER : Maharaja Ramchandra is in Ayodhya, but the General is here.

LAV : What's his name ?

SOLDIER : His name is Shatrughna.

LAV : (*happily*) Shatrughna ? Is it a name ? What a joke !

SOLDIER : A joke ?

LAV : Why are you surprised? Has your General ever fought a battle? I've never heard of him. However, call him. At least he's a Kshatriya. Will Ramchandra not come this way?

SOLDIER : No, he won't.

LAV : I've heard his name. I'd like to see him.

SOLDIER : Are you going to set the horse free or not? Shall I call the General?

LAV : If you don't, shall I fight with the air ? I've told you that Prince Lav won't fight with any common soldier.

SOLDIER : You're very good at jokes !

LAV : I'm very good at fighting, too.

SOLDIER : Very well, you'll soon have plenty of it. (*Goes away.*)

LAV : Let me see how the brave warriors of Ayodhya fight. My blood is boiling and my arms are twitching. Today is the first day for me to fight in a battle. I'm look-

ing forward to this battle. I'll use all my skill in fighting and give a good account of myself.

(*Sita enters.*)

SITA : Lav, my son !

LAV : Yes, Mother.

SITA : Why have you tied the horse to the tree ?

LAV : Mother, it entered the premises of the *ashram,* so I tied it to the tree.

SITA : What will you do with this horse ?

LAV : I'll ride it.

SITA : What will happen if anyone comes looking for it?

LAV : A soldier came a short time ago. I told him I wouldn't give it up without fighting.

(*Kush enters with the children of the hermits. They are frightened.*)

KUSH : Mother dear, a very large army has surrounded the *ashram*. Lav has done a very bad thing to detain the horse.

LAV : Brother Kush, there is nothing to fear. I'll fight them all. You shouldn't worry.

KUSH : There are countless soldiers coming this way. What can you do alone? Listen! Do you hear the noise? I say, "Set the horse free."

SITA : I say too, my son, "Set the horse free."

LAV : No, Mother, I won't. I've told you I won't

return it without fighting. Come what may, I won't give up the horse. A Kshatriya boy is true to his word. Won't you want me to keep my word? (*to Kush*) Go. Let there be a fight. (*to Sita*) You may go too, Mother. Don't worry if there are countless soldiers. I'm a Kshatriya boy. I'm a match for a hundred Generals.

SITA : Lav, are you going to fight just for a horse?

LAV : Yes, Mother.

SITA : Against an army of countless men ?

LAV : Yes, against an army of countless men.

SITA : Alone ?

LAV : Yes, alone.

KUSH : You're foolishly obstinate.

SITA : (*softly to herself*) He's the son of his father. The same brilliance ! The same determination ! The same pride ! The same manner ! The same keenness to shine in battle ! The same sparkle in the eyes! The same self-reliance! The swollen nostrils ! The expanded chest ! He's the exact copy of Sri Ramchandra ! (*aloud*) Son, you're a brave Kshatriya boy. You're a Kshatriya prince. Go and fight. I'm a Kshatriya mother. I shan't stand in your way. Touch your mother's feet and receive her blessings. If I'm truthful, if I'm

pure, if I'm chaste, if I'm loyal to my husband, my blessings will help you to defeat all the warriors of this world. (*Goes away.*)

2. DESTINY !

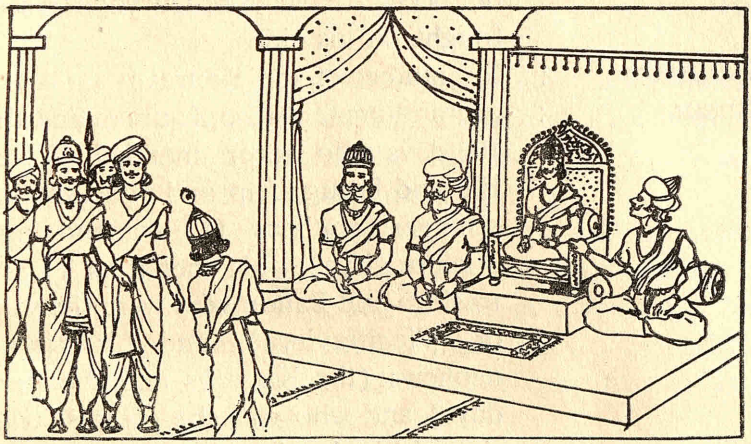
INTRODUCTION

The hundred Kauravs and the five Pandavs were first cousins. The Kauravs were the sons of Dhritrashtra and the Pandavs were the sons of Pandu. Dhritrashtra and Pandu were the sons of King Vichitravirya.

Dhritrashtra was the elder brother but he was blind from birth. So after Vichitravirya, Pandu ruled over the kingdom of Hastinapur and nobody complained; but when Pandu died, trouble started between the young Pandavs and Kauravs. The Pandavs were brave warriors and so the Kauravs were jealous of them. They used every unfair means to dispossess the Pandavs of the kingdom, and even succeeded in keeping them out of the borders of the kingdom of Hastinapur for thirteen long years. The Pandavs, on the other hand, tried their best to avoid civil war with their cousins, and at last asked for only five villages for the five of them.

This proposal was brought to the Kauravs by Krishna. The Kauravs refused to accept it against the advice of all wise people, and the result was the most destructive battle of Mahabharat which saw the end of nearly all the warriors of Asia.

DESTINY !



Characters

SRI KRISHNA	:	the ruler of Dwaraka and a kinsman of the Pandavs and the Kauravs
DUSHASAN	:	one of the Kaurav princes and the evil genius of Duryodhan
DURYODHAN	:	the eldest of the Kaurav princes
SHAKUNI	:	a maternal uncle of the Kauravs who helped them to deprive the Pandavs of everything they had at a game of dice
DRON	:	a learned Brahman who taught the Kauravs and the Pandavs the art of fighting with various weapons

KARN : a famous bowman who was born of Kunti (the mother of the Pandavs) but became a friend of Duryodhan and fought on his side

GANDHARI : the mother of the Kauravs

BHISHM : a grand-uncle of the Kauravs and the Pandavs who never married in his life and brought up and educated his younger brothers (Chitrangad and Vichitravirya), his nephews (Dhritrashtra and Pandu who were the sons of Vichitravirya) and his grand-nephews (the Kauravs and the Pandavs) and who was the greatest warrior of his day in Asia

KRIPACHARYA : Brother-in-law of Dron; fought on the side of the Kauravs.

[*Duryodhan's court at Hastinapur. The time is morning. Duryodhan, Dushasan, Dron, Bhishm, etc., are sitting, and Shri Krishna is standing in front of them.*]

KRISHNA : Maharaja Duryodhan, Dhritrashtra was the elder son of the late king Vichitravirya and Pandu was his younger son. Dhritrashtra was blind from birth, so Pandu became king. You hundred brothers are the sons of Dhritrashtra, so you are not the sons of the king; you are the grandsons of a king. The Pandavs, on the con-

trary, are the sons of the king because they are sons of Pandu. So this kingdom belongs to them. They must get at least half of it.

DUSHASAN : But Yudhishthir lost everything including Draupadi in a game of dice with us. We treated the Pandavs generously and returned Draupadi to them.

KRISHNA : They've suffered enough for gambling with you. They've spent twelve years in the forest and a year in disguise as servants of another man. They aren't asking for much. They want only five villages for the five of them.

DURYODHAN : If they want the kingdom, let them fight and take it. Didn't Bhim shout in the open court that he would smash me to pieces with his club and drink Dushasan's blood?

DUSHASAN : Brother, let's not mention what he said. Let's say that we won't return the kingdom to the Pandavs. The kingdom is ours and we don't want to make a gift of it to anybody. It's a simple matter.

KRISHNA : But Yudhishthir isn't asking for half the kingdom.

DUSHASAN : We won't give even one-fourth.

KRISHNA : He doesn't want one-fourth, either. He wants only five villages.

DUSHASAN : We won't give even one.

DURYODHAN : Let them fight and take what they can. Bhim was too.....

DUSHASAN : Don't refer to it, brother. Why do you mention his name? Why don't you say plainly that we won't give them any part of the kingdom?

KRISHNA : Shakuni, you're always whispering something in Duryodhan's ears ! You're the leader of the conspiracy against the Pandavs !

SHAKUNI : (*pretending surprise*) I ?

KRISHNA : King Duryodhan, I don't ask you to be generous, charitable or kind. You are at this time the King of Hastinapur and the Emperor of Bharat. To do justice is the duty of a king. I ask you, therefore, to do justice. The Pandavs are your first cousins. They're your brothers. They are powerful, and this has been proved to you in your battle against King Virat. They are forgiving. You got proof of this also in the incident with the Gandharvas in the forest of Dwet. They are unambitious and simple, and the proof of it is that they're asking you only for five villages. Do not offend such brothers. Do not make enemies of them. If you do, there will be total destruction.

DRON : Leave them alone, Vasudev ! You're wasting your words on them. They won't listen to you. It is no use watering barren land.

KRISHNA : Shakuni, you've already done too much evil. Don't do any more. The cup of your sins is full to the brim. Why don't you stop now? If you wished and if you tried, you could still prevent the war between the Kauravs and the Pandavs.

SHAKUNI : (*apparently surprised*) I ?

KRISHNA : Yes, you. You're the Kauravs' maternal uncle and chief adviser. You've made Duryodhan drunk with vanity. You've made this palace stink with sin and vice. I don't know by what magic you have made these young men your slaves.

SHAKUNI : (*showing surprise*) I ? No, no, Vasudev, I've nothing to do with this quarrel.

KRISHNA : Don't tell lies. What were you whispering in Duryodhan's ears a few minutes ago?

SHAKUNI : (*really surprised*) Oh, that ? Yes, I was asking him—no, I was telling him that a strange thing was going to happen. Yes, yes, I was asking him to cook.....

KRISHNA : All along you've been cooking up things.

SHAKUNI : And.....

KRISHNA : You understand everything. You're a first class diplomat and a clever man. I can't believe that you don't understand you're

bringing destruction upon the house of Kuru by your actions.

SHAKUNI : I'm not doing anything, Shri Krishna. It's destiny which is doing everything. If it were not so, the saintly Yudhishthir couldn't have gone to the forest and in his place Duryodhan couldn't.....

DURYODHAN : What's that uncle?

SHAKUNI : And Duryodhan couldn't have made Shakuni his chief adviser in spite of Bhishm, Vidur, Dron and other good wise men.

DURYODHAN : What do you mean, uncle?

SHAKUNI : No one can wipe off the writing of destiny. If Bhim is destined to drink the blood of Dushasan, he will drink it.

DUSHASAN : How can he do that ?

SHAKUNI : If destiny has willed so, Bhimsen will also smash Duryodhan's thigh with his club.

DURYODHAN : What has happened to you, uncle ?

SHAKUNI : What's this 'uncle, uncle' business, boy ? Your uncle is yours. Nobody can take him away from you. I was speaking about destiny. Who can wipe off what destiny has written ?

KRISHNA : Then shall I tell the Pandavs that the Kauravs don't want any compromise ?

DURYODHAN : Yes, do. Please tell them that without fighting Duryodhan will not give even an

inch of his land.

KRISHNA : Very well. I'm going.

SHAKUNI : But why ? We brought you here. We've arranged a grand function in your honour. Don't you see ?

