

WHITE CLOUDS FLOATING ON THE HORIZON
Awan Putih Mengambang di Cakrawala

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Andini's Holiday Travel

Andini jumped over two steps with a sobbing breath. In her heart, she blamed herself. In fact her mother had awakened her so many times to quickly prepare herself. Andini had just opened her eyes, peering at the clock in her room.

"Ah. It's 04.00 o'clock, still too early," she muttered as she hugged her pillow and faced the wall.

It was her fault. Andini was forced to rush when her mother was ready to go and yelled at her who was still hugging the pillow. The journey from home to Gambir Station took a long time about one and a half hours. It was possible if people wouldn't go to work at the time. However, Andini and her mother managed to arrive at Gambir Station just ten minutes before the departure of Taksaka train to Yogyakarta. She and her mother would go down in Purwokerto, the station before Yogyakarta, precisely at the foot of Mount Slamet.

Mount Slamet was located in the northwest of Purbalingga City, with a distance of about 30 km. The mountain was located at a position of 7 ° 14.30' South latitude and 109 ° 12.30' East longitude. The entire area of this mountain fell into the border of

five districts, namely Banyumas, Pemalang, Banjarnegara, Brebes, and Purbalingga in Central Java, Indonesia. At the foot of Mount Slamet there were quite famous tourist areas in Central Java, namely Batu Raden and Guci Hot Water Bathing place. The tourist object was very wide because there were also some other tourist sites interesting to visit, among them Botanical Garden, *Curug Gede*, *Pancuran Pitu*, *Pancuran Telu*, *Wana Wisata*, *Telaga Sunyi*, and *Taman Kaloka Widya Mandala*.

The mountain where her grandparents lived had many stories. Andini always missed the fairy tales told by her grandfather about Mount Slamet. The most famous mystery of Mount Slamet was the existence of two large trees lining the path of Bambang so as to form an entrance that was associated with the entrance to the magical kingdom of Mount Slamet. On the climbing route of Bambang a post called *Pos Samarantu* would also be encountered that was known as the most haunted place.

Meanwhile, when climbing through the Guci route, her grandfather once told that dwarf creature often appeared around the plaza of Mount Slamet. This dwarf creature was once mentioned as a lost climber and trapped in the forest unable to return. When there were climbers who spent the night in the plaza of Mount Slamet and left food outside the tent, this dwarf creature would take the food unnoticed by the owner of food. Strange stories had developed in the community area. Andini had heard

the story from her grandfather. The longing to meet her grandfather was very disturbing.

The most practical way to grandfather's house was to take the train. There was also a bus, but through a winding road and sometimes jammed because it would pass a number of train tracks. Purwokerto Station was a railway station located on the edge of Purwokerto City center, Banyumas Regency, precisely in Kober Village, West Purwokerto District, which was in the management of Operation Area V of Purwokerto. As the largest station, almost all trains passing through the southern route of Jakarta stopped at this station. The station was equipped with a very clean locomotive depot that became the best train depot in Central Java. The Purwokerto station was built in 1917-1918 by the Staatsspoorwegen (SS) railway company. The older station in Purwokerto was in the center of Purwokerto, built by Serajoedal Stoomtram Maatschappij in 1893-1896. The station was built on the Cirebon-Kroya line and in 1923, the Purwokerto station was connected to East Purwokerto Station, allowing travel from Jakarta to connect to Wonosobo or Purbalingga. Unfortunately, in 1980 the Serajoedal Stoomtram Maatschappij was deactivated.

Purwokerto was a very beautiful city. Purwokerto was the capital of Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Various nicknames were given to the city located on the southern path of Central Java starting from the city of tourism, the city of chips,

transit city, the city of education to the pension city because so many state officials who retired and finally settled in this city. In this city, there was also a museum of Bank Rakyat Indonesia, because the bank was first established here and the founder of this bank was Raden Bei Aria Wirjaatmadja of Purwokerto. Andini's grandfather used to be one of the officials at the bank.

Andini was the only granddaughter of *eyang* from her mother. She was like her mother, the only child, no brothers and sisters, while from her father, Andini had many cousins. Her father was the sixth of nine sons who were all male and on average they had more than three children. Her father was from Semarang.

Both parents of Andini's father had long passed away. Now she was granddaughter of her mother's parents. *Eyang kakung*, Andini's greeting to her grandfather, was very indulgent. He had retired. He chose to live outside Purwokerto, namely Purbalingga. The city was not so far from Purwokerto. He had a very large clove and pineapple gardens. Not to mention a few hectares of rice fields that always produced tons of rice if harvested, as well as coconut plantation located at the foot of Mount Slamet. Andini was very happy if her grandfather took her to the clove garden. Especially, if the clove trees were filled with flowers. She would run to and fro to pick up the falling clove flowers and the aroma of cloves seemed to make Andini lulled in a calm and peaceful land that could forget the crowded life that she always saw in

Jakarta. Clove tree was a perennial plant that could grow with a height of 10-20 m, with an oval-shaped leaves that bloomed on the shoots. The fruit stalk was initially green, and was red when the flowers were blooming. Cloves would be harvested when they reached 1.5-2 cm in length. Cloves could be used as spices, either in their whole form or in powder form. Spices were used in Europe and Asia. Especially in Indonesia, cloves were used as clove cigarette material. Cloves were also used as incense materials in China and Japan. Clove oil was used as aromatherapy and to treat toothache. The finely ground cloves can be used as a vegetable pesticide and were effective for controlling *fusarium* stem rot by giving 50-100 grams of dried cloves per plant.

Andini's grandfather once told about the history of cloves. In the fourth century, the Han Dynasty leader from China ordered everyone to chew cloves before approaching him to make his breath fragrant. Her grandfather once told about cloves. Andini remembered the story. In ancient times, there was a quite prosperous and great kingdom. The people were rich from rice crops and other abundant crops. Unfortunately, the residents were ungrateful to the nature that had given them food and the abundance of living necessities. They did not keep the nature clean and liked to ruin it. They cut down trees at will and did not replant. One day, God sent a plague to them by making their breath become very smelly. It certainly made them very ashamed to talk to each other. The plague also infected the royal family.

The king and the princesses were hit by the plague. They were confused how to cope with the disease. The kingdom became silent just like a death kingdom. There was no conversation, no jokes, no shouts that indicated life. The kingdom was like an uninhabited territory because there was no sound. The residents only used sign language to greet each other and only talked if it was really urgent. When someone tried to make a sound, someone else would stay away because the smell from the mouth made people vomit.

The king felt helpless. He tried to seek treatment so that the bad breath was gone. The king gathered officials, scholars, and royal scientists to look for drugs that could cure the disease. They could not do anything because everyone in the room did not dare to say a word because of the embarrassment of the bad breath they had. When the king was almost desperate, suddenly the king was made aware that it was God's punishment for their negligence in preserving nature and cleanliness. One day, the king prayed that God would forgive all his faults and his people. The king promised to correct his mistakes in the past. He asked God to send medicine to heal them. The Merciful and Generous God granted the king's prayer. On a sunny morning, the princess wanted to go out of the palace to be able to enjoy the fresh air. Then the princess accompanied by her servants came in a garden. Suddenly there was a bird perching on a tree branch. The bird sang beautifully. It tweeted showing off its voice to the world and

everyone who heard it. The princess could only see the bird with a look of wonder. Then the bird flew back into the sky, but before leaving, the bird dropped a lovely little flower. Feeling interested, the princess took the flower. She was tempted by the scent of the flower that was so fresh and finally, she ate it. Suddenly a miracle happened. A few days after the princess ate the flower, her breath was no longer smelly. Her breath now turned fragrant and very fresh. Realizing that, the princess told her father. The king then ordered the guards to look for the same flowers as the princess ate. The guards also sought the flower as much as possible to be divided to the whole country. The outbreaks of the respiratory illness were lost. Finally, the king ordered all his people to plant the flower. The flower was sold to various neighboring countries. The flower was clove flower.

