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How Parikshit Attained Liberation

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Abhimanyu was Arjuna's son. Parikshit was Abhimanyu's son. He ruled Hastinapura efficiently. One day he went to the forest for hunting. Getting tired after sometime, he went in search of water. He found an Ashram after a long trek.

A little while after, Sameeka's son Sringi returned to the Ashram. He was wild with anger when he saw the scene.

Let Takshaka, the king of the snakes, kill within seven days the king who insulted my father thus.

Sage Sameeka was meditating there. Sir, I am very thirsty. Please give me water to drink.

When the sage got up from his meditation and learnt about the curse...

My son, the Lord Sri Krishna Himself protected Parikshit. when he was in his mother's womb. What a pity you have cursed him! At least send word to him at once. Let your curse lead to his lasting good.

When informed of the curse, the king deeply regretted his impulsive behaviour. He turned his mind to God.

O Lord! I have only seven more days to live. I take refuge in You. Grant me liberation.
He crowned his son Janamejaya as king and retired to the banks of the Ganga to be immersed in God-thought. Hearing the news, many sages visited him.

O Sages! Takshaka will come at any time to bite me. As long as I am alive, bless me that I ceaselessly think of the Supreme Lord.

Let it be so.

O Sage! Blessed am I to hear the glories of the Lord from your holy mouth. May you attain the highest good.

Suka narrated the glorious sports of the Divine Incarnations. Hearing the glories of the Lord, Parikshit was in great joy, with his heart melting in devotion.

On the seventh day, two brahmans met each other on their way to the Ganga.

O brahmin! May I know where you are proceeding to?

O king! The Lord's name alone yields good at all times. If you dwell in God-thought till your life departs, it will give you everlasting happiness. Hence, I shall narrate to you Srimad Bhagavata. Listen to the glories of the God's Incarnations with devotion.

Then came there the great but young sage Suka, the son of Vyasa. He was reverentially received by Parikshit and others. Then, all seated themselves to hear from Suka words of wisdom.

Dear Sir, I understand Parikshit will be killed shortly by Takshaka. If I can save him from the poison, I am sure to be rewarded with silver and gold.
Can you remove the poison of Takehaka?

By my Guru’s grace, I can cure even one poisoned by Adisesha.

O brahmin! I am Takehaka in disguise. I shall inject poison to this banyan tree. Let me see whether you can revive to life the dead tree.

Takehaka bit the banyan tree

The tree was reduced to ashes. The brahmin sprinkled water on it and the tree came back to life.
Takshaka was surprised to see the power of the brahmin.

O brahmin! I bow down to your powers. I give you now itself more wealth than what the king can offer. Allow fate to take its course and you please turn back.

What you say is true. What you gave is enough. I'll go back.

Before anybody could even observe, he reverted to his snake form and bit Parikshit, who was in deep contemplation. The king fell down dead.

Then Takshaka proceeded to the king's place, again disguised as a brahmin.

Narayana! Narayane!

There goes up the Divine light of his soul!

A shower of flowers over his soul!

Ah! Shringi's curse came true!

Parikshit attained liberation, because he heard during his last days the glories of the Divine Lord with supreme devotion.
**SRI BHANUDASA**

Sri Bhanudasa was a great devotee. He lived in Pandarpur, where he owned a textile shop. He lived a virtuous life, constantly thinking of God.

Bhanudasa’s shop.... Sir, look at this. The cost price of this is only five copper pieces. You give me a little more than that. I don’t want much profit.

Another time.... This Saree’s texture is very good. But it is of old stock. So, let me reduce its price.

He is a true devotee. So he does not tell any lie.

As he was truthful the other merchants always grumbled about him. He is always truthful, and sells the material without much profit.

Not only affects our business but we are losing heavily. Such a truthful person should not enter the business line.

Come. It is better we discuss the matter with him.

All the merchants came to his shop.

Come! Come! Please be seated.

Don’t bother about that. If you continue your business in this manner, we all have to close down our shops.

We warn you. You should do business like us. Otherwise it is better that you close your shop.
Friends, money should not be the main concern. We should worship God and lead a virtuous life. I am not bothered about anything else. Please excuse me.

On an Ekadasi day...

Brother, there is a special Bhajan nearby. I wish to attend it. Kindly have an eye on my shop.