KRISHNA : I do. I see all your preparations; and I also see how hollow they are.

DURYODHAN : I don't understand.

KRISHNA : (*to Shakuni*) Uncle, these people can't understand, but you and I do. Now I'm going.

SHAKUNI : Won't you have something to eat before you go ? Won't you give us the pleasure of entertaining you ?

KRISHNA : Thanks for the kind thought, but I've been sufficiently entertained by your talk. (*Moves to go.*)

DURYODHAN : (*to Dushasan*) Let's arrest him.

KRISHNA : Will you? Foolish boy, nobody can arrest me unless I wish to be arrested. (*to Shakuni*) Uncle, you've met your match this time, haven't you ?

DURYODHAN : Arrest him.

(*Dushasan, Karn, etc., step forward. Krishna stares at them and laughs loudly. They can't move any further and he bows to make fun of them.*)

KRISHNA : (*to Duryodhan*) I leave you now, sir. (*Disappears.*)

DURYODHAN : None of you could arrest him !

DUSHASAN : I couldn't. I saw a wonderful scene in his eyes. I saw there the beginning and the end of the world. I was astounded.

DURYODHAN : What about the rest of you ?

KARN : I had the same experience.

DURYODHAN : Describe it.

KARN : I can't describe it. I saw in his eyes fear, joy, pain, pity, love, all at the same time ! I can't explain how I felt.

DURYODHAN : You're all a worthless lot. Am I going to fight the brave Pandavs with this lot ?

SHAKUNI : Destiny !

DURYODHAN : Where has Krishna gone ?

KRIPACHARYA : To the Pandav camp.

DURYODHAN : That means he is on their side.

KRIPACHARYA : That's right.

DURYODHAN : (*to Shakuni*) But, uncle, you said Krishna would be on our side in this battle.

SHAKUNI : Dear boy, my calculations can't be wrong.

DURYODHAN : What calculations ?

SHAKUNI : My calculations are that in this battle you'll attain Krishna. They can't be wrong. I shan't leave you until you attain Krishna. Let me go and prepare for it. The calculations can never be wrong. (*Goes out.*)

DUSHASAN : Don't worry, brother. Krishna has given us his army of ten crores of soldiers. He

has also promised that he will not use a weapon in this battle. What harm can he do us without a weapon in his hand?

(*Gandhari enters.*)

GANDHARI : Duryodhan !

(*Duryodhan gets down from the throne and stands up. All others stand up, too.*)

DURYODHAN : What brings you here, mother ?

GANDHARI : Is peace with the Pandavs impossible ?

DURYODHAN : Quite impossible, mother.

GANDHARI : Son, return this kingdom to Yudhishthir.

DURYODHAN : How can I?

GANDHARI : This kingdom belongs to Yudhishthir.

DURYODHAN : How, mother?

GANDHARI : Duryodhan, I'm your mother. I want you —I order you—to return the kingdom to Yudhishthir.

DURYODHAN : But my dear father.....

GANDHARI : Your father is old and blind. He is blind physically, and his love for his sons has made him blind spiritually too. What is his advice worth ? I order you to return the kingdom to Yudhishthir. I'm your mother. Carry out my orders.

DURYODHAN : But I owe so much to my father.

GANDHARI : And do you owe nothing to your mother ? Foolish boy, who kept you in her womb for nine months? Who fed you with her milk when you were a child ? Who looked

after you day and night like a maid ? Was it your father or your mother ? Is the mother who suffered so much at the time of your birth and who brought you up with most loving care, nothing to you ? Is my pleading with you no more than the begging of a helpless beggar ? Foolish boy ! it is for your own good that I'm asking you to return the kingdom to Yudhishthir. Why don't you listen to my advice ?

DURYODHAN : I'm sorry, mother, I can't do this.

GANDHARI : Reckless boy, give up your vanity. Don't disregard your mother's orders. Don't ruin yourself.

SHAKUNI : Sister, Krishna has gone back to the Pandavs with our final reply. Now there is no way to bring about peace.

GANDHARI : There is still a way. Ignorant man, the door to truth is always open. (*to Duryodhan*) Son, please return the kingdom to Yudhishthir.

DURYODHAN : I can't do it, mother.

GANDHARI : All right. Whether you die or live, may truth be victorious ! (*Goes out.*)

DURYODHAN : What's that ?

DUSHASAN : Thunder !

DURYODHAN : Right above the palace !

(*Everyone except Duryodhan, Bhishm and Dron, goes out in fright.*)

BHISHM : Duryodhan, your face has become pale ! What's this? Why are you trembling? This event is only a forerunner of the final result.

DURYODHAN : Don't say that, grandfather. With Bhishm, Dron and Kripacharya on my side, my victory is certain.

BHISHM : But Krishna is on the side of the Pandavs.

DURYODHAN : His army of ten crore soldiers is on my side.

BHISHM : But Krishna himself is on the other side.

DURYODHAN : This unlimited army.....

BHISHM : Yes, on the one side there is an unlimited army and on the other side there is truth, and Krishna is the fountain of all truth— *Where there is truth there is Krishna, and where there is Krishna there is victory.* (*Goes out.*)

DURYODHAN : How dark it is outside ! Black clouds have spread all over the sky. It's raining heavily and continuously ! Victory ! Defeat ! A gamble between brave men. I've risked my life. Shall I withdraw ? No, never. I may lose my life, but I won't give up my position. Who is there ? Oh,

it's the teacher, Dronacharya. What are you staring at, sir ?

DRON : I see in front of me a river of blood flowing. The Pandavs have bathed in it and are coming out now.

DURYODHAN : What do you mean, sir ?

DRON : Didn't Saint Bhishm say, "Where there is truth there is Krishna, and where there is Krishna there is victory"? Bhishm can't be wrong.

DURYODHAN : Then why has grandfather chosen to be on our side?

DRON : I can't understand Bhishm; but I know that his words can never be untrue.

(*Everyone goes out except Duryodhan.*)

DURYODHAN : The darkness grows ! Who is it ? Uncle !

(*Shakuni enters.*)

SHAKUNI : Yes, it's me.

DURYODHAN : What brings you back here so soon, uncle?

SHAKUNI : Sir, I've seen into the future.....

DURYODHAN : Whose future ?

SHAKUNI : The future of the battle. In this battle victory is certain. It may be yours or theirs. You'll remain firm on your stand— 'I'll gladly give my life but I won't give even an inch of the kingdom.' I've no doubts about it.

DURYODHAN : Who told you this ?

SHAKUNI : I've seen it written on the sheet of black clouds in letters of lightning.

DURYODHAN : Have you ?

SHAKUNI : I have, but don't be afraid.

DURYODHAN : Oh, I don't understand why the wind has suddenly started blowing in the opposite direction.

SHAKUNI : What a fool ! Can't you understand even this? Are you so stupid? This battle will see the end of the Kauravs. What will be my gain? Not much. Only a little satisfaction. It is in my nature that I destroy the man who feeds me. (*Goes out.*)

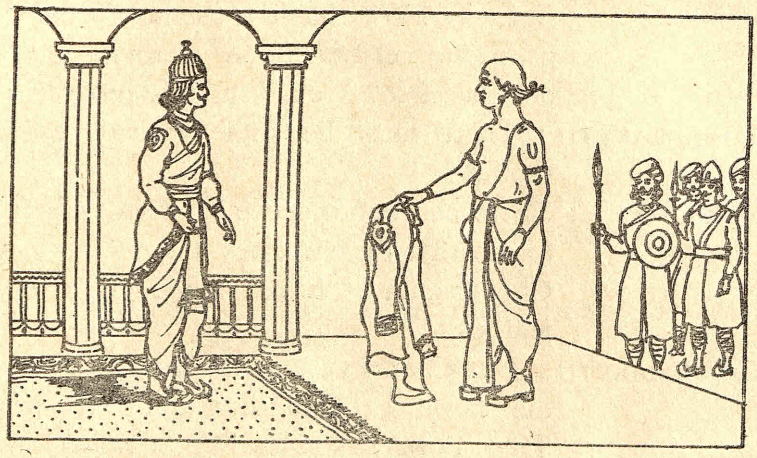
3. THE DEPARTURE OF CHANAKYA

INTRODUCTION

Chandragupta Maurya became the king of Magadh after the murder of Nanda, his step-brother. He had been sent into exile by his father and in his wanderings had perhaps met Alexander somewhere in the north. The meeting with the great Greek conqueror seems to have inspired him to build an empire of his own. He did this with the help of the wily Brahman, Chanakya, whom he made his minister and adviser and who proved to be the greatest politician of his time.

As years passed by, Chandragupta's empire extended as far as Kabul and Hirat and he was feared all over northern India. He was a young man and he did not like the frequent interference of Chanakya with his affairs. Chanakya, on the other hand, treated him as a young disciple of his who was inexperienced in the ways of the world and who needed constant advice and guidance. The result was an open quarrel between the two, and Chanakya left Pataliputra in anger. This happened at a time when the Greeks were still active in northern India and the enemies of Chandragupta were trying to take his life.

THE DEPARTURE OF CHANAKYA



Characters

CHANDRAGUPTA : the first Maurya Emperor of India
CHANDRAKETU : the king of Malay
CHANAKYA : Chandragupta's minister
MURA : Chandragupta's mother
A commander and five armed soldiers

[*Mura and Chandraketu in the royal palace at Pataliputra. The time is night.*]

MURA : Chandraketu, today Chandragupta is returning to Magadh after conquering the kingdoms of the South. Why are there no celebrations in the city?

CHANDRAKETU : Minister Chanakya has forbidden all celebrations.

MURA : But why ? Why has the teacher forbidden people to celebrate the victories of his dear disciple? I can't understand this.

CHANDRAKETU : There must be some special reason, mother.

MURA : There can be no special reason. It seems to me that the victories and the fame of Chandragupta have made Chanakya jealous.

CHANDRAKETU : But Chanakya was the man to give us the news of Chandragupta's victories. That doesn't sound like jealousy. We mustn't think ill of the great Brahman.

MURA : Listen ! The trumpets are sounding. My son is returning home. I should go to the roof of the palace and see him entering the city in procession.

(*Goes away swiftly.*)

CHANDRAKETU : Today I'll see my brother's face glowing with the joy of victory. How happy I am today ! Chandragupta, were you my blood-brother in a previous life?

(*A big noise and the sound of music outside.*)

(*The people shout 'Long live Chandragupta !' and the noise increases as they*

come nearer. Then Chandragupta enters with his soldiers and flag-bearers.)

CHANDRAKETU : Welcome, brother ! (*Gets up to embrace him.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : (*curtly*) Did you get my orders, Chandraketu ?

CHANDRAKETU : What orders, dear brother ?

CHANDRAGUPTA : Did you get the orders to illuminate the city to celebrate my return?

CHANDRAKETU : I did.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Then why have they not been obeyed?

CHANDRAKETU : The Minister said those orders were not to be obeyed.

CHANDRAGUPTA : I thought so. Chandraketu, who is the ruler of Magadh? Chanakya or I?

CHANDRAKETU : Listen to me, brother !.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : Answer my question. Who is the ruler of Magadh?

CHANDRAKETU : The ruler of Magadh is Emperor Chandragupta.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Then ?

CHANDRAKETU : My dear.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : I don't want to listen to you. Send for the Minister.