Actually, Andini's grandfather was not a native of Banyumas or Purwokerto, but came from a small village in Solo. He enjoyed living in Banyumas area because it was beautiful, the land was fertile, and the atmosphere was calm to live as a pensioner. He had a storytelling hobby. From childhood Andini had heard various fairy tales from his grandfather. This was what made Andini always wait impatiently for school holidays to hear his stories that always added to her life experience.

"Mom, papa will follow us to grandfather's home, won't he?" Andini asked her mother as the train started to leave Gambir

Station. "I don't think so, An. Papa is very busy," replied her mother. Maybe her mother also cannot linger in grandfather's house. If she picked up Andini later, her mother promised to persuade Andini's father to come. "Mom, I think grandfather cannot wait for us, eh?"

"Yeah, you must not forget to bring a package of *mantou* bread for grandpa?"

"No, Mom!" Andini replied as she looked out the window. They had just passed Manggarai Station and would soon arrived at Jatinegara Station. Taksaka did not stop there either. Vacation trip was always fun for Andini. She saw different situations in the cities or regions she passed. She could look through the railroad window. The hamlets with all the activities of the inhabitants started in the morning. Andini's favorite thing was the clouds that seemed to hang in the sky following her along the road. The poles lined up on the edge of the train tracks running away from her. So was the case with the trees that lined up neatly along the railroad tracks. There was a rushing motion as if time had not given an opportunity to merely show the newly emerging leaves to Andini. It's an atmosphere she always enjoyed when she took the train.

She always told the experience to her grandfather when Andini arrived at his home. The grandfather patiently listened to the babble of his granddaughter. Andini would eagerly tell him how *dadap* tree looked upright in the rice fields around the visible

hills, as if naked leafless, remaining only the bones of the trunk of the tree. Red petals emerged from the shoots of twigs making the *dadap* tree as if glowing from a distance. Andini's grandfather would take her for a walk while telling story or showing names of trees or anything she did not know yet. Last year, Andini and grandfather took a walk in the countryside around Mount Slamet. Some villages in the mountains were impressive. There were small bamboo houses with half-board walls and a roof made of zinc. If it rained, the bulk was heard on the roof. Around the yard there were several chickens scavenging the ground looking for worms or insects that could be eaten. On the edge of the path, a few goats were moored with stake poles stuck in the ground. The goats ate the grass that grew along the edge of the path. The goat straps were deliberately made not too lengthy. It was done so that the goats were not entangled by its mooring ropes.

Andini with his grandfather saw a merchant hauling piles of pineapple fruit into a truck to take to the city's markets. Meanwhile, pineapple picking workers still paced between the curb and pineapple fields with baskets of pineapple fruit. Her journey with her grandfather took her to the northeast. From the area the ravines presented a magnificent view. Sprawling fields lie bordered by mountain slopes. A great river descended from the hill flowing into the ravine and reappeared in a valley far below the hill. A hamlet was visible in the valley in the middle between the ridges.

Some buildings were emblazoned with glistening roof because it was made of zinc. However, not all houses were roofed with zinc. Some homes used thatched roofs, roofs made of woven palm leaves clasped with bamboo. The lumps of smoke coming out of the houses left their marks in the sky. The village hall could be marked from the existence of a large banyan tree. On the opposite, there lied the fields with its clear, sharp embankment. Behind the village hall were the homes of people, close to each other, neatly lined up, and palm trees rising from behind thinly misted houses. The vultures' wings glittered as they flew over the fields, dimly visible from deep in the clouds, then they vanished, faded in the fog and out of sight. Those memories made Andini always want to go back to his grandfather's place. Clouds hung right before her eyes bordering the horizon, like the sight she saw on the train, the lumps of beautiful white clouds.

At 12:15, Taksaka arrived at Purwokerto Station. Andini helped her mother to take her bag down from the trunk. Then, she walked behind her mother while carrying a bag containing *mantou* cake. With a deep breath of fresh air, she climbed out of the train door. From a distance she saw her grandfather waving a newspaper. Andini wished to run to her grandfather, but she held herself. She felt pity that her mother looked tired while carrying the bag and should come running behind her later.

The grandfather's kisses rained down on her cheeks and crown. Mom greeted grandfather and kisses his hand with respect. Longing faces stared at each other. Andini hurried to the parking lot.

"What train did you ride earlier, Andini?" Asked her grandfather while gently hitting her head with a roll of newspapers. "Taksaka, Grandpa! Comfortable! I did not feel the shock, until we came to Purwokerto," Andini replied as she took her grandfather's hand. "Do you know what Taksaka means?" Asked his grandfather.

"What is it? I don't know, *Eyang*."

"That's the name of a great dragon."

"Dragon? Grandpa, tell me please!" Andini said. "Andini! Later, Okay!" prevented Andini's mother. "Why, Mom?" Andini asked. "Yes, later. We haven't met grandma, have we?" replied her mother. "Promise Grandpa, ok! You will tell a story about Taksaka later, right?" Andini asked his grandfather. "Yes yes! As always, you cannot wait to hear a story," said Andini's grandfather.

Andini ran around his grandfather's car and opened the front door to sit down. The journey from the station to his house was about thirty minutes. Andini was happy to breathe the air of the village where his grandfather lived. Finally, they arrived at the house on the side of a small town street. The house was small and

beautiful. The backyard was widely planted with fruit trees. Guava, mango, hairy fruit with juicy content called *rambutan*, and some flower trees such as *cempaka*, *kenanga*, gardenia, Japanese frangipani, *kemuning*, jasmine, and *menur* were all there.

When she arrived at her grandfather's house, she ran to find her grandmother. With a shout of joy Andini handed over the favorite *mantou* loaf to her grandma. Apparently Andini's grandmother had prepared Andini's favorite food, *klepon* cakes made from glutinous powder sprinkled with grated coconut. How pleased Andini was. Her mouth was full of *klepon* cakes. Her grandmother also prepared lunch in the form of *sroto*, typical Banyumas food, with a side dish of *rempela ati bacem*, and *mendoan*. Andini rested while chattering to her grandmother until she unconsciously ended up sleeping exhausted. Her grandmother let Andini sleep on the middle of the couch. She then went into the back room and talked with Andini's mother.

In the afternoon, Andini woke up feeling refreshed. After taking a bath, she sat outside the house approaching her grandfather who was examining the *kaca piring* flower. Grandfather did not like if there were caterpillars laying on the leaves of the flower. The leaves would surely be bare and would only look like brown flower stalks and arid. "Not good," said the grandfather. "Eyang, you said that you want to tell the dragon serpent Taksaka. How is

that, Grandpa?" Andini said as she stood by his grandfather. "Yes, a minute," his grandfather said in a soft voice. "Here Andini, come and sit with grandpa," said her grandfather inviting Andini to his favorite chair on the porch. "Here's the story," he said, stretching his legs under the table. "Taksaka is a giant dragon who killed a king named Parikesit."

"Why was the king murdered, Grandpa?" Asked Andini probing. "Yes, because the king is exposed to a curse," answered her grandfather as he stroked Andini's head.

"What is curse, Eyang?" Andini asked back. "The curse is an oath uttered by a person because he is grudging or heartache to others," said Andini's grandfather.

"Why was King Parikesit cursed by people, Grandpa?" Andini frowned. "Because he hurts others, the hurt person grudges and then condemns him."

"So, if we are hurt by someone, we should curse that person, right, Grandpa?" Andini asked again. "Ah, no, Andini, no! If we are hurt by others, we can forgive those who hurt us. We should not be revengeful and take care of ourselves not to condemn it!" Andini's grandfather said. "Why is that, Grandpa?" Andini asked. "Yes, so we will not be like King Parikesit who ends up having to die from a curse."