No, I cannot. I have my own business to look after.

But Bhanudas went for bhajan without bothering to close the shop.

Let God take care of it.

Seeing him absent from the shop, the other shop-keepers...

Bhanudas has gone to Bhajan. Before he returns, let us steal all the clothes from his shop and...

Let us dump it in that old well.

That is right.

Bhanudas in Bhajan group.

Vittal! Vittal! Jaya Jaya Vittal Panduranga! Pandurnatha!
When the shop-keepers returned after dumping the garments in the well, they found great confusion near the market.

Thieves! Thieves! Alas! Everything lost!

The thieves took away all the garments from the other shops. They beat severely whoever opposed.

Alas! Don’t beat. We are doomed. I will die.

After they were beaten up, they sat worried.

We reap what we sow. God has punished us for our malicious act.

Let us apologise to Bhanudasa. Bhanudasa was returning from the Bhaian.

Ah! What is all this? All the shops have been looted. Even my shop is empty. It appears my friends, who are approaching me had been beaten up black and blue.

They all bowed down to him and said...

Please forgive us.

We harmed you and God has punished us.

Is it so? You have repented for your deeds. Lord Pandurang will forgive you and shower His grace on you soon. Don’t worry, God is compassionate.

Your garments can be recovered from the dilapidated well.

Thieves stole away all our garments. Gone! Everything gone.
One day, Dronacharya, the Guru of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, was on the way to the river Ganga for an oil bath. The disciples too accompanied him.

When they were proceeding to the Ganga bank...

Oh! We have forgotten to bring the oil vessel. What to do now?

We can ask Arjuna to pass on this information to our Guru.

Why not? I shall tell him.

After Arjuna's departure, Duryodhana said to Dushasana...

Oh brother, had we informed this lapse to Drona, he would have been wild with anger at us. Since Arjuna communicated the news, he was very calm. Did you notice it?

Yes brother, Arjuna is his favourite disciple.
Drona overheard the conversation. 

When they were waiting under a banyan tree, Drona wrote a mantra on the soil with his arrow.

I should teach a lesson to those two.

O Prince! This mantra is very powerful. Uttering this, I shall shoot an arrow at the leaves. See what happens.

It pierced every single leaf of the tree and then fell down.

After some time, Arjuna was returning with the oil vessel. He saw on the way the mantra written on the ground. He also noticed that all the leaves had been pierced.

Did you see? All right! We shall now move to the river bank.

In my absence, our Guru has taught a new lesson to the princes. Why did he do it? There must be some reason behind it.
After thinking for a while, he repeated that Mantra and shot an arrow. What a wonder! It pierced another hole in all the leaves.

With great satisfaction, he went to the river and handed over the oil vessel to his Guru.

Drona finished his bath. When they were all returning, they were astonished to find a second hole in all the leaves in the same banyan tree.

Drona smiled meaningfully.

Do you see, Duryodhana? None of you thought of learning or using the new Mantra. Arjuna had that eagerness. That is why, he is dear to me. So don't be jealous of him.

Arjuna! Is it your work?

Yea, Sir! Forgive me. Uttering the Mantra, I shot the arrow and learnt a new lesson.
Markandeya

Maruthuvathi was married to Mrkandu, a great Tapasvi. She was very pious and served her husband devotedly. They lived in a forest hermitage, leading an austere life. They were childless.

Once Mrkandu went to the sacred Kashi, bathed in the holy Ganga at Manikarnika Ghat and worshipped Viswanatha, Visalakshi and other gods and goddesses in the various temples.

Staying thereafter near the temple of Lord Viswanatha, Mrkandu performed great penance and contemplated on Shiva.

Pleased by his devotion, Lord Shiva appeared!

Ask for a boon! I shall grant!

O Lord! Grant me a son.

Do you want a son who would live for a hundred years but would be mediocre, indisciplined and characterless? Or do you choose a boy who would live only for sixteen years but would be good-natured, well disciplined and greatly devoted to Me?
I want only a child who would be ever devoted to You and worship You. I don't mind if his life be short.

After sometime Maruthuvathi gave birth to a son. Mrikanandu celebrated the happy occasion by distributing a lot of gifts in charity.

Your boon is granted.

Lord Brahma appeared...

Name the infant as Markandeya.

