

Ancient Science of India 2: Practical Implementation of Biotechnology for the Growth of Kuru Dynasty*

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ABSTRACT The epic Mahabharata is written by Maharshi Krushna Dwaipayana (known as Veda Vyasa-Jagatguru) in Sanskrit. This world famous epic is an epitome of virtues and ethics in addition to the family history of Kuru dynasty that suffered for generations without any male personality to rule the country. Evidences are available that techniques like artificial insemination, embryonic tissue transfer and use of surrogate mothers were employed to conserve the inheritance of the dynasty. Ultimately, the generation of the Kuru dynasty got divided into two groups of cousin brothers, namely, Kaurabas (100) and Pandabas (5). The Kaurabas to acquire over the country tortured the Pandabas, which finally ended with the Mahabharata war.

INTRODUCTION

The epic Mahabharata was written by Vyasadeva. The purpose of this epic was not only for historical records of the then time, rather it was an epitome to guide the human society in search of peace for all the times to come. When nothing is visible inside the darkness of ignorance, Mahabharata is written to open the inner eyes of the whole world. The four main objects of human life (*Chaturbarga*), that is, virtue, wealth, enjoyment and salvation are well elaborated in this epic. Deep study of Mahabharata clears the illusion darkness of the heart. There is a folklore that what is not written in the epic Mahabharata that does not exist in this world.

The Mahabharata war, that was fought five thousand years ago between cousin brothers of Kaurabas and Pandabas was a product of family dispute for the share of the kingdom, but caused a national involvement and international horror. By that time the total Bharat Varsa (undivided India comprising the east 'Gandhara', which is present Kandahar of Afghanistan, west 'Mani-man', which is present Myanmar, north the Himalayas, and south 'Singhala', which is current Sri Lanka) was not under one administration, and yet the contemporary cultural environment was of sameness. The nomenclature of the country

Bharat Varsa is said to be according to the name of an earlier famous king named Bharata, who was the ruler of the Indian subcontinent at a particular time. Among Bharata's descendants there was a king named 'Kuru' and the Kuru dynasty started from him.

The aim of this communication is to explore the ambiguity of the Kuru dynasty and various tortures to Pandabas, which finally ended with the Mahabharata war, the cause and effect respectively. Moreover, the techniques of artificial insemination, embryonic tissue transfer and use of surrogate mothers were frequently implemented to save the dynasty for three generations.

METHODOLOGY

The research techniques in ethno-biology can be broadly divided into two categories, namely, field research and literary research. Study of ancient literature and mythology has a broad dimension in literary research, which conveys the former traditional scientific thoughts, encapsulated in the hymns of Sanskrit or any other language and religious icons in symbolic terms and/or forms respectively (Padhy et al. 2015). In the present context the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata, written by saint Vyasadeva is the study material. This work has focused on the ambiguous Kuru dynasty and Mahabharata war that caused the social, ethical and environmental hazards 5000 years ago.

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OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Ambiguous Kuru Dynasty

King Santanu was a descendant of Kuru dynasty, who had two wives. The first named Ganga, had a son Debabrata, and also called Gangaya, Bhishma. The second wife Satyabati had two sons, namely, Chitrangada and Bichitrabirja. Debabrata being the eldest son was under the vow to remain bachelor and not produce children. He had also relinquished the rights over the kingdom. Chitrangada died young. Bichitrabirja had two wives, namely, Ambica and Ambalika, daughters of the King of Kashi. Bichitrabirja also passed away leaving his wives barren without any issue. The Kuru dynasty was almost devoid of any male personality to rule the country. By that time Satyabati was alone to take any decision. She looked for a *Niyoga Prathaa*, a socially approved natural process of artificial insemination to have children through her widowed daughters-in-law.

The biology of artificial insemination in ancient India, can be traced back to the legendary epic Manusmruti, which might have eventuated under restricted natural conditions of a physical, social, psychological and ethical environment (Mohapatra et al. 2001). This process was known as *Niyoga Prathaa* (process), referred as socially allowed sexual relation with a female (who had either a sterile husband or a widow without issue) by another specific man other than her husband, with the only intention to have a child (son). More to say, *Niyoga* was a natural process of artificial insemination, a significant part of the eugenic concept of ancient Indians (Padhy 2010). In *Niyoga*, the elder or younger brother of the female's husband, or in their absence any *Sapinda* (kinsman of the husband) is allowed to donate the sperm (Manu 9/59). In the epic Mahabharata, repeated practical implementation of *Niyoga* is described to have children in order to save the dynasty (Fig. 1).