"Who the hell, Grandpa, is King Parikesit?" Andini asked curiously. "He is a descendant of King Astina. Here's the story.

There was once a family who ruled the Kingdom of Astina. The family name was Kuru. They had descendants named Destarata and Pandu," explained Andini's grandfather. Then, he told about the life of Pandavas and Kurawa. They were cousins who did not get along. Their fathers were two brothers of Maharaja Astina's sons. The eldest son was named Destarata and his little brother was named Pandu Dewanata. Destarata was blind by birth. Therefore, he could not be crowned king as his father's successor. Finally, Pandu Dewanata was crowned king as successor of his father.

Destarata was married to Dewi Gendari. They had a hundred sons, later known as the Kurawa family. The eldest son was named Duryudana. His siblings were all male, except one is female whose name was Dushala. Destarata also had a son from his maid named Yuyutsu. As for Pandu, he was married to Kunti and had three sons, namely Yudhisthira, Bima and Arjuna. Pandu also had another wife whose name was Dewi Madrim. From Dewi Madrim, Pandu got twin sons named Nakula and Sadewa. Pandu's children were then famous as the family of Five Pandawa.

The two families lived in the Astina Kingdom. Since they were the grandchildren of King Astina, they should receive the

education of a great teacher. The teacher who educated them in war and government expertise was Dorna. When they were still small, they were together educated in the form of physical and also thought. However, the Five Pandawa had a superior ability than Kurawa. Disputes between them often occurred because of envy. The children of Kurawa felt jealous because the Pandavas' skills were superior to them.

Since childhood Five Pandawa had no father. Pandu Dewanata died of a curse while walking with Dewi Madrim in the forest. Pandu once hunted a pair of deer that were making love. Pandu did not know that the deer were divine incarnation of the heaven. The god and goddess were coming down from heaven to make love in the forms of deer, but Pandu hunted them down. At that time Pandu was cursed, he would die while making love with his wife. Finally, Pandu died by the curse, at the time when he made love with Dewi Madrim in the forest. And Dewi Madrim also killed herself. The Kingdom of Astina was then controlled by Destarata to wait until the Five Pandavas were adult.

Dewi Gendari, the mother of Kurawa felt great fear if Yudhisthira, the first child of Five Pandawa, would substitute for Destarata's leadership. Gendari hoped her children could be smarter than the Five Pandavas, but none of her hundred children could compete with the advantages of the Five Pandavas. The mother's hatred spread to her children, Kurawa. With various

ways mother and children tried to get rid of Five Pandawas. In any way, the Five Pandavas assisted by mother Kunti could defend themselves. When Yudhisthira grew up, he was made King of Astina. Yudhisthira's wisdom and virtue in ruling the kingdom provoked envy and hatred amongst the Destarata's children, especially Duryudana. He drove away Yudhisthira and his brothers from the Astina Kingdom by holding a dice game that made Pandavas lose.

Pandawa was sentenced to five years for his defeat to play the dice. They must live in the wilderness without showing themselves. When the sentence was over in five years, Pandavas asked to hold the reins of the royal government again. The request was rejected. Five Pandavas remained patient and they did not want to impose the will to reclaim the Kingdom of Astina. Pandavas only asked permission to manage the kingdom in an area called Indraprasta and recognized its existence. However, the request was also rejected. Kurawa drove the Pandavas to get away from Astina Kingdom. Pandavas felt unfairly treated. Finally, there was resistance to his own brother. There was a battle in a field called Kurusetra. Kuru is the name of the ancestors of the Pandavas and Kurawa, whereas Setra is the name of a vast field.

The Field of *Kurusetra*

The battle between the Pandavas and Kurawa families lasted eighteen days. Soldiers of both sides were dead. Prevention of the

event had been done, but the Kurawa party insisted on defending the kingdom of Astina which was not their right.

The death of Duryudana's brothers made the feeling of Duryudana increasingly furious and the desire to destroy the Pandavas did not recede. An increasingly burning grudge in Duryudana's heart blinded the eyes of his heart as a human being. Duryudana was embarrassed to retreat because he had sacrificed many soldiers and also his brothers. He acted as a hero even though he fought for something that was not true. When Duryudana was confused at the edge of the river, Bima came with a mighty carrying his famous club called *rujakpala*.

"Duryudana, what are you doing there! The cruel leader, who has sacrificed his brothers and his soldiers, what will you do? "

"I will behave as a leader, Bima." Duryudana said slightly trembling at the sight of Bima's ferocity. "If you had previously conquered your wicked heart, and you would share it with your brother Pandavas, your fate certainly would not be like now."

"Don't talk too much! Come on! Just cut my head and let me finish my suffering quickly!" shrieked Duryudana. "You are despicable as a descendant of Maharaja Astina? Come, fight me like a hero!"

"I don't feel sorry, Bima! Though I knew I was wrong. I cannot change what should happen," said Duryudana. "Yes, of course

you cannot change it because you are the source of that destruction. Come on fight me, do not be like earthworms!" challenged Bima while throwing a few javelins at Duryudana. Hearing the words "like a worm", Duryudana growled with fierce. He then ran against Bima with a blow of his hand. However, the energy and spirits of his life had been somewhat faded. Duryudana was then struck by *rujakpala* cudgel on his thighs. Finally, he fell to the ground and was hit on his head by Bima's weapon. Duryudana was killed in the hands of Bima and ended the resistance of the Kurawa in maintaining power over the Kingdom of Astina. Duryudana was a greedy king and did not know manners. He took the kingdom from the Pandavas by force. Actually Kurawa and Pandawa were one family, but Kurawa was greedy and did not want to divide the kingdom with Pandavas so there was a fight over the kingdom.

The war between the two families was over. The vast field with Irrawaddy stream in the middle of it now became silent. The river water used to be clear, in which a variety of fish swimming in the sidelines of the rocks on the banks of the river. Now the river turned reddish and smelled rancid in the chest.

The dead soldiers were lying on their backs on the ground. Hawks and wolves roamed the field eating the remains of the carcasses. The air was wet and the smell of blood was everywhere.

The Pandavas won victory and reigned over the wealthy Astina Kingdom. A heady and heartbreaking victory. On the one hand, they were content to defeat Kurawa but on the other hand they were sad because not a few of their friends were dead unavailing. There was no perfect happiness. No sadness is complete. There was only bland heart, and insipidness at the rest of life. After resting and recuperating, they immediately cleared the Kurusetra from the remnants of the war. Yudhisthira led the Pandavas. He ordered to wipe clean the Kurusetra field. He said. "The corpses need to be respected with proper religious ceremonies for both friends and enemies."

Several soldiers were busy collecting corpses scattered across the field. Animal carcasses are separated from human corpses. Yudhisthira summoned priests both from the Kurawa and the Pandavas. The priests prepared equipment for the cremation ceremony. When all were well organized, relatives scattered to recognize the bodies of siblings, children, or husbands. The crying resonated in *Padang Kurusetra*. "Duh, *Kakang*, why are you so quick to leave me?" a woman shrieked as she recognized that one of the corpses was her husband. "My son, you finally achieved your goal of becoming a hero," said a mother, tearing down the tears that melted in her old eyes. The child and her husband died in battle in the Field of *Kurusetra*. There was a middle-aged woman running all the way up and raising her legs high. Her curled hair above her neck was tumbling with the wind

into a tangle of dust covered with dirt. Feeling exhausted after running uncertain direction, she finally sat down on the edge of the field. She could not find the corpse of her husband, the father of her seven children. The *dadap* leaves fell on the ground, grieving over the sorrow of a wife who lost her husband. Not far from where the woman was lying face-down a priest walked carrying a sprinkling of flower water from the poultry all over the direction of the wind. From his mouth resonated prayer for the salvation of the spirits of the deceased in the Field of *Kurusetra*. Finally, just before noon, the fire to burn the bodies was lit and the bodies were quickly burned and properly cremated. The ash from the corpses were brought to the banks of the Irrawaddy River and spread to the middle of the river.