Markandeya grew as a pious and well disciplined boy, greatly devoted to Shiva. He completed the study of the Vedas. He was nearing the age of sixteen. The parents were deeply worried as his life would shortly come to an end.

They explained to him why they were grieving. Markandeya consoled them...

What is bothering you both that you are so much worried?

Don't worry, by the grace of Lord Shiva, I shall overcome even Yama and return. Bless me.

Going to Kashi, Markandeya bathed in Manikarnika Ghat. He wholeheartedly worshipped Lord Vishwanatha with flowers.
Yama, getting confirmation from Chitrangada that the moment of death for Markandeya had come, called his minister Kalan.

O Kalan! Go and take the life out of Markandeya.

O Lord, I am afraid to go near Markandeya.

O Lord! I am afraid to go near Markandeya.

But Markandeya refused to go, relying on the worship of Lord Shiva. So, Kalan too returned unsuccessfully to Yama. Then Yama himself, in anger, came to Kashi to take away the life of Markandeya.

O Markandeya! Follow me!

O Child! Don't fear Yama. Continue your worship.

Kalan reached Kashi in no time. The destined moment of death has come to you. So according to the command of Lord Yama, I have come to take your life. Please follow me.

Lord Shiva appeared.
Yama threw the death noose on Markandeya!

Lord Shiva, appeared out of the Linga and kicked Yama. Yama fell down from his vehicle, the buffalo.

Markandeya praised the glory of Shiva.

O Yama! You should not go anywhere near any of my devotees.

Markandeya! I bless you to live for ever as a boy of sixteen years.

What we have to learn from this story which appears in ‘Skanda Purana’, is that by whole-hearted devotion to the Supreme God even destiny can be overcome.

As you command, Oh Lord!
After the death of Surapadma, his friend Dumbasura was coming by that way, seeking the grace of Lord Muruga. He met Agastya and bowed to him.

O Sage! Please bless me. I want to spend my days in the service of Lord Muruga.

If you carry these two peaks to my abode, Lord Muruga will bless you.

I am blessed. I shall certainly carry out your wish.
He tried his best to carry the two mounts. He was, however, shocked to find that he could not even lift them, which were so easily carried by Agastyva, a little earlier.

O Sage! I have moved several bigger hills earlier. Now I am unable even to lift these two. Grant me enough strength to carry them to your abode.

Idumba was surprised to see the power of the Mantra taught by the sage.

Idumba worshipped Muruga as instructed. As a result, eight snakes appeared and turned into the form of ropes. The Brahma Danci became a huge stick.

Idumba, tie four ropes each to either end of the stick, tie their other end to the two mounts and lift them.
Idumba lifted the peaks slowly like lifting a Kavadi.

By the grace of Lord Muruga proceed south I shall come afterwards.

When he reached Thiruvvairankudi, the hills began to press him down. So he placed them on the ground to rest for a while.

After resting a while, he tried to lift them again but could not.

A boy standing under a Viiva tree smiled at him teasingly, noticing his helplessness.

Hum... Hum...

You naughty boy, why do you laugh?
Idumba, in anger, sprang at the boy. But surprisingly he fell at the feet of the boy and he died. His wife rushed to the spot.

The boy resumed his true form as Lord Muruga and revived Idumba.

Idumba! Let these two hills remain here. You will guard the foot of these hills. Just as you carried these peaks on your shoulders, let my devotees carry Kavadi to please me. Before climbing the hill let them first bow down to you.

Idumba and his wife prostrated before Lord Muruga.

According to Muruga's command, Idumba, even today, guards that place.

Muruga! Muruga! We are very fortunate.
Jayadeva, immersed in contemplation on Lord Krishna, started composing the Gitagovinda in hymns called Ashtapadi. Padmavathi, his wife served him devotedly during this period.

Jayadeva returned after his bath. He looked at the manuscript and was surprised to see the composition completed from where he had left off.

He composed eighteen Ashtapadis. While composing the nineteenth, he was to write on the episode wherein Lord Krishna supplicates to Radha. Somehow Jayadeva was reluctant to write on that. He closed the manuscript and went for bath.

Meanwhile Lord Krishna Himself came in the form of Jayadeva and asked his wife Padmavathi to bring the manuscript. Immediately he completed what was left out.

Jayadeva, the author of Gitagovinda was born in a village near Puri. He was greatly devoted to Lord Krishna. Besides he was a born poet.