Satyabati asked Vyasa for insemination of his widowed daughters-in-law, Ambica and Ambalika. The order was carried out. But the question arises about how Vyasa came to the picture. He was neither a family member nor a kinsman. Vyasa with the original name Krushna Dwaipayana was the son of Satyabati (the daughter of a fisherman king) and saint Parasara, a product of the former, before marriage. Such a son whom a damsel secretly bears in her parental house before marriage is termed

as *Kanina Putra* (Manu 9/172). The offsprings of such an unmarried girl belong to him who weds her afterwards, when she declares it at the time of contingency and emergency (Mohapatra et al. 2001). Timely, Satyabati declared this event when she wanted to appoint Vyasa to produce children out of her two widowed daughters-in-law. By that time there was no alternative other than Vyasa for *Niyoga*.

The sons so born due to insemination by Vyasa were Dhrutarashtra, Pandu and Bidura. The first one was born blind and the second was an albino. Both were strong, stout and warriors, but for the congenital disorders their widow mothers were blamed for the negative mental reaction they expressed during cohabitation with the saint. The third son Bidura was a product through a non-*Kshatriya* maiden servant. Ambica and Ambalika, to avoid cohabitation with the saint, secretly projected this servant lady before him in a dark bedroom. Bidura, though a learned person and minister, was not accepted as a *Kshatriya*. Moreover, the *Niyoga* word was not used in the epic and the whole event was described as Vyasa's blessings.

In course of time Dhrutarashtra got married to Gandhari. Pandu had two wives, namely, Kunti and Madri, and without any offspring. Pandu had permitted his wives to bear children from other sources, as he was suffering from a curse that he would die if he goes for sexual cohabitation. There are interpretations that Pandu was a weak personality suffering from chronic jaundice, which caused the albino appearance of his body colour. The above presentations prove that sperm donation technology was highly developed in ancient India at par with the modern biology.

Kunti and Madri, the wives of Pandu and the mothers of five Pandabas, had their children from divine sources (*Devataas*) like Dharma, Vaayu, Indira and Aswini Kumars through *Niyoga*. It is physically and biologically impossible for a female to co-habit with the natural powers (*Devataas*) of the environment to have children. Moreover, Kunti had a *Kanina Putra* named 'Karna' from the source of Sun God (Surya). This indicates towards the obscurity of the name of sperm donors that was followed in ancient India. The same ethics is also implemented in the sperm banks of modern days. This hiding of the name is done to avoid social problems and demand for fatherhood by the male partner. The Pandabas, namely, Yudhistira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva are recognised and