After the cremation ceremony was over, *Kurusetra* was quiet again. The vast field left a miserable memory for people who had been killed by a husband or child. The vultures flew in bewilderment because they could not find any more leftovers which they would poke. Everything was clean and the weeds began to bring their pistils to the surface of the earth, followed by the scrub that was originally trampled by the Pandawa and Kurawa chariots. The sound of wind rolled echoing in the vast field. Life must continue, regardless of the disaster that had destroyed some or all of the means of life. There's something to keep going. Everything must rush to fill this life. The world did

not care, the sun kept moving from east to west with fixed time. Man must walk according to the time available.

The Kingdom of Astina

King Yudhisthira with the help of four brothers, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sadewa, ruled the Kingdom of Astina. The previous high tax was lowered. Agricultural land cultivation was cared by the royal courtiers so that the irrigation that had not been evenly divided now became evenly distributed. Plantations were upgraded so that the fields producing such as coffee, cloves, and spices were abundant. The roads to villages were repaired and the construction of houses of worship was done by working together. The roads needed to be repaired to make it easier for the villagers to go to the royal capital. Tranquility can be felt by all people and there was no inequality in wealth. All got sufficient results for the necessities of life. Thieves hardly existed, especially robbery. Security was guarded by the palace soldiers to the remote villages. People felt safe without fear.

Before the war between brothers happened, Arjuna's son, Abimanyu, was nominated as the heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Astina. However, Abimanyu died alongside other Pandawa heroes. Abimanyu's death looked so miserable. Arjuna, the Dad, was not there near Abhimanyu to help him. At the last moment, without bow and no horse-drawn carriage, Abhimanyu fought the attackers from Kurawa alone. Armed with sword and

shield, he jumped to and fro to fend off attacks. Abhimanyu looked like a *garuda* bird that swooped down the opponent to the right and left. Because no one helped him, Abimanyu's power was drained away. The soldiers of Kurawa and his commander were not ashamed of gang up Abimanyu until he fell lying dead in the middle of the Kurusetra field, which was then like a drought-stricken ocean.

When Abimanyu's death arrived, the wolves howled and the pale sun set rapidly in the western sky.

The wind stopped and the atmosphere suddenly became silent as the wolf stopped howling. The Pandavas were grieving because one of the younger generation who was considered smart and agile had fallen out, after fighting alone without any help. They returned to the camp with bowed heads. They sat in silence and did not dare to look up at Arjuna and Krishna.

Arjuna asked "Your face is weird? Where is Abimanyu? He usually comes to greet me!" No one answered Arjuna's question, while Krishna who accompanied Arjuna seemed to know that something had happened to the Pandavas. Finally, Krishna told Arjuna that Abhimanyu had been killed in the battlefield of Kurusetra.

"Everyone will die, my brother. He is a hero who will never retreat in battle and was attacked in groups by enemies who do

not know the ethics of war." With sadness Arjuna said to his brothers. "I will avenge my son's death. You guys are all brave soldiers, why can't you protect my child in the battlefield? Are you a coward?" Arjuna breathlessly uttered those sorrowful words and finally drooped down beside Krishna. His hands still hold the bow and sword.

"Tomorrow I will kill Jayadrata. He has taken my son's life away. I swear, before the sun sets I will have finished it," Arjuna said fiercely. Arjuna took his bow and stretched firmly with both hands. The clang of the bow thundered through the sky. Krishna followed Arjuna's action by blowing his long trumpet called *pancajaya*. Arjuna stretched out the *dewadata*. Its sound was incredibly hard on the four corners of the universe and thrilled the enemy who heard it. Jayadrata who had killed Abhimanyu felt the same. He was very afraid to hear the tone of Arjuna's anger from the horn blow.

On the following day, Arjuna exercised his intention to avenge Abimanyu's death. He fought fiercely. Many victims fell on Kurawa's side. As dusk began to fall, Krishna reminded Arjuna of his oath to kill Jayadrata before sunset.

"Jayadrata is protected by six courageous kings. Without defeating the kings, you will not be able to catch him. I'm going to use a spell to make the sun look set. Thus, Jayadrata will think it is safe from your target and he will be careless," said Krishna to

Arjuna. "All right," replied Arjuna. Kresna's spell casted darkness around the sun. It's like the sun went down. Kurawa's warriors stretched their heads to see the sun as it entered the western horizon. Jayadrata also acted so.

Krishna immediately reminded Arjuna. "Brother, Arjuna! Jayadrata is looking at the sun. It is time! Shoot his neck and keep his head from touching the ground. If his head hits the ground, your own head will also fall apart into hundreds of fractions. It is determined by the curse," said Kresna. By reading a spell in his heart, Arjuna lifted his bow slowly. An arrow which was given a prayer with arson and flower burnings was firmly fired by Arjuna. The arrow darted quickly and hit Jayadrata's head as easily as a knife slicing watermelon fruit. Arjuna constantly released arrows toward the head so as to make Jayadrata's head fly across the air until it fell into the lap of King Wridaksatra, Jayadrata's father.

King Wridaksatra was meditating in a forest near the Field of Kurusetra. In the past, Wridaksatra uttered a curse because he was sad to hear the subtle word that predicted the death of his son someday. When Jayadrata was born, Wridaksatra heard the unseen word in his sleep that the baby would attain fame and greatness, and would be killed in battle, finished off by his enemy so that he died as a hero and his deed was accepted well in the afterlife. Jayadrata would be killed with his head falling on the ground. The word made deep sorrow for Wridaksatra. He then

cursed whoever caused Jayadrata's head to fall to the ground, he would meet his death with his head falling to the ground too.

When Jayadrata's head fell into his lap, King Wridaksatra was meditating so he did not realize that the head of his son was on his lap. As he stood up from meditation, Jayadrata's head fell from his lap and was on the ground. Instantly the curse that Wridaksatra once uttered happened to himself. Wridaksatra's head fell on the ground and his death came. Finally, Arjuna could execute his desire to avenge Abimanyu's death by killing Jayadrata. Abimanyu died as a hero on the battlefield leaving a wife named Utari. At that time, Utari was pregnant with Abimanyu's child.

Pandavas were so sad that the pregnancy had been condemned by Aswatama, the son of priest Dorna from Kurawa. Aswatama condemned all the infants of the Pandavas who were still in the womb, if born would die. Before uttering the curse, Aswatama killed the Pandavas. Sons, friends, and advisors of Pandavas were killed in a terrible way. After wiping out all the grandchildren and the Pandavas family at night, Aswatama fled and hid in disguise as an Abyasa disciple on the banks of the Ganges River. Aswatama was dressed in grass-clad, dust-covered clothing, and his body was buffed with buffalo oil.

When Bima saw Aswatama among the disciples of Abyasa, he lifted his bow. He would stab the bow on Aswatama himself.

Aswatama uttered the mantra given by his father, Dorna Rishi. In his left hand he grasped the smashed grass that turned into a terrible weapon of the god. Aswatama prayed.

"May this weapon destroy the Pandavas!" And there came a fire out of the grass. Bima who had guessed Aswatama's movements immediately said to Arjuna. "Arjuna! Shoot your weapon of destruction! Destroy the power of Aswatama given by the Dorna Rishi!"