CHANDRAKETU : Listen to me, brother. There was a special reason.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : I will not listen to you. I'm going to ask him for an explanation right now.

CHANDRAKETU : He said.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : Let him come and repeat what he said. It must be settled right now whether Chanakya is the ruler of Magadh or Chandragupta.

CHANDRAKETU : Don't be impatient. Listen.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : Chandraketu, you don't obey me, either ! Go.

(*Chandraketu goes out slowly.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : The vanity of this Brahman is taxing my patience too much. This time I'm going to.....No, no, I'll first ask him to explain. I shan't act wrongly. (*Walks about.*)

(*Chanakya enters with Chandraketu.*)

CHANAKYA : Long live the Emperor !

CHANDRAGUPTA : (*bowing indifferently*) Minister, sir, I had given orders for the illumination of the city on the occasion of my return home. Why have those orders not been carried out?

CHANAKYA : I had forbidden the illumination of the city.

CHANDRAGUPTA : (*greatly surprised; then after a short pause*) May I know the reason?

CHANAKYA : No use.

CHANDRAGUPTA : No use ?

CHANAKYA : I never do a thing uselessly.

CHANDRAGUPTA : I should still like to know the reason.

CHANAKYA : The time has not come for it. I'll tell you when it is proper to do so.

CHANDRAGUPTA : I'm the ruler of Magadh, am I not ?

CHANAKYA : (*Smiles and looks at Chandragupta.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : Minister, I can't stand this impertinence. I must do something about it.

CHANAKYA : Don't be excited, Chandragupta. Be patient. (*Gets up to go.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : Minister !

CHANAKYA : (*turning back*) Son !

CHANDRAGUPTA : I want to know whether Chanakya is the king or Chandragupta.

CHANAKYA : Chandragupta.

CHANDRAGUPTA : How ? I don't see that. I see that I'm a prisoner in my own kingdom, a slave in my own house. I see that Minister Chanakya sits peacefully in Pataliputra and rules over my kingdom, and I have to go to far-off lands and bring him what I can. I see that people all over Bharat praise the greatness of Chanakya and Chandragupta struggles day and night for that greatness. I find that Emperor Chandragupta obeys Minister Chanakya without question and Chanakya defies the orders of Chandragupta. If this is the relationship between you and me, the sooner we break it the better.

CHANAKYA : As you wish, sir. Chanakya never begged

for the office of the Minister. He is going to resign that office right now.

CHANDRAGUPTA : I want your explanation before you do so.

CHANAKYA : I won't give any explanation.

CHANDRAGUPTA : So impertinent ! Soldiers, arrest him. (*The soldiers do not move.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : Soldiers ! (*The soldiers advance. Chanakya smiles and raises his hand to stop them. They stop.*)

CHANAKYA : The Shudra should not go any further. Chandragupta, I resign my post. I'm your Minister no longer. (*Takes off his Ministerial robes and puts them down.*) Now listen, sir. Chanakya does not enjoy himself in the capital. From here he controls a big empire. His food is a handful of rice and his bedding consists of only a deerskin. He wakes up long before dawn and walks about thinking how your empire can be made strong and lasting. But all that is over now. I'm going away. The empire is yours; rule over it. (*Takes a step forward, but turns back suddenly.*) Before I go away, let me explain why I forbade the celebrations today. The minister of the late king, Nanda, has made a plot against you. His men have dug an underground passage to your bed-

chamber and are waiting there to murder you, but I have sent soldiers to kill them. (*Goes a step forward, and then turns back again.*) Yes, there is another thing to tell you. The victorious Selukus has crossed the Indus. Our enemies are arming themselves to the teeth. So, I thought this was not the time for merry-making and forbade the celebrations.

CHANDRAKETU : (*falling at Chanakya's feet*) Beloved teacher, forgive us.

CHANAKYA : After giving an explanation Chanakya cannot accept the office of the Minister. (*Goes out.*)

CHANDRAKETU : Dear brother, ask his forgiveness and bring him back.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Why should I ? Can no king rule without Chanakya? Think how vain he is! What has been lost? Nothing. I am independent now. I am really the Emperor.

CHANDRAKETU : Listen to my advice, brother. Fall at his feet and persuade him to come back.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Chandraketu, I don't want to listen to your advice. At your instance, I forgave him once. It was a mistake. Think of the impertinence of the penniless Brahman! I'm the Emperor, and yet I've no powers! I've not even the power to forgive my brother! He thinks I am nobody!

He thinks I am only a showboy. Straightforward slavery is much better than this cruel show.

CHANDRAKETU : Everything the teacher does is for your good, Chandragupta.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Was it for my good that he murdered my brother, Nanda? He and Katyayan killed Nanda and danced wildly over his dead body. Did I not see that?

CHANDRAKETU : But you are indebted to him for your throne.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Indebted ! Get away ! You only know how to say bitter words.

CHANDRAKETU : That is the right of a friend.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Friendship is between equals.

CHANDRAKETU : (*pausing for a few seconds*) Sir, forgive me for my impertinence. In future I shall never wish to be your friend. I leave you now, sir; but before I go let me tell you one thing. When fortune is kind to you, you may spurn me as a friend, but do not spurn me when fortune turns against you. If you should ever need my help, do not feel ashamed to ask for it. I shall be happy to lay down my life for you.

(*Goes out.*)

(*Chandragupta stands in silence. After a few minutes five armed soldiers enter. One*

of them is holding the head of a man in his hand. He shows it to Chandragupta.)

SOLDIER : Sir, this is the head of the leader of the gang.

CHANDRAGUPTA : What gang ?

SOLDIER : Twenty-five armed men entered your bed-chamber by an underground passage, but the honourable Minister had already posted us there. We have killed all twenty-five of them, and this is the head of the leader.

CHANDRAGUPTA : (*Looks at the head.*) This is the head of Vachal, the brother-in-law of Nanda ! Very well, you may go.

COMMANDER : Long live the Emperor !

CHANDRAGUPTA : What's the news ?

COMMANDER : The rebels came to attack the city, but they found us armed and watchful and went back.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Who told you to be watchful ?

COMMANDER : The honourable Minister.

(*Chandragupta looks into empty space. The commander goes away quietly, but Chandragupta does not move.*)

4. THE RETURN OF CHANAKYA

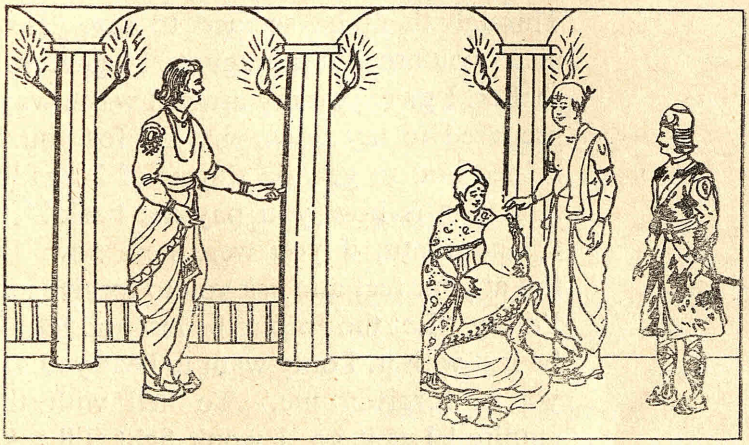
INTRODUCTION

In the last scene we saw that Chanakya left Pataliputra in anger and was followed by Chandraketu. Both of them had been insulted by Chandragupta who did not show any signs of regret for what he had done.

In this scene we find Chandragupta unhappy and repentant. In the absence of Chanakya his enemies got the upper hand and the independence of Pataliputra was in grave danger. It had been besieged and the city walls were being broken. Chandragupta was behaving like a man who had lost all interest in life, and refused to go out and inspire his soldiers with his presence. He felt that all was lost.

Then a miracle happened. Chanakya appeared on the scene with Chandraketu and soon the situation changed completely. Pataliputra was saved and the Maurya empire was saved. Chanakya and Chandraketu are shown at their best in this scene.

THE RETURN OF CHANAKYA



Characters

CHANDRAGUPTA, CHANAKYA, CHANDRAKETU and MURA
CHHAYA : Chandraketu's sister
Four Soldiers

[*Chandragupta's Palace at Pataliputra. The time is night. Chandragupta is sitting alone.*]

CHANDRAGUPTA : My own people and my own army have gone over to the enemy ! I have enemies outside and enemies inside. There is no escape now. It seems to me that Nature is out to take revenge on me. I turned my benefactor out of my king-

dom. Yes, I turned him out. My dearest friend's pride was hurt and he left me. There were tears of pride in his eyes. Through them he seemed to say, "How mean you are, Chandragupta ! I gave you shelter. I gave you my army. I was always prepared to lay down my life for you. I helped you to get the throne of Magadh. And this is how you pay me back !" O Chandraketu, if you were here now, I'd fall at your feet and ask you to forgive me. I'd say, "Let the empire be lost and let me be lost with it. I only want to hear you say you've forgiven me." To hell with the empire ! Let it go. I won't fight. I'll take revenge upon myself. Let the Empire of Magadh fall like a house of cards. I won't be sorry.

(*A soldier enters.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : What's the news, soldier ?

SOLDIER : The southern wall of the Fort has been broken.

CHANDRAGUPTA : That's good. You may go, Why don't you go ? Why are you looking at me ? Go.

SOLDIER : The army of the enemy is entering the Fort.

CHANDRAGUPTA : I will not fight. I'll take revenge upon myself. I'll kill myself.

(*Another soldier enters.*)

SOLDIER : Emperor !

CHANDRAGUPTA : Who are you ? Go away.

SOLDIER : The enemy.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : Who is the enemy ? There is no enemy. These people are my great friends. Let them come. You may go. (*The soldier goes out.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : I don't know who my enemies are and who my friends are. I've enemies in the kingdom, and I've enemies outside the kingdom. My boat is caught in a big storm, and there is no one to row it to safety. It is being tossed about by huge waves. It may sink any moment now. Excellent ! There is no Chanakya here to give me advice, no Chandraketu to give his life for me. Here comes a wave ! Here comes another !

(*A third soldier enters.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : Here comes another !

SOLDIER : Emperor !

CHANDRAGUPTA : Who is the Emperor ? There is no Emperor here. (*curtly*) Go away. (*The soldier goes out.*)

(*The noise and music of battle outside.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : What's this noise ? The sound of trumpets at this late hour ? What can it be ? Oh, it's the noise of battle. Battle !

Who is fighting a battle, and against whom ? The sound of trumpets again ! Chandragupta, are you dead or alive ? You hear the battle-cry and yet you are sitting inside the palace like a dead man ! Your soldiers are fighting. They're laying down their lives for you, and you're sitting in your palace ! Get up, brave man ! Plunge like lightning into the darkness that surrounds you ! Let the stormy noise of the battle be drowned in the thunder of your voice ! Long live Magadh !

(*Mura enters.*)

MURA : What's this, Chandragupta ?

CHANDRAGUPTA : Good-bye, mother. I'm going.

MURA : Where ?

CHANDRAGUPTA : To battle. I'll die fighting. I won't allow myself to be pierced to death like a tiger in a cage. I shall die fighting at the head of my army in the battle-field under the star-studded blue sky.

MURA : Why should you think of dying, son? The enemy has attacked Pataliputra. You should fight. You're a brave man. Why should you die ?