I got a sudden inspiration. I have returned without finishing my bath to complete the Ashtapadi verse I should forget.

Padmavathi! Who wrote this stanza?

What a strange question? You only came back half way through your bath and asked for the manuscript and completed the work.
When did I come before completing my bath? Oh Krishna! Govinda! It is all your leela. Padmavathi! You are really fortunate! The Lord came in my form and gave you His vision, which I have not had so far.

Jayadeva's Ashtapadi became popular everywhere and was praised by one and all. So one day king Sathyaki came with his wife to pay his respects to Jayadeva.

Once a relative of the king died. His wife decided to enter the pyre. The whole city including the king had assembled to witness that event. That day Padmavathi met the queen.

May Lord bless you!

However much a wife may love her husband, can she give up her life naturally? It is not possible.

Are you not going to witness the great event?

What is the greatness here? As soon as she heard the death of her husband, she too must have died naturally. Why this deliberate effort to give up life?

Why not? It will certainly happen like that in the case of a wife who looks upon her husband as God.
Is it really so? I would like to test your statement.

Shortly she got an opportunity. Once Jayadeva accompanied the king to the forest.

Who is there? Go and call Padmavathi.

Look, while I am chatting with Padmavathi, you should report as if you are coming from the forest bringing the sad news of the death of Jayadeva.

When the queen was talking with Padmavathi, the soldier came running, and wept loudly.

O queen! Jayadeva has been killed by a tiger in the forest.

All right!
Hearing that tragic news, Padmavathi fell down and died instantly.

Oh! She has really died! What shall I say to the king and to Jayadeva?

Jayadeva then sang in front of his wife's body the Ashapadi which was composed by the Lord Himself. What a miracle! Padmavathi got up as if from sleep.

The king and the queen fell at their feet.

When the king and Jayadeva returned, the king was shocked to hear the happening from the queen. In deep remorse he was about to kill himself with his sword.

Wait! Oh king! What a rash act you are about to commit?

It is all the play of Lord Krishna. May God bless you!

Forgive us for our folly, oh devoted couple!
On a particular day he was to perform the obsequies of his ancestors. The usual tradition was to feed the brahmins on that occasion. But Eknath instead went to the poor and low-caste people.

Eknath was a great devotee.

Tomorrow there is a ceremony at our house. You all should come and give me the privilege of feeding you.

The next.

We did not expect such a big feast.

Please eat to your heart's content. It is a privilege to serve you all.

The brahmins of the place came to know about this event. They were furious and went in a group to Eknath's house.

How is it you have broken the tradition of feeding the brahmins on the ceremony day?

Your act deserves condemnation.

What punishment should be meted out to him?

He must be excommunicated unless he atones for his sin by proper expiatory rites.

He was taken to the river for performing expiatory rites.

Eknath merely submitted to their orders.
He bathed in the river. He smeared his body with the sacred ash. The brahmins chanted the sacred mantras.

Yan me voca manasa...
Imam me gange, yamune Saraswati.

Then...

Sir, who is Eknath? I want to see him immediately.

Look there. The one who is standing in the water is Eknath. Who is this leper? Why has he come here?

Sir, you alone should protect me.
Who are you?

I have come from the village of Thiriyambakeshwar. What service can I do for you?

I am a devotee of Lord Shiva. I worship Him regularly. Yesterday He appeared in my dream and directed me to meet you.
He said in my dream that you have accumulated a lot of Purya, by feeding the poor and the low-caste on the ceremony day. If you part with a little of that Purya, my disease will be cured.

Is it so? Right now I gladly part with the Purya if it can cure your disease.

Ek Nath took a handful of water from the river and sprinkled it on the leper.

Oh! What a great miracle! The leper has been made whole.

How bright the leper looks now!

What a wonder it is!

We have committed a great sin by maligning him.

Please forgive us.

It is all the will of God. Let us live in total surrender to God.
THE GREATNESS OF WORK

In a forest near Karmapuri lived a pious brahmin. When his daughter came of age he approached the king.

O king! I have to perform my daughter’s marriage. Be kind enough to help me.

O king! Excuse me. That amount will not be sufficient for the marriage.

The king somehow could not get angry. He wanted at all costs to satisfy the brahmin.

Then take twenty thousand.