"May this Brahmastra destroy the power of Aswatama!" Arjuna whispered as he stretched the bow with an arrow. Arjuna's arrow exploded and turned into a large blob of fire and made the atmosphere around him terribly hot. The grass was burning, the trees wilted its leaves. The horses neighed in agony as their skin was burned and finally rolled to death roasted by the heat of Arjuna's weapons. Arjuna's weapon and Aswatama's weapon were facing each other and would destroy the entire earth. When the two weapons were about to be released, the priest Abyasa appeared to separate them. "What are you doing?" Abyasa said, "Other heroes who are now lying dead also have powerful weapons like you, but they do not use them because they know the result of the use of the weapon. It will certainly destroy the contents of this earth," Abyasa scolded Arjuna and Aswatama. Arjuna kept back the famous Brahmastra arrow weapon and said that Aswatama must also hand over the gems that made him

immune. Aswatama said. "I'll give this gem, but my destructive grass as a destroyer of Pandavas family descent cannot be withdrawn"

"Let the grass enter the womb of the daughters of Pandavas, but hand the gems to Arjuna," said Begawan Abyasa. "This gem has a greater meaning to me than the treasures of the world. This gem protects the wearer from all weapons, diseases, and hunger. I cannot let go of it. To respect Begawan Abyasa who asks, take it! However, my grass weapon cannot be pulled back after being released. This weapon will enter the womb of the daughters of Pandavas ".

After Aswatama handed over his pearl, his power was lost from various weapons and diseases. Aswatama eventually went wandering out into the forest without a friend and without anyone to talk to. His body emitted a foul odor coming out of pus and blood. All the diseases that attacked humans were in Aswatama's body. However, Aswatama was content to destroy the descendants of Pandavas.

The Birth of Parikesit

Utari was Abimanyu's wife. Abimanyu's father was Arjuna who married Sumbadra, younger sister of Kresna. So, Krishna is the brother-in-law of Arjuna and Abimanyu was Krishna's nephew. After helping the Pandavas in the war at Padang Kurusetra,

Krishna said good-bye to Yudhishthira to return to his kingdom, Dwaraka. It was in the kingdom that Utari, Abimanyu's wife, lived with her mother-in-law, Sumbadra.

Krishna arrived at the palace and was greeted by Basudewa, Krishna's father. His mother hastened to ask the waiter to prepare the dish for Krishna. Basudewa embraced Krishna gratefully that he still survived the Kurusetra war. The king's servants immediately washed the feet of Krishna and then served various meals to him. Basudewa asked various questions about the events that occurred in the war in the Field of Kurusetra. When talking with Basudewa, Sumbadra and Utari were welcoming the arrival of Krishna. "The Almighty still protects you, *Kanda*! I'm glad you survived the battle," Sumbadra said, hugging Krishna.

"Yes, Sumbadra. I am saved because of your prayers, the prayers of my father and mother, and the prayers of the people of Dwaraka. How are you, Sumbadra?" Krishna said to his sister. Sumbadra quietly said to his brother, Krishna. "*Kanda*, tell me how my son died?"

Krishna stunned and he moved out his hand to take the drink served by the waiter. Drinking water was so difficult through his throat and Krishna choked until he coughed. Basudewa chimed in Sumbadra's words. "You're famous as a person who always talks about the truth, Krishna. Why don't you tell the truth about Abimanyu's death, my grandson?"

Krishna replied with a heavy sigh. "Don't be sad, *Dinda Sumbadra!*" said Krishna. "What happens must happen. Though I, your husband Arjuna, Bima, or Yudhisthira helped and protected him, he was still killed. It is already in the line of human life and his own destiny. Do not drag on in grief! Better think about Utari, Abimanyu's wife, who is pregnant."

"I am sad, *Kanda,*" Sumbadra said. "Utari is constantly lamenting Abimanyu"

Krishna got up and embraced Sumbadra while saying. "Sumbadra, life and death have been determined. We may be sad, but it should not be excessive.

We can also be happy, but not too much! As the mother of Abhimanyu, you should be heartened because your son is dead in the defense of the truth. You should also encourage Utari and calmed down her. Remind her that the one in his belly is the son of a great hero of the king and royal defender." Abimanyu is my gem, *Kanda.* He is my sole survival," Sumbadra said, tearing her eyes. Krishna walked towards Utari and wiped Utari's head, who had been crying silently all the time. Krishna said to Utari.

"For the sake of your husband, Utari, stop crying, take good care of the baby in your womb!"

Utari did not say a word. Tears came from her eyes unceasingly like a river. Her body was weak and helpless. Only one could

keep her alive, the pulse in her stomach. The love left in her was the subtle motion that was always present at all times in her body. It was the only memory of her husband for Utari. After a few days of resting in Dwaraka, Krishna returned to Astina with Utari and Sumabadra. Utari gave birth in Astina attended by Sumbadra, Kunti, and Drupadi. The baby born was male. However, due to Aswatama's curse, the baby was born dead. The entire palace of Astina lamented the frozen baby that came out of Utari's uterus. Kunti burst into tears, calling for Krishna. Behind Kunti, stood Drupadi, Sumbadra, and the Pandavas relatives. Their cries were so loud that it made Krishna run closer to Utari's room. Kunti said, pulling Krishna's arm. "Save us, Krishna. Only you can do it," Kunti said, wailing. "Your nephew's wife gave birth to a baby who did not move. Bring him to life again. Remember, you have promised to do it when Aswatama turned the grass leaf into a brahma weapon that would kill all the grandchildren of Pandavas."

"Calm down, Aunt Kunti, I will try. May the deities accept my deeds!" Said Krishna. The words of Krishna gave the spirit to all residents of the Royal Palace of Astina. Krishna went into the birthing room where Utari laid helpless. He ordered that the room be purified with white flower strands, the *pasu* trays were filled with water until full, and lamps were placed in every corner of the room. Utari was seated by the *dayangs* on the bed with a few pallets to support her back. Her face was pale and bloodless and

her expression hopelessly dead. Everyone who looked at her would cry to see Utari's condition. With the help of the maids, she clasped her hands together and respectfully worshiped Krishna standing by her bed.

Krishna touched the water in the *pasu* tray and eliminated the strength of Aswatama's *brahma* weapon. The king's hand grabbed something from the crown of his head. A blue *wijaya kusuma* flower was lying in the palm of his hand. Everyone who watched was thrilled as if fixed on the earth in their place. There was no sound of any breath from the living creature in the room. It was a magic flower, the flower of life. Not everyone could touch it or carry it in the palm of the hand. Only Krishna could hold the flower. Krishna was the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the god of life who ruled the earth. A moment later Krishna recited a mantra with a deep voice. "Sang Hyang Widi, the creator of the universe, please bring this child to life because I love *darma*, honor the Brahmins, and please give life to Abimanyu's child as the successor of the Pandavas." Not long afterwards, the baby boy who had been wiped with *wijaya kusuma* heirloom flowers from the top of the head to the ankle three times, moved his arms and legs vaguely. A strong white glow illuminated the room and burst of cry from the baby's little mouth. His voice echoed around the corner of the palace and evoked the smiles and spirits of Astina's elders. Utari's face slowly flushed red and the tears of happiness fell through the pale cheeks. The happiness of hearing the baby's

cry made her spirits to live rise. She must try to live. She must live for the love left behind by Abimanyu, a tangible love of a baby boy. Utari briefly saw the shadow of her husband figure smiling at her. The face looked happy and glowing. Slowly, the shadow faded and replaced with the loud cry of a baby pumping the entire pulse in Utari's body. She stood up and stared at the baby moving his legs and hands groping in the air. It was Abimanyu's love for her. The Pandavas were again filled with joy. They had got a future crown prince who would become the king of Astina replacing King Yudhisthira. The baby was named Parikesit.

Parikesit Became A King

Fifteen years the Pandavas ruled the Kingdom of Astina. It was fifteen years after the Kurusetra war that caused the mother to lose children, the wife lost her husband, the child lost a father, and someone lost a lover. In running the government, Yudhisthira always acted on Dastarata's advice. Yudhisthira treated his uncle, Kurawa's father, well. Expensive gifts were always given to the blind king. Yudhisthira ordered his retainer to make happy Dastarata and Gendari who had lost one hundred Kurawa sons in the field of Kurusetra. Any conquered king who would give tribute to King Yudhisthira was expected to meet Dastarata and Gendari first in order to pay homage. The atmosphere of the kingdom after Yudhishtira became king changed.