CHANDRAGUPTA : There is no alternative. There are enemies inside, and there are enemies outside. I can't tell who my friends are and

who my enemies are. And the army of the enemy is so huge !

MURA : But.....

CHANDRAGUPTA : There is no 'but' about it. I want to die. Listen ! That's the noise of the battle ! Soldier !

(*A soldier enters and bows.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : I'm going to the battle-field right now. Inform the bodyguards. The trumpets are sounding repeatedly. Go. (*The soldier goes out.*)

FROM OUTSIDE : Long live Emperor Chandragupta !

CHANDRAGUPTA : What's that ? Long live Chandragupta ! Am I dreaming ? It can't be. My enemies are making fun of me. The glory of Chandragupta departed with the departure of Chanakya and Chandraketu. The same noise again ! and closer still ! It's right here ! Oh, the voice sounds familiar ! Who are these people ? (*Chandraketu, drenched in blood, enters with Chhaya and Chanakya.*)

CHANDRAGUPTA : What a dream !

CHANDRAKETU : I've come back, friend; and I've succeeded in persuading the teacher to come back. There is nothing to fear now.

MURA : Forgive us, beloved teacher. (*Falls at Chanakya's feet. Chhaya raises her up.*)

CHANAKYA : Rise, Mura ! There is nothing Chanakya

cannot do except bring a dead man back to life. There is nothing to fear now. Rise, Chandragupta ! Get ready for the battle. The Greeks haven't got the guts to destroy what Chanakya has built.

CHANDRAKETU : What are you staring at, brother ? Come, let's fight once again shoulder to shoulder. We shall smash even a mountain to pieces.

CHANDRAGUPTA : Chandraketu ! My friend ! My brother ! (*Embraces him.*)

5. SHAKT SINGH AND AKBAR

INTRODUCTION

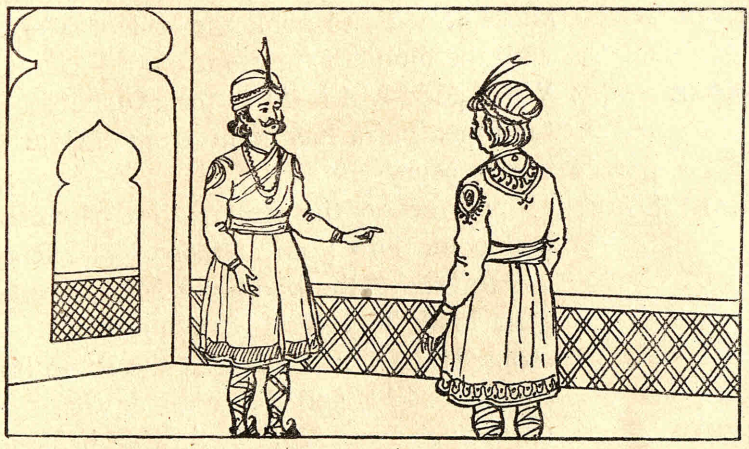
The Rajput rulers, one by one, surrendered to Akbar and recognized him as their emperor. Rana Pratap Singh of Chittor was the only one among them who refused to bow to the Mughals and went on fighting against them till the end of his life. It was an unequal fight and Pratap Singh suffered terribly all his life, but he never regretted his decision.

Shakt Singh was Pratap's younger brother. He was as brave and as proud as Pratap, but he was not a wise man. He was a little too vain. He thought that he had as much right to be the ruler of Mewar as Pratap; and so he once challenged Pratap to a fight with spears. He refused to listen to Pratap's good advice and the fight started; but before any harm could come to either of them, their family priest came in between them and killed himself with a dagger to stop the unnatural fight. This tragic incident made Pratap Singh very unhappy. He was now convinced of what the astrologers had predicted about Shakt Singh. They had said that Shakt Singh would bring ruin upon Mewar, and that is why Rana Udai Singh, Shakt Singh's father, had sent him out of Mewar. Later Pratap had brought him back and given him all honour due to a prince of his house, but now he ordered Shakt Singh to leave Mewar immediately. Shakt Singh left Mewar and

proceeded to the Mughal Court at Agra. He decided to join the enemies of Pratap and take revenge upon him.

Shakt Singh's interview with Akbar and Man Singh at Agra shows some of the great qualities of the Rajput character.

SHAKT SINGH AND AKBAR



Characters

AKBAR : the Mughal Emperor
SHAKT SINGH : Rana Pratap Singh's younger brother
MAN SINGH : the Maharaja of Amber and a General of Akbar's army

A Sentry

[*The Hall of Consultation at Agra. The time is early morning. Akbar and Shakt Singh are standing facing each other.*]

AKBAR : You're Rana Pratap Singh's brother, aren't you?

SHAKT SINGH : Yes sir, I am.

AKBAR : What brings you here ?

SHAKT SINGH : I wish to lead the Mughal army against the Rana. I wish to bring the Rana to his knees. I wish to soak the soil of Mewar with the blood of the Rana's army.

AKBAR : What good will it do to the Mughals ? So far not a paisa has come from Mewar to our treasury.

SHAKT SINGH : If you defeat the Rana, a lot of wealth will come into your treasury. The Rana has forbidden the people of Mewar to till their land. This land can produce rich crops. Have you heard that the Rana had a shepherd hanged the other day?

AKBAR : (*thinking*) I see. Very well, what help can you give us?

SHAKT SINGH : I'm a Rajput. I know how to fight. I'll fight against the Rana. A Rajput knows how to lead an army. I'll lead the Mughal army against the Rana.

AKBAR : What benefit will you get from it ?

SHAKT SINGH : I'll have my revenge on the Rana.

AKBAR : Is that all ?

SHAKT SINGH : Yes, sir. That's all I want.

AKBAR : Will you be able to defeat Pratap Singh if you are given an army?

SHAKT SINGH : I'm sure I'll be able to defeat him. I know the strength of Pratap's army; I know how to plan a battle; and I know

how to lead an attack. Pratap is a warrior and so am I. The only difference between him and me is that he's the elder brother and I'm the younger. But once Pratap Singh's own son, Amar Singh, said that an elder brother is not necessarily superior to the younger. His words struck me then, and now I believe what he said.

AKBAR : I see ! (*Walks about thinking.*)

AKBAR : Anyone there ?

(*A sentry comes and bows.*)

AKBAR : Ask Maharaja Man Singh to come.

SENTRY : Very well, Your Majesty. (*Goes out.*)

AKBAR : I've been told that Rana Pratap Singh has been very good to you.

SHAKT SINGH : In what way ?

AKBAR : Hasn't he ? Well, then I've been wrongly informed. Has Pratap Singh never done any good to you?

SHAKT SINGH : He has. He did me a good turn when my father Udai Singh gave orders to kill me.

AKBAR : (*surprised*) What ? Did your father give orders to kill you?

SHAKT SINGH : Yes, sir, he did. Let me tell you the whole story. One day, when I was about five, I saw a long dagger lying on the ground. I wanted to know how sharp it was and so I struck my left hand with it.

My horoscope says that I'll rise against the land of my birth and destroy it. So, when my father saw what I had done, he was convinced that my horoscope couldn't be wrong. He believed that I was capable of doing the impossible; and that very day he ordered that I should be killed.

AKBAR : I'm surprised.

SHAKT SINGH : But why ? Don't you know him well ? If he hadn't run away like a coward when Chittor was besieged, its sun would never have set.

AKBAR : Is it not fortunate that Chittor came under the Mughals?

SHAKT SINGH : How ?

AKBAR : I thought you would admit that the uncivilized Rajputs don't know how to rule.

SHAKT SINGH : I don't know whether the Rajputs are uncivilized or the Musalmans, but so far I haven't heard anyone say that we Rajputs are uncivilized.

AKBAR : If they hadn't been uncivilized, the Mughals wouldn't have been ruling over the Hindus.

SHAKT SINGH : The uncivilized Goths conquered the highly civilized Romans, didn't they?

AKBAR : The Romans had become irreligious.

SHAKT SINGH : Were the Goths religious ? The fact is that in this world religion is not always victorious. Everything depends upon the times. Today the people of Hindustan have become irreligious and yet everyone says they are civilized.

AKBAR : (*puzzled*) Let's change the subject. Will you complete your story ? What happened when your father ordered that you should be killed?

SHAKT SINGH : When I was being taken to a lonely place, Raja Govind Singh of Salumbar saw me. He spoke to my father and saved my life. He adopted me as his son and brought me up. Later, a son was born to him. Pratap Singh had become the Rana by then. He brought me to Chittor and showed me all honour due to a prince of his house.

AKBAR : Did he know what your horoscope said ?

SHAKT SINGH : He did.

AKBAR : But you said Pratap Singh never did any good to you.

SHAKT SINGH : What good did he do me ? I had been unjustly kept out of my land and my rights. Pratap Singh brought me back. He did justice to me. That's all. I'm not in his debt in any way. Moreover, I didn't get all my rights. What right has

Pratap to sit on the throne of Mewar and give orders to me? He and I are sons of the same father. It's true that he's the elder son and I'm the younger. But that does not make him superior to me. One day we went out to decide who was superior between us, but it couldn't be done as a Brahman was killed in our fight. If Pratap had proved that he was superior to me and then turned me out of his kingdom, I wouldn't have minded. But he turned me out without proving himself superior to me. He did me great injustice, and I'm anxious to take revenge on him.

AKBAR : (*smiling*) Pratap Singh trusts you, doesn't he?

SHAKT SINGH : He does.

AKBAR : Why don't you betray him into our hands? It will avoid unnecessary fighting.

SHAKT SINGH : I'm sorry I can't do that. If this is what you expect from me, I'm going.

AKBAR : Why, what's the harm? If we can do without fighting and shedding blood, why should we fight and shed blood unnecessarily?

SHAKT SINGH : Sir, you and your people belong to a civilized race. These cunning tricks are worthy of you. We Rajputs are uncivilized

people. We lay down our lives for our friends and give our enemies a fair fight. We don't know the art of stabbing in the back. Both as friends and as enemies, Rajputs are always Rajputs. It's true I've lost my faith in religion, I don't believe in God and I'm a rebel, but all the same I'm a Rajput. I can never do a thing which is not worthy of a Rajput.

AKBAR : But Man Singh never hesitates to do such things. He is the only one among the Rajputs who fights with his brains. Half the battle is won with his brains. On many occasions he lets the enemy see his strength, but does not make use of it.

SHAKT SINGH : He must do so! If he hadn't done that, he couldn't have become a General of the Mughal army! In that event I would have taken his place.

AKBAR : But he is a Rajput too, isn't he ?

SHAKT SINGH : Yes, so I've heard. I've heard that his mother was a Rajputin and his father was a Rajput.

(*Akbar understands the sarcasm, but he does not let Shakt Singh know that he understands it.*)

AKBAR : Then ?

SHAKT SINGH : Then, as rotten mangoes soon fall to the ground from the tree, so Man Singh

has fallen too. Besides,..... (*Stops speaking.*)

AKBAR : Besides, what ?

SHAKT SINGH : He's the son of the Emperor's brother-in-law while I'm nothing to the Emperor. Moreover, he has been dining and feasting with the Emperor. This must have had its effect.

AKBAR : (*after a pause*) Very well, you go and have a rest. We'll decide tomorrow.