Looking at the face of the brahmin, the king understood that he was still not satisfied.

Call the treasurer immediately.

I am already here. O king!
The king uttered something in the treasurer’s ears.

Oh! The king has ordered to give half his treasure!

What a wonder! How the brahmin came to know of the king’s order.

As you please.

Then, if you so desire, I can offer you half of my kingdom.

Do you know, why all these offers are insufficient? All the wealth you now have is only an inheritance. If you can give me even a small amount earned by your own hands, that will be enough.

The brahmin did not move from the place. Seeing that...

Cashier, open to him the whole treasury. Let his daughter’s marriage be done on a grand scale.

O king! I appreciate your generosity. But pardon me, if I say that even this is not sufficient.

That night the king went in disguise in search of a job. A blacksmith was busy in a shop.

Can you offer me a job?

O! You want from my earning. Then please come tomorrow. Let me work and earn meanwhile.

You have come at the right time!
The king and others saw the brahmin leaving with great satisfaction.

The brahmin accepted it with great delight.

The king said to his councillors, "O brahmin! You have made me realise THE GREATNESS OF WORK."

O king! I am now a millionaire! You can take from me as much wealth as you require for your treasury. Money earned by hard and honest labour may be small, but see how great is its fruit.

The brahmin performed his daughter's marriage on a lavish style. Even the king attended the marriage with his courtiers.

The next morning, the brahmin's wife noticed two trees in the exact place where she have earned by hard labour.

What a great wonder! The tree is full of gold coins, gems, pearls...

This will be hundred times more valuable than the King's treasure.

The whole night both of them worked very hard.

What a fool you are! Refusing half the kingdom, you have brought two worthless copper coins. Of what use will they be? Let me throw them into the ditch.
When the sage said this, the vision of this incident unfolded before his mental eye.

He is ignoring me. How can he have a son? The only way out for him is to worship my daughter Nandini and please her.

The King and the Queen prostrated at the feet of the sage.

Dlipa, Nandini is our cow. She will come here at any time now. Both you and your wife should serve and worship her. Your problem will then be solved.

At that time, Nandini was returning to the hermitage with her calf.

You are not aware of the curse of Kamadhenu. Those who disrespect the great cannot live happily.

Gurudev did such an event happen? I am sorry for my mistake. I have suffered the consequence so long. Please bless us that we serve and worship Nandini with love.

Ah! What a divine beauty!

The mother cow and the calf are a feast to the eyes.
From that day, the emperor and his wife bathed the cow, decorated it and worshipped it with flowers and served it the best of fruits. The king followed it wherever it went and looked after it with great care.

Twenty-one days passed in this way. On the twenty-second day, Nandini went by a different hill path to graze. The king was fascinated by the natural beauty of the place. Just then he heard the agonizing cry of the cow at a distance.

Hearing the cry Dhipa ran towards the spot. There he saw...

Dhipa bent the bow and drew the arrow. Just then he felt as though his arm is paralysed.

Surprisingly, the lion began to speak in a human voice...

What is this? I am unable to move my arms.

O lion! I am the king of the land. It is my duty to protect my subjects. There is no cow in this world equal to this Nandini. Hence leave it. Instead you can kill and eat me.

O king! You will not be able to shoot the arrow at me because I am the servant of Lord Shiva. I shall kill this cow and eat it to appease my hunger.

Amma...ma!
The lion released the cow. Dilipa fearlessly went near the lion and sat prostrating before it, with closed eyes.

He was expecting the lion to pounce on him. Instead flowers spell on him.

Get up, Dilipa.

Dilipa looked around. The lion had disappeared. Only Nandini looking at him with compassion, spoke in a human voice, like the lion.

O Dilipa, it was only a magical lion that came to test you. By the grace of sage Vasishtha, none can harm me. I am pleased by your spirit of service and sacrifice.

Dilipa bowed down to Nandini.

Revered Nandini! Bless me with a son who would bring credit to the Solar dynasty.

Both of you, drink my milk. Your wife will give birth to a worthy son soon.

Accordingly with the blessings of Vasishtha both of them drank the milk of Nandini. The very next year, Sudakshina gave birth to a worthy son named Raghunath. The dynasty came to be known by this name from this time. Later on the Divine Lord took birth as Sri Rama in the Raghuv dynasty and was therefore also called Raghava.