The people felt the peace and sufficiency in terms of clothing and food. The people's tax was low. The kings conquered by Astina always sent tribute with feelings of pleasure without being forced. They handed over valuable items such as gold, diamonds, agricultural products, or craft products from their people. None of the conquered kingdoms were rebellious because Yudhisthira was a just and wise king. One day, Dastarata, Gandari, and Kunti requested permission from Yudhisthira to leave the palace into the wilderness.

"Listen to our words, Yudhisthira. We bless you for making us happy for fifteen years. We now ask your permission to retreat into the forest, to wear bark clothes, to cleanse ourselves from sin. We will spend our lives there while blessing you." Yudhisthira approved Dastarata's request to go to the forest. It was indeed an act that must be done by an old king withdrawing himself from the life of the world. The king had to undergo penance in the forest by surrendering to nature. They controlled their thoughts, words, and deeds by meditating. After Yudhisthira gave permission, Dastarata, Gandari, and Kunti prepared themselves for a journey into the forest. At the appointed time, Yudhisthira summoned his brothers to tell his mother, uncle, and aunt's wishes. "My brothers, our mother and our uncle and aunt will go from this kingdom to do *darma* before their deaths," Yudhisthira told his younger brothers. "Must *darma* be done by going into the forest to torture yourself, brother?" asked Bima to Yudhisthira.

"Bima, you actually knew the terms of doing *darma* in the old days. Yes, it must be so. That is the desire of our parents" answered Yudhisthira. "Yes Kanda Yudhisthira, I also know. Is it possible that these conditions should not be done by torturing ourselves to go to the forest? But, it's okay if that's the desire of our parents," replied Bima. "Well, if that is the case. My brothers, today our parents will go to the forest where they do *darma*. Let us together lead them," said Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira's desire to escort to the forest where they did *darma* was rejected by Dastarata, Gendari, and Kunti. They did not want to be escorted. They walked out of the majestic palace. The royal outfits they usually wore had been removed. Dastarata, Gandari, and Kunti finally lived in the forest wearing bark clothes and fasted not to eat and drink. Dastarata put the pebbles into his mouth and only lived from the air. He did not want to speak a word to anyone else. Gandari lived by drinking water only, while Kunti still ate once a month. As the forest burned, Dastarata, Gandari, and Kunti sat facing east, concentrating their minds silently like wooden columns. They were burned by fire.

Fifteen years later, ie thirty-five years after the war in Padang Kurusetra, Yudhisthira decided to abstain from the world following in the footsteps of Dastarata, Gendari, and Kunti. "It's time we left the palace."

Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa, and Drupadi agreed. Yudhisthira then crowned Parikesit, the son of Abhimanyu, to succeed him as king. Yudistira said to Sumbadra. "Parikesit, your grandson will be the successor of the king of the Kuru people. He will rule Astinapura. Take care of him! Keep him from acting contrary to *dharma!*" "Can I go with you to the forest?" Sumbadra asked. "No, my wife, you must take care of Parikesit so that he will not lose us," Arjuna replied.

"Forgive me *Kanda*, if I think about my own interests, it's because of my great love to you, *Kanda*," Sumbadra replied. "Pray for us so that we are strong enough to do this *dharma*, *Dinda* Sumbadra!" Arjuna said again. "Yes, *Kanda*. My prayers will always be for *Kanda* Yudhisthira, Bima, Arjuna, and my brothers Nakula, Sadewa, and sister Drupadi," Sumbadra replied. Yudhisthira then invited his subjects to inform his decision which would keep themselves away from the mundane. Yudhisthira removed all the royal jewelry and wore garments made of bark. So was the case with Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa, and Drupadi. With perseverance, the Pandavas traveled through many countries and across the seas and rivers. Yudhisthira led the group. Behind him were Bima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sadewa, Drupadi, and a dog. They arrived at a sea of red water. Arjuna threw his bow and arrows into the red sea waves.

The Pandavas then turned south. When they arrived on the north shore of salt sea, they moved forward to the southwest and arrived at the former Kingdom of Dwaraka that had been destroyed under the ocean because of the civil war. They then turned north and walked on in that direction. Finally, they could climb Mount Himawan and then went down to face with the vast expanse of sand. In the distance they saw the highest peak, the summit of Mount Meru where the last trip they wanted to go. Raden Parikesit was born after the Baratayudha war. He was really cherished by the five Pandavas. At the time he was still a baby, he was always sought by Aswatama to be killed because it was Parikesit who in the future would control Astinapura. Inadvertently, Parikesit kicked the arrow that was placed to keep him and instantly penetrated Aswatama. He fell to his death. Then, Parikesit reigned as king in Astinapura, under the name of King Kresnadipayana, as the great-grandfather name, King Kresnadipayana (Abyasa).

When Parikesit was not yet born, Abhimanyu received the revelation of Jayaningrat the grace of The One and Only God through some gods in heaven. It was said that whoever got this revelation, his offspring would gain the nobleness and glory of his life. As the news of this revelation spread, some knights endeavored with all the power and ability they possessed to obtain the revelation including Lesmana Mandrakumara the son of Kurupati, Samba Krishna's son, and Abhimanyu, the son of

Arjuna. Various obstacles and temptations must be faced. The temptation was to test the physical fitness in the form of dexterity, inner torment with monthly meditation that could be won by Abimanyu. However, Abhimanyu died in the Bharatayuda war for protecting Puntadewa that was attacked by Kurawa forces. Puntadewa felt very guilty for Abimanyu's death. In a deep remorse, he swore before the whole universe that after the war was over and if the Pandavas won, there was nothing worthy of riding on the throne of the kingdom with nobility and glory except the descendants of Abhimanyu. This oath was heard throughout the universe and was sanctioned by the Almighty. The right of the throne moved into the hands of Abimanyu's son, who happened to be born to coincide with the end of the battle of Bharatayuda. For a moment the leadership of the Astina kingdom was in the hands of Puntadewa. King Baladewa or Begawan Curiganata was assigned to educate and foster Parikesit as the crown prince.

After the death of Pandavas, Parikesit reorganized the government of Astina Kingdom. Parikesit was a clever young king. He mastered literature and war science. He ruled wisely. His wisdom was well known to the end of the world. Agriculture and plantations were progressing. Some irrigation improvements were done on old waterworks. Trade increased. Arts and literature flourished. The wealth of the Kingdom of Astina radiated from the beautiful palace building. The hall of the palace was decorated

with a sprinkling of gold when the lights struck the moon during the night. Royal chariots were made of gold. Horse outfits were embroidered with gold. The wealth was proportional to Parikesit's wisdom in governing the Kingdom of Astina. Parikesit was blessed with a son named Janamejaya. His happy life was surrounded by smart royal courtiers.

The Curse of *Srenggi*

Parikesit was the heir of the Pandavas who had a hobby of hunting animals. As a child, Parikesit often went hunting with his grandparents. He was most happy to follow his grandfather Arjuna.

He loved how Arjuna stalked his quarry, how Arjuna marked his quarry through a certain path. He remembered how Arjuna's legs did not seem to step on the twig and quickly darted after his quarry. At that time Parikesit followed Arjuna who was hunting a big deer. Carefully and silently, Arjuna put an arrow in his bow. One shot, the deer floundered without having time to run from the presence of Arjuna. Parikesit greatly admired Arjuna. It was from Arjuna that Parikesit became to always happy to hunt. Any spare occasions were used for the pleasure of hunting deer or other animals in the wilderness.