SHAKT SINGH : As you wish, sir. (*Bows and goes out.*)

AKBAR : (*after Shakt Singh had left*) Pratap Singh, I've got your brother. You can't escape now. If events like this had not favoured me in the past, I could not have conquered such a big country. If Maharaja Man Singh had not come to my help, the Mughal empire could not have extended so far. Here he comes!

(*Man Singh comes and bows.*)

AKBAR : Come in, Maharaja Saheb.

MAN SINGH : Did you want me, sir ?

AKBAR : Yes, I did. Did you meet Pratap's brother, Shakt Singh?

MAN SINGH : Yes, sir, I did. I met him on the way a minute ago. As he went, he kept looking at me.

AKBAR : The man seems to be fearless and sensible. He can also use sarcastic words. He seems

to have seen only selfishness in the world. He is like raw metal and needs tempering.

MAN SINGH : He wants blood.

AKBAR : Not blood but revenge. Love and hatred have no place in this man's heart. He is thoroughly businesslike. He has no religion, but he is proud of his race.

MAN SINGH : Then what does Your Majesty want me to do?

AKBAR : Have you heard that Pratap Singh got a shepherd hanged?

MAN SINGH : No, I haven't.

AKBAR : He made three attacks on the Mughal army and wiped it out completely. Have you not heard this either?

MAN SINGH : Yes, I've heard about it.

AKBAR : Then how long will this mad tiger remain at large? Now is the time to strike. What do you think?

MAN SINGH : I thought I would see him on my way back from Sholapur. It would be splendid if we could trap him without any bloodshed. If we can't, we'll have to fight.

AKBAR : You're right. I agree with you. When are you going to Sholapur?

MAN SINGH : The day after tomorrow.

AKBAR : All right. I must go now.

MAN SINGH : Good-bye, sir. (*Akbar leaves him.*)

MAN SINGH : I was prepared for this interview. Father is pressing me to arrange Rewa's marriage. I want to speak to Pratap Singh about it. I want to marry her to Pratap's son Amar Singh. It'll be a great thing if he agrees. Let me see if I can wash away the blot on my family through this connection. All Rajputs—all of us—have fallen very low. Only Pratap Singh's flag flies—proud and free. Pratap Singh, you are indeed the glory of the Rajputs!

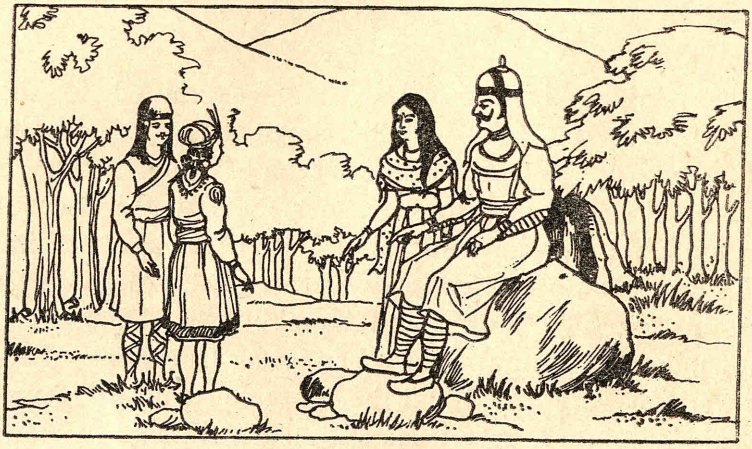
6. THE LIGHT OF THE RAJPUT RACE

INTRODUCTION

The Rajput kings, big and small, submitted to the Mughal rule one by one and recognized Akbar as the Emperor of Hindustan. Maharana Pratap Singh of Mewar alone refused to surrender the independence of his motherland. The emperor declared war against him. This war continued for many years and Pratap Singh lost his capital Chittor, and Kumbhalmer, Dhurmuthi, Gogunda and a number of other forts. Thousands of his brave men were killed and the evergreen land of Mewar was turned into a desert. He and his family had to spend many days of their life in the jungles where they could get nothing to eat except wild fruit and leaves and roots of plants. But he never gave up the fight and remained unconquered till the end of his life.

The scene in the following pages gives us an idea of the sufferings of the Rana after the battle of Haldighati and also shows what a great man he was.

THE LIGHT OF THE RAJPUT RACE



Characters

PRATAP	:	the Rana of Mewar
LAKSHMI	:	Pratap's wife
IRA	:	Pratap's daughter
MAHU	:	a Bhil chieftain
MEHARUNNISA	:	Akbar's daughter
AMAR SINGH	:	Pratap's son

[*In the entrance to a mountain cave near Udaipur. The time is evening. Maharana Pratap Singh is sitting alone.*]

PRATAP : Kumbhalmer is lost, and the forts of Dhurmuthi and Gogunda are lost too.

Udaipur is in the hands of Mahabat Khan. I've lost all of them. Perhaps I can bear their loss. Time has taken them away from me, and it may yet restore them to me. But Mana and Rohidas! I've lost them both in the battle of Haldighati and can never get them back again.

(*Ira enters slowly.*)

PRATAP : Have you had your food, Ira?

IRA : Yes, father. Father, what's this place?

PRATAP : The Jungle of Udaipur.

IRA : It's a beautiful place. The hill-tops look beautiful. Everything is quiet. How beautiful!

(*Lakshmi enters with food.*)

PRATAP : Have the children had any food?

LAKSHMI : Yes, they have. I've brought some for you.

PRATAP : I'm not hungry.

LAKSHMI : You've had nothing to eat since morning and still you're not hungry!

IRA : Father, have something.

PRATAP : Very well, leave it here.

LAKSHMI : (*putting the food in front of Pratap*) I'll go and put the children to bed.

(*Lakshmi goes, and Pratap eats the wild fruit and roots of plants.*)

PRATAP : This is the life of the Rajputs! Fast the whole day and eat wild fruit and roots of

plants in the evening! Work hard from morning till evening and sleep on the ground at night! Yes, this is the life of the Rajputs. For the sake of the country, this food served on leaves of trees is a hundred times more delicious than the nectar of heaven. For the sake of the motherland, the bare, stony earth is a much more comfortable place to sleep on than a bed of flowers.

(*Mahu, a Bhil chieftain, enters and bows to the Rana.*)

PRATAP : Who is that? Is it Mahu?

MAHU : Yes, Ranaji, it is Mahu. I heard you were here and so I've come to see you.

PRATAP : That's very good of you.

IRA : How are you, Mahu?

MAHU : Very well, thank you. (*to Ira*) Sister, you look pale and weak!

PRATAP : I'm surprised that she lives on. She is sickly, she can't be looked after, and she can't get even two square meals a day. Today she had nothing to eat since morning until a few minutes ago.

MAHU : Well, how can you carry on in this way?

PRATAP : What can I do, Mahu? I had made some arangements for our food in the jungle of Bithoor, but the Mughals soon got to know about it and surrounded us with five

thousand soldiers. I was forced to run to this jungle with my family and my two hundred men.

(*Mahu's face becomes sad.*)

MAHU : Ranaji, have you got the latest news ?

PRATAP : What is it ?

MAHU : Most of the soldiers of Farid Khan have gone to Raigarh. There are only one thousand here.

PRATAP : Farid Khan ! Where is he ?

MAHU : Here. Today is his birthday. There will be dancing, feasting and merry-making. Today is the day to attack.

PRATAP : But I've only a hundred armed men.

MAHU : I've thousands of Bhils who will give their lives for their Rana.

PRATAP : Very well, then. Get them ready. We'll attack the Mughal camp tonight. Make haste. Let's not waste time.

MAHU : Your orders will be carried out. (*to Ira*) Look after yourself, sister. You can't carry on like this for long. (*Goes away.*)

PRATAP : In this world it's difficult to get a friend like this Bhil chieftain. His men are going to do me a great service in the hour of my need.

IRA : Father !

PRATAP : Yes, darling.

IRA : Why is there this war ? How long do we

stay in this world ? Have we come into this world to love and help one another, or have we come here to fight and make one another unhappy ?

PRATAP : Ira, if men could love one another and live in peace, this world would become a heaven.

IRA : Father, where is heaven ? Is it in the blue sky ? No, I don't think so. I believe that one day the earth itself will become a heaven. It will become a heaven when men trust and love one another, when there is no selfishness among them and when their main aim in life is to help others.

PRATAP : That day is still far off, my child.

IRA : But, Father, why don't we try to bring that day nearer ? Why are we driving it further away by shedding one another's blood ? (*Amar Singh enters with Meharunnisa dressed as a boy.*)

PRATAP : Who is it ? Amar Singh ? Who is this young lad with you ?

AMAR SINGH : He says he is a messenger of Maharaja Man Singh, but I don't believe him. (*Meharunnisa looks intently at Rana Pratap Singh.*)

PRATAP : Are you a messenger of Man Singh ?

MEHARUNNISA : Are you Rana Pratap Singh ? Is this hut your residence ? Is this wild fruit your

food ? Are these leaves of trees your bedding ?

PRATAP : The answer to all your questions is 'yes'. Now tell me who you are.

MEHARUNNISA : I'm afraid to tell the truth. I'm afraid that when you know the truth you may ask me to go away.

PRATAP : Ask you to go away ?

MEHARUNNISA : You're the light of the Rajput race. You're the pride of mankind. I've heard a lot about you. I couldn't believe all of it; but what I've seen today is wonderful, beyond imagination, glorious ! I had heard that if you wanted you could be the right hand man of Emperor Akbar but that you refused to sell the freedom of your motherland and were facing great hardships. In order to believe this, I had to come and see things for myself. Sir, I'm not anybody's messenger. (*She is over-powered with admiration for the Rana and stops speaking.*)

PRATAP : Then who are you ?

MEHARUNNISA : I'm a woman.

PRATAP : A woman in this dress ! And here !

MEHARUNNISA : I came here with a different purpose, but now I want to stay on and look after your family.

PRATAP : But you haven't told me yet who you are.

MEHARUNNISA : It isn't necessary for you to know the names of women.

PRATAP : What's your father's name ?

MEHARUNNISA : My father is your great enemy, but at this time I'm under your protection. I won't tell you my father's name until you promise not to send me away.

PRATAP : You know I'm a Rajput, and you also know the Rajput code of honour. We don't give up anyone who comes under our protection.

MEHARUNNISA : My father .....

PRATAP : Yes, yes, go on. Say who he is.

MEHARUNNISA : My father is your great enemy, (*after a pause*) the Emperor Akbar.

(*Pratap is amazed and looks intently at Meharunnisa for some time.*)

PRATAP : I hope you aren't deceiving me.

MEHARUNNISA : Maharanaji, I've never deceived anyone in my life.

PRATAP : But Akbar's daughter in my camp ! Why ? Impossible !

MEHARUNNISA : But it's true. I've run away from the palace.

PRATAP : Why ?

MEHARUNNISA : I'll tell you.

IRA : Oh, I know her. She's Mehar.

PRATAP : Do you know her ?

IRA : Yes, Father, I know her. She's Mehar, the daughter of Akbar.

PRATAP : Where did you see her before ?

IRA : On the battle-field of Haldighati.

PRATAP : (*getting up*) Meharunnisa, you're the daughter of my enemy, but you've asked me for shelter. I shan't refuse it to you although at this time I myself am without shelter. You'll be a daughter to me as long as you stay with us. Ira, take her to your mother.