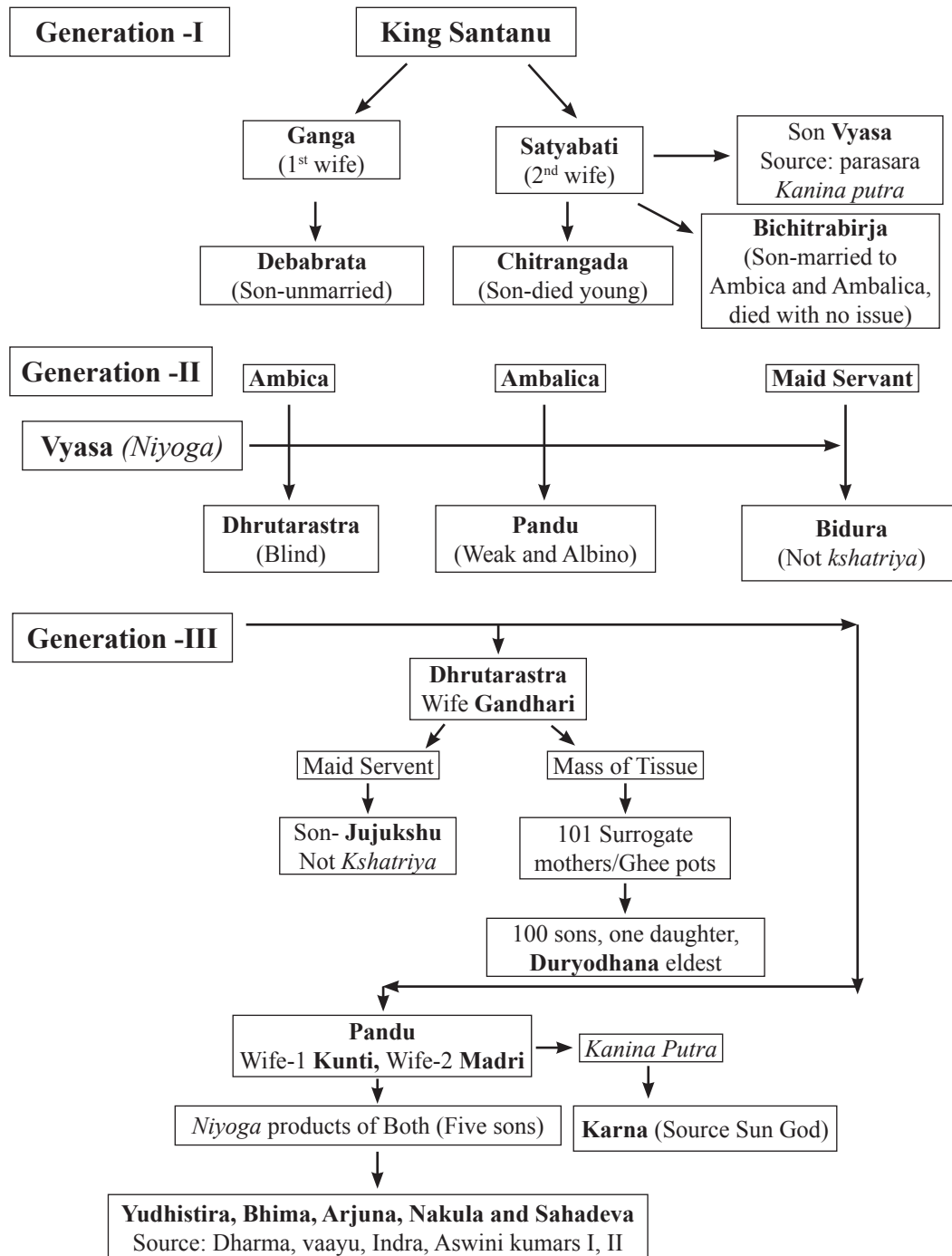


Fig. 1. Growth of Kuru Dynasty

respected as sons of Pandu (called Pandabas). The unfortunate Karna being the eldest son of Kunti, was not included in *Kshatriya* caste, as he was abandoned by his mother before her marriage and brought up by a non-*Kshatriya* couple.

Because of blindness, being the eldest son in the family, Dhritarastra could not enjoy the throne of Hastina. Younger Pandu ruled over the country. In spite of his humbleness towards his elder brother, Dhritarastra was not happy with the situation. Due to ill health, Pandu sacrificed the throne and went away to Himalayas for austerity. Dhritarastra temporarily became the king. There was a silent competition earlier between the families of two brothers to produce sons to become the crown prince. As discussed earlier, Pandu permitted his wives for *Niyoga*. Coincidentally, Gandhari and Kunti conceived at the same time. Both were eager to give birth to the first male child, the envisaged king. Some abnormality happened with Gandhari and she could not deliver the child even after the tenth month of conception. Meanwhile, Kunti gave birth to a male child (Yudhistira) being inseminated (*Niyoga*) by the mythical personality Dharma. Gandhari, out of frustration hit repeatedly over her womb and finally delivered a mass of tissues. She was about to throw the mass, when suddenly Vyasa appeared there, consoled her and advised to arrange one hundred pots of *Ghruta* (Ghee). The tissue mass was dissected to one hundred pieces and each piece was kept inside a *Ghruta* pot for further growth. One extra piece was inoculated separately with the expectation that it carried a female genome (XX). All the one hundred and one pots were kept under careful supervision. After two years, one hundred sons appeared inside the pots and a girl child in the extra pot. Duryodhana was the eldest among them. The total growth of Kuru dynasty is presented generation wise from King Santanu onwards in Figure 1.