One day, Parikesit and his companion held a hunt in the forest. The equipment for catching and carrying game animals was

prepared by the royal courtier. It was a great day for Parikesit. The sky was bright and blue. The wind blew slowly and the sun shined brightly. Parikesit spirit was on fire to immediately find game animal in the forest. He walked following the way of Arjuna who did not seem to touch the ground and break the branches of the bush in the forest. Carrying his bow, he entered the wilderness. He saw a golden deer. Parikesit's heart was so enamored with the deer that ran faster and lighter than Parikesit. With a panting breath he scrambled over the bushes, slashing the branches of tree that blocked him. However, Parikesit ran hard vainly. Until finally he lost the trail of the deer. Slowly, Parikesit sneaked in search of the golden deer. His footsteps led Parikesit toward an ascetic Brahmin in the forest. His name was Begawan Samiti. The Brahmin was seen sitting under the tree as though exhausted and sleepy. Parikesit asked the Brahmin sitting cross-legged on the ground. "O Brahmin, I am Parikesit, Pandu's grandson, King of Astina, did you see a deer passing by in this place? Where did the deer go? Show me please!"

Begawan Samiti at that time was being mute ascetic, doing meditation in silence when Parikesit asked about the golden deer. None of the answers came out of his mouth. Parikesit repeatedly asked, but Begawan Samiti still did not answer. Parikesit as the descendant of Kuru, Pandu's grandson, and Great King of Astina, the sole successor of King Yudhisthira felt the Brahmin had insulted him for not wanting to answer his question. Parikesit was

offended and angry. Emotionally he saw the carcass of a snake lying not far from where the Brahmin sat cross-legged. Parikesit took the carcass of the snake with its long bow. Then, the carcass was dashed into the neck of Begawan Samiti while saying rudely full of anger.

"To your contempt, this is my reply, O ungrateful Brahmin. You simply did not answer the question of the king of the world. I'm sick of seeing your silence. Now feel the stench of serpent on your neck as much as you please. This is the punishment for the Brahmin who disobeyed his king!" After he was satisfied screaming to channel his anger to Begawan Samiti, Parikesit went away. His heart was very sad because he had never been treated like that by people he had ever met. He felt very humiliated. His heart was very upset because he failed to catch the golden deer. Unbeknownst to Parikesit, his behavior to the Begawan Samiti was known by someone from behind the bushes. He was a friend of Srenggi named Kresa. Srenggi was the son of Begawan Samiti. At that time Srenggi was not around his father. He was walking around visiting his mother in the divine heaven.

Along with Parikesit's departure from the forest, Srenggi came humming while looking at the scenery of the right-hand side of the road that he passed. As he walked, his hand broke the branches of a nearby tree. So, behind Kala Srenggi's back, the bushes looked messy because of the broken branches or twigs.

The noise and rattling sounded from a distance when Kala Srenggi's body had not appeared. Hastily Kresa approached Srenggi's arrival and unceremoniously described the incident that happened to his father, Begawan Samiti. "What did you say?" Srenggi shouted at Kresa's story about King Parikesit's attitude toward his father. "Damn you, the King of Astina dared to insult my father!" Srenggi said furiously. "Please repeat your words and do not try to lie to me!" Srenggi snapped at Kresa.

"Yeah, I saw Parikesit arrogantly snarled Begawan Samiti. His hands pointed at Begawan's face and his voice thundered so that the animals passing nearby ran away. Then, Parikesit threw a dead snake on Begawan Samiti's face. The dead snake dangled on the neck of Begawan," said Kresa telling the incident he saw with a little exaggeration that made Srenggi increasingly angry. While rushing around in his father's direction he grumbled. "I have a friend, a very powerful dragon. I'll ask him to help me to beat up Parikesit," Srenggi said in a voice like a jolt.

While continuing to be followed by Kresa, Srenggi's hands broke the branches of trees on both sides of the road that he passed. Suddenly he stopped. He raised both hands high. Raising his face, he exclaimed. "O gods in the sky, grant me this request! Within seven days, may the insolent king, Parikesit be dead, the Taksaka Dragon will bite him!"

Suddenly thunderbolts and thunders sounded through the sky, the earth shook greatly at his oath.

After the earth subsided with its vibrations, Srenggi continued his journey to where his father was. It so happened that Begawan Samiti just finished his meditation. Without wondering about his father's condition, Srenggi immediately told the story. "Father, I just cursed Parikesit to be bitten dead by the Taksaka Dragon. He's insolent, Dad, how dare he insult you," shouted Srenggi.

Begawan Samiti was surprised to hear Srenggi's words. "Oh gods! What will happen to the Astina Kingdom? Srenggi! You should not swear without knowing about the problem," Begawan Samiti snarled angrily. "Who told you about Parikesit's attitude against me?" asked Begawan Samiti looking at his son. "Dad, Kresa saw the event from behind the bush and when I came he immediately told me about it," said Kala Srenggi "Oh, Kresa! Kresa! Apparently you loved to create conflict just like a weasel," said Begawan Samiti unknowingly. Suddenly Kresa who stood near Srenggi dropped himself and turned into a weasel. By squeaking the weasel approached the foot of Begawan Samiti. The old man was stunned to see the result of speech that came out of his mouth. "God, the ruler of the world, forgive your servant!" said Begawan Samiti. He was very sorry to have said such a curse to Kresa. It was done because Begawan Samiti was surprised that his son Srenggi had cursed Parikesit. Then, he said to the weasel

of Kresa's embodiment. "Kresa, that's your karma. If you want to turn into a human again, you have to meditate. You must not eat poultry and fruits for three years. Later if you do all with resignation and peace of your heart, there will come a little boy who will hit you with a *dadap* tree branch. That's when you become a human again," said Begawan Samiti.

The weasel ran quickly away from Begawan Samiti, whimpering loudly. After the weasel of Kresa's incarnation left, Begawan Samiti advised Srenggi to revoke his curse to Parikesit. "Srenggi, you see for yourself how Kresa suffered because of my words that came out of my mouth unconsciously. I should be careful, but I do that out of shock when I heard your action cursing King Parikesit. Now try to take your oath of King Parikesit, Srenggi!" said Begawan Samiti. However, Srenggi refused the request. "I never take my oath back. Parikesit has insulted you and I cannot let it happen," Srenggi told his father. "If so, my son," said Begawan Samiti, "go to King Parikesit and tell him to look for an antidote so your curse won't attack him."

"No, Father, I do not want to go to Parikesit," Srenggi replied.

Finally, Begawan Samiti told someone to tell about Srenggi's curse to King Parikesit. Begawan Samiti also advised Parikesit to seek an antidote to avoid the curse. When the messenger Begawan Samiti arrived and delivered the message of Begawan Samiti to King Parikesit, King Parikesit got angry to the

messenger. He felt that the *begawan* had insulted him. "I'm not a beggar. I am the great king of the Kuru. Why should I look for a snake antidote? I can save myself."

The emissary of Begawan Samiti finally returned to the hermitage and reported to Begawan Samiti. "The good and the bad of human life and the fate of man depend on his karma while alive," said the *begawan*. Meanwhile, Parikesit ordered to build a tall tower. Workers rushed to finish the tower to be used as the shelter of Parikesit from snake bites. One day the curse of Srenggi arrived, the tower was completed. The walls were tall and firm and hard for both human and snakes. Parikesit climbed into the tower. From the top of the tower he could see amazing scenery. The royal area was visible from the tower window. The village cluster that were interconnected by the path was clear. Above the horizon, the hanging white clouds moved slowly in the thrust by the wind. Parikesit lightly imagined himself in the clouds moving slowly to observe the territory of the Kingdom of Astina that he led.

The Death of a King

That morning the weather was strange. The sun that emerged from the eastern horizon sprinkled the red color of the saga seeds. The impression was not beautiful, but very horrible. The blowing wind seemed to pierce the bones. The morning that should be able to inspire human spirit to start life even turned strange and had a

creepy impression. It seemed that the air was filled with the smell of death. People were lazy to come out of the house. Their bodies seemed to fever pierced by the wind. Many residents came out of the house wearing a blanket of sarong to protect the skin from the blast of cold air and covered the face to avoid the grains of sand flown by the wind.