(*Mehar goes inside the cave with Ira.*)

7. THE LAST MARTYR OF MEWAR

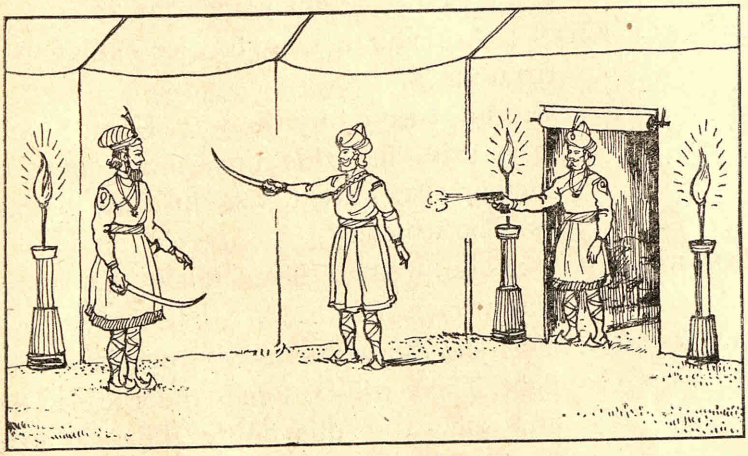
INTRODUCTION

After the death of Pratap Singh, who kept on fighting the Mughals for the honour and freedom of his motherland till the last day of his life, his son, Amar Singh, became the Rana of Mewar. Rana Amar Singh also refused to submit to the Mughal Emperor and continued the fight. In this war many battles were fought and won and many brave deeds were done by the Rajputs, but the strength of the Rana's army was greatly reduced. On the other side, Emperor Jahangir was ashamed of the successive defeats of his army and finally decided to send Mahabat Khan with a huge army to finish Mewar.

Mahabat Khan was a nephew of Rana Pratap Singh and one of the ablest Generals of his time. He had become a Muslim and had gone over to the Mughal side. He hated the Hindu religion but loved Mewar which was his motherland. For a long time he had kept away from leading an attack on it, but now he could not refuse. The huge Mughal army under his leadership proved more than a match for the few thousand men of the Rana and Mewar was reduced to ashes.

In the following scene we find how the old Raja Govind Singh, who was the last of the warriors of Mewar left, met his death in the camp of his son-in-law, Mahabat Khan.

THE LAST MARTYR OF MEWAR



Characters

MAHABAT KHAN	:	the Mughal Commander-in-chief
GAJ SINGH	:	the Raja of Jodhpur
GOVIND SINGH	:	a General of Rana Amar Singh's army

[*Mahabat Khan's camp in a valley of Mewar. The time is evening. Mahabat Khan is standing outside his tent and is looking at the rays of the setting sun on the hill-tops.*]

MAHABAT KHAN : There it goes ! . . . . . .

(*Maharaja Gaj Singh enters.*)

GAJ SINGH : Khan Saheb !

MAHABAT KHAN : Come in, Maharaja. What's the news ?

GAJ SINGH : You've won the battle. Why don't you enter Udaipur with your army ?

MAHABAT KHAN : Are you asking for an explanation from me ?

GAJ SINGH : Oh, no. I asked by the way. Khan Saheb, it is said that this time the women of Mewar also have taken up arms against us. The women !

MAHABAT KHAN : The women have taken up arms ! The women ?

GAJ SINGH : Yes, sir, the women. Let's see how they fight. There will be some tenderness in the atmosphere of this battle. I'll also take part in it.

MAHABAT KHAN : Maharaja Saheb, you're a Rajput, and yet you make fun of the Rajput women. Are you really a Rajput ? I think not.

GAJ SINGH : Khan Saheb ! . . . . . .

MAHABAT KHAN : You may leave me, sir. Show your bravery elsewhere. (*Gaj Singh leaves.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : People like this man wave the flag of Hindu religion. O Hindus! you've lost your country, and along with it you've also lost your character.

(*A soldier enters.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : What's the news ?

SOLDIER : The prince has arrived with an army.

MAHABAT KHAN : Has he ? Very well, you may go. (*The soldier goes out.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : There was no need to bring here another army now. I had already conquered Mewar. But I did not want to enter Udaipur with the Mughal army. This may now be done by the Mughal prince himself. My job is finished. (*Govind Singh enters.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : Who are you ?

GOVIND SINGH : I'm a chieftain of Mewar.

MAHABAT KHAN : Why have you come here ?

GOVIND SINGH : I'll tell you. Let me get back my breath.

MAHABAT KHAN : Has Rana Amar Singh sent you to beg for peace ?

GOVIND SINGH : May a thunder-bolt strike me before such a thing happens !

MAHABAT KHAN : Then what do you want ?

GOVIND SINGH : I want to die. I've grown very old; I don't want to live any longer. I want to die fighting, but I don't want to fight with an ordinary man. I want to die at your hands. I'll die fighting with you.

MAHABAT KHAN : Are you mad ?

GOVIND SINGH : No, Mahabat, I'm not mad. You may be thinking that I've come to fight a duel

with you and to kill you. God ! I wish I had that strength now. No, Mahabat Khan, I can't kill you in a duel; but I can die. I want to die at your hands. This is my wish.

MAHABAT KHAN : It's a very strange wish.

GOVIND SINGH : There is nothing strange about it. I fought at least fifty battles under the late Maharana Pratap Singh, and there are scars of dozens of wounds on my body. The last wound must come from your sword.

MAHABAT KHAN : What good will it do you ?

GOVIND SINGH : No special good; but, although a Muslim by faith, you're a Hindu by blood. Besides, you're a nephew of Rana Pratap. So there is some glory in dying at your hands.

MAHABAT KHAN : Are you Thakur Govind Singh of Salumbar ?

GOVIND SINGH : You took a long time to recognize me, Mahabat Khan. Do you understand now why I want to die at your hands ? Mahabat Khan, although you've conquered Mewar and torn it to pieces, I won't let you enter the Fort of Udaipur. Mewar has no army now to fight against your army. I'm its last warrior. So you will have to fight with me. I'm here to stop the

Mughals from entering Udaipur. I won't let you enter the Fort of Udaipur without taking my life. Draw your sword. (*Govind Singh draws his sword.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : But O brave warrior, I don't want to enter the Fort of Udaipur.

GOVIND SINGH : That makes no difference to me. Come on, draw your sword.

MAHABAT KHAN : Please listen .....

GOVIND SINGH : I don't want to listen to anything. There is a strong fire burning inside me. I've lost my son; I've lost my daughter. I want to die now. I want to die before my independent Mewar is trampled by the Mughals. And I want to die at the hands of the man who, though my son-in-law, killed my son; who, though a son of Mewar, is the slave of its enemies; who, though a Hindu by birth, is a Muslim; and who, though a brother of our Rana, is his enemy. Mahabat Khan, draw your sword.

MAHABAT KHAN : (*drawing his sword*) Please calm yourself. I will not kill you. No, never.

GOVIND SINGH : I don't want to hear anything. Defend yourself.

MAHABAT KHAN : Raja Govind Singh !

GOVIND SINGH : Kill me ! Kill me ! .....

MAHABAT KHAN : I'm laying down my sword.

GOVIND SINGH : Mahabat Khan, I will not spare you.

Take up your sword. I've come to die, and I will die today. Take up your sword. I will not spare you.

(*Govind Singh gets ready to attack. In the meantime, Gaj Singh shoots him from behind. Govind Singh falls on the floor.*)

MAHABAT KHAN : What's this ? Maharaja Gaj Singh, what have you done?

GAJ SINGH : I've killed him.

MAHABAT SINGH : Do you know who he is ?

GAJ SINGH : He must be a robber.

GOVIND SINGH : I'm not a robber, but you certainly are. I've not come to rob others of their property, but you have. Mahabat Khan, you may now enter Udaipur. No one will stop you. Sell your motherland, Mewar, to the Mughals. Do your duty to your motherland. (*dying*) Ajaya! Kalyani! Mewar!

8. LONG LIVE SHAH JAHAN !

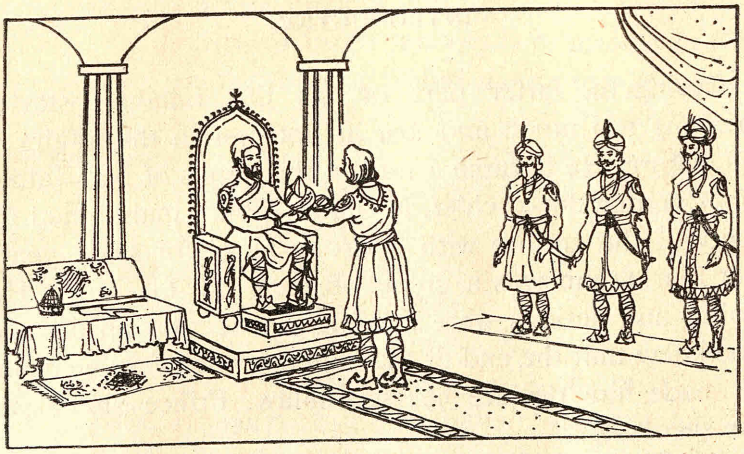
INTRODUCTION

During the latter part of his life Jahangir started drinking too much and lost all interest in the affairs of his empire. He became a tool in the hands of Nur Jahan. His Commander-in-chief, Mahabat Khan, maintained the unity of the empire with a strong hand for some years, but Nur Jahan was a great obstacle in his way. Her policy and actions were causing disaffection all around. She knew that the end of the Emperor was very near and so made him declare her son-in-law, Prince Shaharyar, his successor.

So Mahabat Khan, Rana Karn Singh, Asaf Khan (Nur Jahan's brother) and several other nobles decided to defeat her plans by putting Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan) on the throne. They knew that Prince Shaharyar was neither fit nor anxious to become the Emperor of Hindustan and Nur Jahan wanted to rule in his name.

The scene in the following pages shows some noble qualities of three important characters in the play (NUR JAHAN)—Shah Jahan, Mahabat Khan and Rana Karn Singh, and contains a message for every Indian.

LONG LIVE SHAH JAHAN !



Characters

SHAH JAHAN	:	Prince Khurram, son of Jahangir
MAHABAT KHAN	:	Commander-in-chief of Jahangir. He was the son of Rana Samar Singh and a nephew of Rana Pratap, but had embraced Islam and gone over to the Mughals
KARN SINGH	:	the Rana of Udaipur
THE RAJA OF BANDAR	:	a wicked, mean courtier of Nur Jahan

Some officials of Mewar

[*In the Badal-Palace at Udaipur. The time is early morning. Mahabat Khan, the Raja of Bandar, Karn Singh, the Rana of Mewar, and the officials seem to be waiting for somebody. In a few minutes the trumpet blows and Shah Jahan enters*].

ALL : Long live Shah Jahan, the Emperor of Hindustan !

MAHABAT : Your Majesty, here is the flag of your enemies, and here is the crown of your father, the late Emperor Jahangir. (*Gives them to Shah Jahan.*)

SHAH JAHAN : Mahabat Khan, I see that you have already conquered the empire for Shah Jahan. How can I reward you for what you have done for me? This empire of Hindustan was completely in your hands but you threw it away as if it were a lump of clay. If you had wished, you could have been the Emperor, not I.

KARN SINGH : Sir, his job is to make emperors, not to be an emperor.

SHAH JAHAN : Has the Empress been arrested ?