Few Secret Facts

In the epic Mahabharata, many facts are omitted or represented in symbolic form. This is responsible for the creation of different myths. A scientific approach to analyse the myths are as follows (Padhy 2016):

1. If one looks at Gandhari's conception from a gynaecological point of view, it was a molar pregnancy. In such case, the embryo grows to

some extent without any differentiation of tissue and finally becomes a living static tissue mass or dead. The mass of tissue looks like a bunch of grapes. In Gandhari's case the tissues were not dead, since they differentiated again actively under suitable circumstances. The whole irony is, animal cells including human cells do not have totipotency and only can be manipulated and used for the development of a child in gametic stage or restricted growth stage of the embryo inside a womb only. The growth of a human embryo (as well as animals) is possible inside the uterus of the concerned mother or a surrogate/substitute mother.

2. As narrated in the epic, the whole process of tissue transfer in Gandhari's laboratory was conducted by the direction of Vyasa. The meaning of the Sanskrit word Vyasa is a dissector, a surgeon. Maharshi Krushna Dwaipayana, the original name of Satyabati's '*Kanina Putra*', who was the key person who composed the epic Mahabharata, was given a nickname Veda '*Vyasa*'. Since he conglomerated the scattered Vedic knowledge and divided it into four groups of Rig, Saam, Yajur and Atharva, the above nickname was conferred on him. He is also known as *Jagatguru* (teacher of the world). He inseminated in the *Niyoga* process to save the Kuru dynasty as discussed earlier. In the present context, if Maharshi Vyasa dissected the tissue mass delivered by Gandhari, he must be adorned as a scientist, surgery specialist and biotechnologist. Otherwise, there were two personalities named Vyasa, that is, one, the above referred saint poet and the other was a true scientist aware of practical biotechnology. It is a big question without an answer about who was '*Vyasa*', and maybe the latter with the advice of the former carried out the whole event.
3. As far as possible, one hundred and one surrogate mothers were employed to receive the undifferentiated embryo segments of Gandhari. Under the circumstances, one has to assume that the menstrual cycle and uterine condition of these mothers were congenial to receive the embryonic tissue. Maybe some other technology was known to earlier civilisation, to monitor the uterine environment of a female before cohabitation to ensure fertilisation. This conclusion is

based on various (only) single sexual events between the partners and giving birth to child, as depicted in different other Puranic epics along with Mahabharata. The use of surrogate mothers was kept a secret in the epic and they are referred as *Ghruta* vessels. Another assumption should be made that the success of the event was one hundred percent, since there was no written evidence of failure.