In a place leading to the Kingdom of Astina, walked a Brahmin named Kasyapa. He would meet King Astina to help King Parikesit from Srenggi's curse. Kasyapa heard the curse. Kasyapa every day wandered to the far corners of the Astina Kingdom. In the middle of the road, Kasyapa met the Taksaka dragon, but Kasyapa had never known the dragon. Then, Kasyapa greeted, "Who are you?"

"Hi, Brahmin, where are you going?" Asked Taksaka. "I am Kasyapa," the Brahmin replied, "I am going to the castle of King Parikesit. Don't you know that Srenggi cursed Parikesit to be bitten by a dragon today?" explained Kasyapa. "O Brahmin, could you really be able to help Parikesit to avoid the curse? What is your power, show me please!" challenged Taksaka. Then, Taksaka competed with Kasyapa. Some of the supernatural powers of Kasyapa and Taksaka were shown. A banyan tree attacked by Taksaka was burned to ashes. Kasyapa recited the mantra and revived the tree again. The mantra could only be used once, so after the supernatural exhibition, Kasyapa could not give life to

anything that had died again. The spell was actually Kashapa's mainstay to help Parikesit. Since Kasyapa was arrogant and loved to be flattered, the supernatural power that should not be used in that place had been used. However, Kasyapa did not cancel his intention to help King Parikesit. His heart said there were still some supernatural powers that had not been released yet. The magical power of Kasyapa amazed Taksaka. Taksaka managed to destroy some of Kasyapa's supernatural powers. Taksaka praised and worshiped Begawan Kasyapa for bringing out some supernatural powers. Kasyapa was so happy and proud of the praise. Finally, they parted each other to Astina. Taksaka transformed himself into a Brahmin by bringing a basket of fresh cashew with appealing taste. He walked through a shortcut preceding Kasyapa towards Astinapura.

It was the day according to Srenggi's foretold when Parikesit was predicted dead. The way to the top of the tower was heavily guarded. Brahmins and royal priests were unceasingly praying for King Astina to survive the curse of Srenggi, the son of Begawan Samiti. By late afternoon, there was no sign of the arrival of the Taksaka dragon. Prayers were still heard throughout the palace. At that time, another Brahmin brought fresh red guava in a basket. The Brahmin joined the other Brahmins after handing the basket to the courtier. The Brahmin said to the courtier.

"I give this guava to King Parikesit as one of the repellent of danger. I hope you accept my offer," said the Brahmin while worshiping. After delivering the guava, the Brahmin disappeared. It turned out that the Brahmin was the incarnation of Taksaka who then secretly infiltrated into the guava fruit in a basket brought by the royal courtier. The royal retainer took the basket to the top of the tower. Slowly he climbed the stairs of the tower to the door. After knocking on the door, the royalretainerworshiped as he said.

"Your Highness, this is a gift from a Brahmin as one of the repellent of danger," said the courtier, bending his head. Parikesit opened the door of the tower and received the fresh red guava basket, the freshness of the guava appealed to Parikesit.

At dusk, when he felt there was almost no more threat associated with Srenggi's curse, Parikesit took the red guava to eat. When the guava got bitten, a frightening little worm came out from the inside of the fresh and seductive cashew. The worm jumped into Parikesit's feet and turned into a gigantic dragon. The dragon's tongue protruded and his eyes were bright red. The dragon's fangs flashed. The dragon's eyes radiated a glint that instantly limped the human bones who were staring at it. Parikesit saw a line of white light entering the room. "If so, my death has come. At last the curse happened because I insulted the Brahmin. I must accept this karma!"

Parikesit then took a deep breath and began to face to the east. In a flash, the branched-tongued dragon drove his fangs into Parikshit's body. After that, the dragon disappeared slowly intangibly.

The sky became dim. There was a faint sound of chant and the scent of flowers. *Cempaka* flowers fell from the stalk like a drizzle. Parikesit looked at the nature around from the top of the tower. His body shivered between hot and cold. With a smile, he looked at the clouds hung above the horizon. The white clouds clumped closer to the tower as if preparing a means for Parikesit to lie down. Parikesit began to feel his body lifted, as if floating. He began to realize that everything was not eternal. What was created would be destroyed, what went up would fall down. Death did not hate or love someone. It was *karma* that determined life. Parikesit still saw the clouds moving slowly away from the horizon, floating and hanging. Then, Parikesit's body fell onto the bed with a smile. All of Astina and its people mourned because the great king died in the curse.

White Clouds

Andini was still staring at the mouth of his grandfather as he told the story of Taksaka dragon who bit Great King of Astina because of his karma. "Well, that's the story of human life. Parikesit as the great king will not think that his death is only due to a snakebite," said Andini's grandfather. "It turns out that men have different

characters, Eyang. Poor Parikesit! It is just because his question was not answered by Begawan Samiti, that he got angry right away."

"That's it, Andini," his grandfather said again, "What you saw so shall you reap. Who plant the seeds of evil will pick the unfavorable fruits," added Andini's grand father. "Oh, I see, grandpa!" Andini replied. "Yes, that's it, Andini. Now, we see grandma. She has been waiting for us for dinner, come on!" said the grandfather as he took Andini's hand and led her into the house.

That night, after eating, Andini sat sweetly near her grandmother and mother. She answered every question asked by her grandmother. The question revolved around the school and her school friends. They talked late into the night. Andini slept so late that the next day Andini woke up late. Her grandfather had gone to the meeting place with his friends. Andini then took a shower and breakfast before noon. After eating, she tried to pick up the caterpillars on the *kacapiring* tree. Andini could not help feeling amused when she saw the caterpillar writhing as she pulled from the leaves that were half eaten by caterpillars. Bored with looking for caterpillars, Andini then strolled slowly out of the yard heading down the street of the housing complex occupied by his grandfather.

Behind the housing complex was a vast rice fields reaching to the edge of the mountain. The mountain stood like a giant.

The name of the mountain was Mount Slamet. At the time the weather was bright and the sky was blue. The figure of Mount Slamet in the distance was clearly visible. The ravines on the mountain formed dark plots and the forest seemed bluish green. Some places look flushed. The grandfather told that the place that looked red was bare without plants to grow. Andini stared at the mountain silently. As if the mountain had a mystery story that aroused the curiosity of people to investigate.

Andini remembered Parikesit who was killed by the Taksaka dragon. She saw as if Parikesit was floating and lay comfortably in a clump of white clouds that slowly moved around the summit of Mount Slamet. The cloud moved slowly as it floated above the horizon. Andini's heart was always touched to see the cloud. There was a beauty, there was a pain, and there was an awe. She imagined Parikesit was like a white cloud. He was a great king, and his name was renowned throughout the kingdoms other than Astina. Parikesit floated in the wind. Life was like a wind that floated and became intoxicating. Parikesit forgot that life in power was not only for himself, he could not be above the horizon, he must be grounded.

"The clouds were beautiful. I wondered why every time I saw the clump of clouds in the sky I always remembered Parikesit."

Andini said to herself. "Ah, so be it! Parikesit, yes, Parikesit! Clouds, yes, clouds, remained to stay above the horizon and white," Andini said again. "I asked grandpa why the white cloud was always interesting if it clumped and ran slowly over the horizon," Andini said as she turned to her grandfather's house. Andini returned to find her grandfather who had just returned from a meeting with his friends. Andini was always thirsty to hear stories from her grandfather. She had a lot of experience from stories told by his grandfather. Still a few days longer she lived in her grandfather's house. Andini's mother had returned to Jakarta and Andini would be picked up by her mom if the holiday period was over.

The grandfather and grandmother were happy to have Andini with them. They had a friend to chat with to the grandmother and there were people who would eat every food she cooked. The grandfather was happy because Andini was persistent to hear every story. Andini was a good granddaughter. For the grandparents, Andini was like a white cloud that walked slowly over the horizon aided by the wind.