MAHABAT : Yes, Your Majesty.

SHAH JAHAN : Mahabat Khan, please set her free. She will get a pension of ten thousand muhars a year.

MAHABAT : As you wish, sir.

SHAH JAHAN : What arrangements have been made for the other members of the royal family?

RAJA OF BANDAR : Your Majesty, I've made all arrangements.

SHAH JAHAN : You have made the arrangements ! What a pity! Will you tell me what arrangements you have made?

RAJA OF BANDAR : Both the sons of Khusru have been killed. The sons of Parvez had already died, so they didn't have to be killed. Shaharyar's eyes have been put out and his sons have been killed by strangling.

SHAH JAHAN : (*greatly shocked and full of grief*) Can it be true? Are you telling me the truth, Raja?

RAJA OF BANDAR : Every word is true, sir. How can I tell lies to my Emperor?

SHAH JAHAN : Oh, what a horrible thing ? It is the work of the Devil himself. Who has done it?

RAJA OF BANDAR : I, your most humble servant.

SHAH JAHAN : Begham Nur Jahan ! of all your sins the greatest has been to protect this meanest and most cowardly sinner. So many murders! Such devilish cruelty! I could never have imagined such a thing was possible. Sentries, (*pointing to the Raja*) put him in chains.

(*The sentries put him in chains.*)

RAJA OF BANDAR : I'm surprised, Your Majesty.

SHAH JAHAN : Be quiet. You thought I'd be happy to

hear what you've done to my brother and nephews. Can such a thing make any man happy? My own brother made blind, and my own nephews murdered, and I should be happy! What does it matter if they turned against me? Were they not my own flesh and blood? Oh! Oh! O Raja, what punishment shall I give you? Death is no punishment for such a crime. I'm not able to think. Sentries, take this hateful creature out of my sight. Let Mahabat Khan shoot him.

MAHABAT KHAN : No royal orders have given me so much pleasure as these.

(*The sentries take the Raja out. Mahabat Khan follows them.*)

SHAH JAHAN: O unfortunate children ! O luckless brother Shaharyar! I am innocent.

(*Outside a gun is fired. The Raja cries and drops on the ground.*)

SHAH JAHAN: Let it be. A great sinner has been removed from the earth.

KARN SINGH : Your Majesty, what has been done cannot be undone. Do what you can for those who are alive.

SHAH JAHAN: Rana Saheb, how shall I pay off my debts to you? When I was pursued by the army of the Empress, you gave me shel-

ter and fought for me with all the armies of Mewar.

KARN SINGH: I did so because I knew that I was fighting for the cause of good against the forces of evil.

SHAH JAHAN: Since then I've been your guest for so many days, and you've given me all possible comforts and all possible honour and happiness. You built me this palace and this mosque, and you had this throne made for me. Rana Saheb, these will perish before long, won't they?

KARN SINGH: I shall protect them against the destructive hands of time as long as I can.

SHAH JAHAN: Will you protect this mosque ? Does it not belong to a faith which is opposed to yours?

KARN SINGH : Your Majesty, the Rajputs have fallen on evil days, but they have not fallen so low. . . . . As long as there is a man left in Mewar to light a lamp, there will be a light in this mosque every evening.

SHAH JAHAN: Blessed is this large-heartedness of the Rajputs! I'm a Muslim, but I'm proud that three-fourths of the blood in my veins is the blood of the Rajput race. Maharana, give me your turban.

(*The Rana takes off his turban and gives it to the Emperor. The Emperor takes off*

his own turban and gives it to the Rana. Then he puts on the Rana's turban.)

SHAH JAHAN: Karn Singh, from today on you and I are brothers; and the Hindus and the Muslims will always be brothers in my eyes.

9. GOOD CANNOT BE NURSED BY EVIL

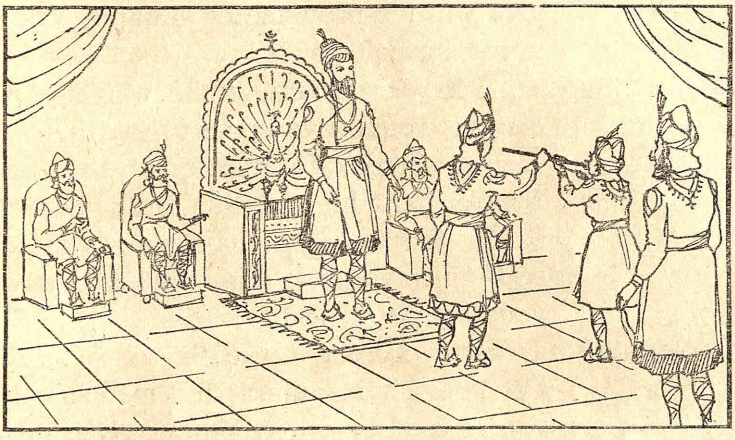
INTRODUCTION

Aurangzeb succeeded in deceiving everybody. He went on pretending that his heart was set on going to Mecca and that he was not at all interested in the empire of Hindustan, and gradually removed all the hurdles which lay in his way. He imprisoned the old Emperor Shahjahan in the Fort at Agra, had Shuja driven into the jungles of Arakan, betrayed Murad into prison, and, finally, had Dara murdered in cold blood. The Rajput chieftains, including Jaswant Singh, did not see any point in opposing him now and agreed to recognise him as the Emperor.

But even now Aurangzeb did not throw off his mask: He kept on saying that everything had been done by him in the cause of Islam and that the empire of Hindustan had been forced upon him by circumstances.

In the following scene the double-faced character of Aurangzeb is sharply contrasted with the noble nature of young Suleman, a worthy son of his philosopher father, Dara.

GOOD CANNOT BE NURSED BY EVIL



Characters

AURANGZEB	:	one of Shahjahan's four sons
JASWANT SINGH	:	the Maharaja of Jodhpur
SHAYISTA KHAN	:	a General of Aurangzeb's army
MIR JUMLA	:	Aurangzeb's minister
JAYA SINGH	:	the Maharaja of Jaipur
DILER KHAN	:	a General of Dara's army who went over to Aurangzeb's side
SULEMAN	:	the elder son of Dara
ZOHARAT	:	Dara's daughter

[*Aurangzeb's Court at Delhi. Aurangzeb is sitting on the*

throne. Mir Jumla, Shayista Khan, Jaswant Singh, Diler Khan and others are sitting in front of him.]

AURANGZEB : Maharaja Jaswant Singh, I promised to give you the province of Gujarat. You've got it, haven't you?

JASWANT SINGH : I have, sir; and so the whole of my army is yours. I've come to say this.

AURANGZEB : Jaswant Singh, if a man betrays me once I never trust him again. But Maharaja Jai Singh has been speaking for you, and so I'll give you one more chance to prove your loyalty to me.

JASWANT SINGH : Sir, you've got the throne of Delhi. I'm not worried about the means which you've used to get it. You've given peace to the country and it will be sinful for anyone to disturb this peace.

AURANGZEB : Maharaja Jaswant Singh, I'm pleased to hear this from you. I can perhaps trust your loyalty now.

JASWANT SINGH : Without any doubt, Your Majesty.

AURANGZEB : Thank you, Maharaja. (*turning to Mir Jumla*) Chief Minister, at present Sultan Shuja is under the protection of the ruler of Arakan, isn't he?

MIR JUMLA : Sir, I've driven him to the borders of Arakan.

AURANGZEB : You are, indeed, a courageous and brave man. I admire you for these quali-

ties. (*turning to Shayista Khan*) General, have you imprisoned Prince Muhammad in the Fort at Gwalior?

SHAYISTA KHAN : I have, Your Majesty.

AURANGZEB : Poor Prince ! But let the world see that I treat all my subjects alike. I'm not partial even to my own children and friends.

JAYA SINGH : There is no doubt about it, sir.

AURANGZEB : The death of the unfortunate Dara has taken the shine off my success. But all this has been for the glory of Islam. A man's religion is a much greater thing than his brothers or children. (*turning to Shayista Khan again*) General, is Murad all right in the Fort at Agra ?

SHAYISTA KHAN : Yes, Your Majesty.

AURANGZEB : Foolish brother ! you have lost the empire of Hindustan by your own folly, and you have prevented me from going to the holy city of Mecca. Well, God's will be done ! (*turning to Diler Khan*) Diler Khan, how were you able to arrest Prince Suleman?

DILER KHAN : When Raja Prithvi Singh of Srinagar refused to give shelter to the Prince's army, he had to send us away. Soon after this I got Your Majesty's orders and went to Raja Prithvi Singh. I told him that your Majesty loved Prince Suleman more

than your own son, but he refused to hand over the prince to me. The next day, however, he sent him away. I do not understand why he did this.

AURANGZEB : Unfortunate prince! What happened next ?

DILER KHAN : The prince set out for Tibet, but he did not know the way and there was no one to guide him. He spent the whole night wandering about the place and the next morning found himself near the gates of Srinagar again. I arrested him there. If I have done any wrong, may God punish me. I am a General of the Emperor and I had to obey his orders.

AURANGZEB : You're quite right, General. You've done no wrong. You did your duty. Bring the prince here.

DILER KHAN : Very well, sir. (*Goes out.*)

AURANGZEB : (*to Raja Jaya Singh*) Is it true that Jihan Khan has been murdered?

JAYA SINGH : Yes, Your Majesty. It is said that Jihan Khan's own subjects have murdered him.

AURANGZEB : It serves him right. God has justly punished the sinner. Here comes the prince!

(Diler Khan enters with Prince Suleman.)

AURANGZEB : Come in, Prince. Hullo! Look up. Why are you hanging your head?

SULEMAN : Emperor..... (*Stops.*)

AURANGZEB : Speak out, Prince. What do you want to say? You have nothing to fear. It was necessary to kill your father. Otherwise .....

SULEMAN : Your Majesty, I don't want an explanation from you. The victorious Aurangzeb does not owe an explanation to anybody. Who can judge you? Please kill me. Your dagger is sharp enough to kill me. Why should you try to poison it?

AURANGZEB : I shall not kill you. But.....

SULEMAN : Your Majesty, I know what this 'but' of yours means. It means that you want to give me a punishment which is more terrible than death. There is nothing more frightful for a man than the Emperor's intention to do a painful thing to him. And I know that if there are two ways of doing it, you will choose the more painful way. Sir, your kindness is much more painful than your revenge. Now let me hear what you have to say—'but'—

AURANGZEB : Do not be frightened, Prince.

SULEMAN : No? And why not? Oh God! how can a man talk so smoothly and at the same time be such a great devil?

AURANGZEB : Suleman, I do not want to torture you.

Tell me if you want anything. I'll grant your request.

SULEMAN : I only want you to torture me as much as you can. I do not want any favour from my father's murderer. Think upon what you have done. You have killed your brother—the flesh of your flesh and the blood of your blood! Was he not born of your own mother? Did he not grow up with you under the loving care of the same father? Could there be anyone so near and dear to you as he? And yet you killed him! You and he played together, studied together and ate together. He was your companion and friend. You should have fought for him; you should have suffered for him. But you killed him! And what a brother he was to you! If you had told him that you wanted the empire, he would gladly have given it to you. He never treated you unkindly; he never did you any wrong. Everybody liked him and loved him. But you killed him! Will you be able to face him on the day of judgment? O you murderer! Tyrant! Satan! Do you want me to ask you for a favour? I spit upon your favours.

AURANGZEB : As you wish, then. I order your death.

(*Gets down from the throne.*) Say your last prayers, Suleman.

(*Zoharatunnisa, dressed as a boy, enters swiftly.*)

ZOHARAT : Say your last prayers, Aurangzeb. (*Aims a loaded gun at him.*)

SULEMAN : Who is it? Zoharatunnisa! (*Catches hold of her hand.*)

ZOHARAT : Leave me alone. Leave me alone. Who are you? I'll kill this sinner today. Leave me alone.

SULEMAN : What's this, Zoharat? Be patient. The return for blood is not blood. Good cannot be nursed by evil. If I had wished to kill him, I would have killed him here by now. But murder is a very great sin.

ZOHARAT : You coward! You unworthy son of your father! Get out of my way. I will take revenge for the murder of my father. Leave me alone. And you! You hypocrite! Robber! Murderer!.....! (*Faints and drops on the floor.*)

AURANGZEB : O brave, noble prince! go. I will not kill you. Shayista Khan, take him to the Fort at Gwalior; and take Dara's daughter to my father in the Fort at Agra.

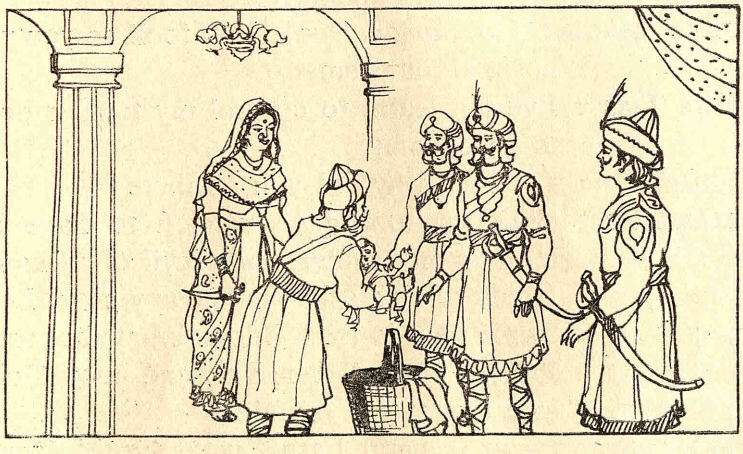
10. THE FORESIGHT OF DURGA DAS

INTRODUCTION

Jaswant Singh, the Maharaja of Marwar, had gone over to Aurangzeb's side after the murder of Dara, and had fought and won many battles for him. Aurangzeb, however, never trusted him fully and was afraid of him. He wanted to get rid of him and to kill or imprison his sons and queen and conquer Marwar. He sent Jaswant Singh to Afghanistan and had him killed there; then he had Jaswant Singh's elder son Prithvi Singh killed by poisoning his food; and now he wanted to get rid of Jaswant Singh's queen Mahamaya and her younger son Ajit Singh who was an infant.

In the following scene we see how Durga Das, a brave General of Marwar, rescued the queen and her infant son.

THE FORESIGHT OF DURGA DAS



Characters

DURGA DAS	:	a General of Marwar
SAMAR DAS	:	Durga Das's brother
VIJAI SINGH	:	nobles of Jodhpur
SUBAL SINGH	:	
MUKUND SINGH	:	
KASIM	:	a loyal servant of Jaswant Singh
MAHAMAYA	:	Jaswant Singh's queen

The infant son and little daughter of Mahamaya
Five Rajput ladies

[*The Palace of Jaswant Singh at Delhi. The time is afternoon. Durga Das' brother, Samar Das, and the nobles of Jodhpur are standing on the veranda on the first floor. They are greatly excited.*]

VIJAYA SINGH : (*to Samar Das*) You fool! so you've upset all our plans!

SAMAR DAS : I've not learnt to control my temper nor to be cunning.

MUKUND SINGH : Then why did you go there ?

SAMAR DAS : With one object. I wanted to have a look at that sinner, that devil of a man. I didn't go to ask him for anything. Let Durga Das do that. I don't know that art. I'm not at all clever. I depend upon God and this sword of mine.

SUBAL SINGH : The General hasn't yet returned from the court. I'm worried.

VIJAYA SINGH : Do you think he has been deceived and arrested?

SAMAR DAS : (*excitedly*) Is it possible?

SUBAL SINGH : It can't be. Our General never does a thing thoughtlessly.

MUKUND SINGH : In these evil days of ours we depend upon him alone. Listen, that's the sound of the bugle. Look! Here comes our General riding furiously!

VIJAYA SINGH : Thank God, he has come. Let's go down and listen to the news he has brought.

SUBAL SINGH : We needn't go down. Let the General come up here. (*Outside, the voice of Durga Das—"Get ready! Make haste!"*)

SAMAR DAS : Ready ! What for ?

SUBAL SINGH : Look, Durga Das has come up. (*Durga Das enters perspiring.*)

DURGA DAS : Get ready, all of you.

SAMAR DAS : What for ?

DURGA DAS : For your own defence.

VIJAYA SINGH : Let's hear the news you've brought.

DURGA DAS : There is no time to give the details. The Emperor will not let Jaswant Singh's queen leave Delhi. He wants to arrest her. We've to save her and her son. The Mughal soldiers are about to besiege this house.

VIJAYA SINGH : What shall we do ?

DURGA DAS : Let's get ready to lay down our lives. Are you prepared to die for the Maharani ?

ALL : We're all prepared.

DURGA DAS : But that's not enough. We've to take the Maharani and the prince to a place of safety.

(*The queen of Jaswant Singh enters.*)

QUEEN : (*calmly*) The queen of Jaswant Singh fears nothing. Don't worry about her, Durga Das. Save her child, the light of the house of Jodhpur. Save this family. There is no danger for the queen. She

knows how to die. Save the child, Durga Das !

DURGA DAS : We'll do all we can to save the life of the prince, Maharani. Please bring him.

(*The queen goes out.*)

DURGA DAS : Vijaya Singh, bring Kasim along.

(*Vijaya goes out.*)

DURGA DAS : There's a basket for sweets outside. Bring it here.

SAMAR DAS : Basket for sweets ! Why ?

DURGA DAS : Dear brother, let's not lose time. Go and get it. (*Samar Das goes out.*)

(*Kasim enters with Vijaya Singh.*)

KASIM : (*bowing to Durga Das*) What can I do for you, chief ?

DURGA DAS : Kasim, you've a very important job to do. You've to save the life of the prince. The Mughal soldiers will be here in a few minutes. They'll take away the prince. We can't let them do it. You must save his life.

KASIM : I'll do what you say to save the prince's life.

(*Samar Das enters with the basket for sweets.*)

DURGA DAS : Put the prince into this basket, cover it with a piece of cloth and take it to a safe place. You're a Musalman, so no one will suspect you. Do you follow me ?

KASIM : Where shall I take the prince ?

DURGA DAS : Can you see that far-off temple ?

KASIM : Yes, I can.

DURGA DAS : Go there and hand over the prince to the priest. Then you needn't worry. He knows what to do. Be quick. The Mughal soldiers are nearly here.

KASIM : Very well, chief. I'll give even my life for the prince.

DURGA DAS : I know that, Kasim, or I wouldn't have asked you.

(*The queen enters with the infant prince in her arms.*)

DURGA DAS : Maharani, hand over the prince to Kasim. There is no danger. I say this.

QUEEN : Durga Das, I have no fears if you say so. Kasim, you are a God-fearing man, aren't you ?

KASIM : Don't be afraid, Maharani Sahiba. The prince's life will be dearer to me than my own life.

QUEEN : (*Takes the prince from Kasim's arms and kisses him.*) My darling child !

DURGA DAS : Please give the child to Kasim. Let's not lose time.

QUEEN : (*Kisses the prince and hands him over to Kasim.*) God is our witness, Kasim.

KASIM : I pray to God to be our witness. Do not fear, Maharani Sahiba. (*Kasim puts the*

prince into the basket, covers it with a piece of cloth, and then puts the basket on his head.)

SAMAR DAS : What will happen if Kasim is caught on the way ?

QUEEN : Kasim, take this dagger. If you're caught on the way, kill the prince with it. Let no one take him alive to Aurangzeb. (*Gives him the dagger.*)

DURGA DAS : Do not fear, Maharani. Kasim, go. Go out from the back door. Come on, I'll show you the way.
(*Kasim goes with the basket on his head. Durga Das and the queen follow him.*)

VIJAYA SINGH : Durga Das, I admire your presence of mind.

SUBAL SINGH : I'm sure Durga Das had made all the arrangements before he went to see the Emperor.

MUKUND SINGH : Look, the Mughal soldiers are coming.

VIJAYA SINGH : It's a huge army !

SUBAL SINGH : And Diler Khan, the chief of the Mughal army, is there himself !
(*Durga Das enters.*)

DURGA DAS : There is nothing to worry about now. The Mughal army has arrived. Now be prepared to die.

VIJAYA SINGH : What about the ladies ?

DURGA DAS : I'm going to make suitable arrangements for them too. We should have thought about it before going to the Emperor. Call the ladies, Samar.

(*Samar goes out.*)

MUKUND SINGH : Look, the Mughal army has arrived !

VIJAYA SINGH : They've started firing.

SUBAL SINGH : They're trying to break the gates.

MUKUND SINGH : They're making a fire. Perhaps they'll set fire to this house.

DURGA DAS : We can't make any arrangements for the ladies now. There is no time.

(*Samar Das enters with the ladies.*)

DURGA DAS : Mothers, sisters and daughters ! today I had to make very cruel arrangements for you. You must die by burning yourselves.

AN ELDERLY LADY : It's nothing new for us, General. We're the wives and daughters of brave Kshatriya warriors. We know how to die.

DURGA DAS : Mothers, there is no alternative. We're going out to die. You get into that room. There is a big heap of gun-powder in it. Stand on it; and then you know what to do.

ANOTHER LADY : We'll set fire to it. Sisters, let's go.

(*The queen enters. Her hair is untidy.*)

LADIES : Long live the Queen !

QUEEN : Long live ? We'll live long in death. You're going to your death ! Go ! Go to

Heaven ! I won't come with you today. Today I'll save myself if I can. I wanted to die now, Durga Das; but, no. I'm not going to die today. I hear someone from above saying to me, "Your time hasn't come yet. You still have a job to do." I have to stay back. Durga Das, save my life today if you can. If I am saved, I'll light a fire in the whole of the country—a fire which will not be put out by the waters of all the seven seas !

DURGA DAS : Maharani, we'll lay down our lives to save yours. Mothers, please go. The main gate is about to break.

(*All the ladies except the queen go.*)

QUEEN : Then, let's go, Durga Das. But wait. Let me bring my little daughter along. I won't leave her I'll carry her in my arms. You—all of you—please get along (*Goes in.*)

DURGA DAS : Samar !

SAMAR DAS : Brother !

DURGA DAS : Let's go out to die.

SAMAR DAS : Come along.

DURGA DAS : Wait a minute. Let's see the end of the ladies. (*There is a terrible explosion in a remote room.*) That's it. All finished. Let's go now.

SAMAR DAS : Come on.

DURGA DAS : Samar ! we may not see each other again. Let me embrace you. (*The two brothers embrace each other, and the curtain falls.*)

This is good book

This is a very very good book.



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