4. Puranic literature says that Gandhari was a maiden from the country Gandhara (now 'Kandahar' in Afghanistan). She came to her in-laws' house along with a good number of young maidservants. Generally in royal families maidservants were given as marriage gifts (*Jautika*) along with the bride. Probably these maids were used as surrogate mothers, that is, those who were only limited to the premises of King's palace. This was another reason why the fact was not publicised.
5. The inoculated embryonic tissues finally developed hundred sons and a girl child. It is mentioned in the epic that the babies were released from the *Ghruta* pots after two years. The normal incubation period of a human child in mother's womb is ten months only. The two years period is an ambiguous application. Moreover, it is written that, Vyasa advised to open the lids of the pots after two years. This was an advice with a dual meaning. Indirectly he mentioned that the matter maybe made open to public after two years, after the breastfeeding period is over. Events that occur inside a King's family were hardly made public and/or rarely questioned by anyone. In this case also, the public were notified that Gandhari was blessed with one hundred sons and a daughter, with Duryodhan being the eldest one.
6. At a particular time the Kuru dynasty was passing through a critical time. The throne was in uncertainty after the departure of Pandu. Dhritrashtra was temporarily managing as the King. The *Niyoga* products of Kunti were young enough to take up the responsibility of the Kingdom. The blind Dhritrashtra was selfish with all negative thoughts. At that juncture, in order to save the dynasty, saint Vyasadeva very cleverly omitted the whole birth event of hundred sons, which occurred with the use of surrogate mothers. Moreover, he had a weakness towards the dynasty, which was revived by his *Niyoga* earlier. It was certain that the surrogate mothers were not of *Kshatriya Varna*. That will certainly reflect on the integrity of the *Kshatriya* dynasty (Padhy 2010). It was also a hard task to get one hundred young *Kshatriya* females for the purpose at a time. Vyasadeva has tactfully controlled the situation in the right time and has publicised the embryo transfer technology through plant tissue culture techniques. The use of surrogate mothers was kept a secret and accordingly reflected in the epic Mahabharata.
7. During Gandhari's conception time, a *Vaisya* female was in personal service of Dhritrashtra. Subsequently, her master made her pregnant and had a son named Juyukshu, who was not included in the *Kshatriya Varna* but was accepted in the family (like his uncle Bidura). Comparatively he was calmer and more sober than his so called hundred Kuru brothers. He joined with the Pandavas in the Mahabharata war at the spot in the battlefield.
8. Surrogate mothers do not contribute genes to their children. But a mother's impact as *Samskara* (metaphysical character transfer) of the child cannot be ruled out. In this context, a book published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, namely, 'Pre-natal education towards a Glorious Future' can supply enough feedback. The negative characters of Duryodhana and his ninety-nine brothers stand similar vis-à-vis with their maternal uncle Sakuni, an inhabitant of Gandhara country. Sakuni is narrated as the most wicked personality of Mahabharata, who was the key person for all the devastating events. Since the surrogate mothers were from Gandhara, their negative epigenic characters might have reflected in their children.
9. To save the integrity of the Kuru dynasty, the embryo transfer technology was omitted and published through a mysterious plant tissue culture technique (tissue developed to child inside *Ghruta* pot) by Vyasa in the epic Mahabharata. The meaning of Sanskrit word *Ghruta* is cream of anything substantial (like milk), can be compared with the well-planned nutrient solution used in plant culture medium of modern technology.
10. More to add here is that Sri Balarama, the elder brother of Sri Krishna, was a product of embryo transfer from one womb to another

Birth History of Sri Balarama

Basudev and Devaki, parents of Sri Balarama and Sri Krishna were kept in prison just after their marriage, by Kansa (the wicked king and brother of Devaki). The prediction was that Kansa would be killed by the eighth offspring of Devaki, which was the reason for this brutal activity and torture of the couple. Kansa promised to kill all the eight children of Devaki. Moreover, the young couple was under surveillance rather than rigorous imprisonment, with all medical facilities and comfort requirements to give birth to their eight children. In course of time, the first six sons were killed by Kansa and the seventh conception of Devaki was declared as a miscarriage. Sri Krishna was born as the eighth son of the royal couple. Further life history of Sri Krishna is an open text.

Basudev had two wives, the first one Rohini and second Devaki. Before his marriage with Devaki, Rohini was issueless. Under the disputed circumstances after the second marriage of Basudev, Rohini migrated from Mathura to Gopa. She was under the protection of King Nanda, a good friend of Basudev. Virtually there was no physical relation between Basudev and Rohini, as they were at a distance from each other. The puranic literature says that, as soon as Devaki had a miscarriage at Mathura, by that time Rohini conceived at Gopa. The embryo from Devaki's womb was transferred to Rohini's womb by 'Mahamaya' as the epic says. The ambiguous name Mahamaya is ever referred to the cosmic illusion, a female force and a difficult concept to understand and realise. In Indian philosophy Mahamaya is referred as the nature's internal inderent power that works in obscurity and forces a being to experience the good and bad results of deeds in his life. In the present context, it cannot be ruled out that Mahamaya was a royal gynaecologist who was looking after Devaki and secretly transferred her foetus (7th conception) to Rohini's womb. Rohini gave birth to Sri Balarama at Gopa, who was regarded as the elder brother of Sri Krishna. This fact more or less was known to everyone by that time in the family. Rohini had no ill reputation for the conception and motherhood in the absence of her husband. This indicates a public consciousness of such event. Rather in the future, Sri Balarama was nicknamed as *Rohinisuta* (son), and Sri Krishna as *Devakisuta*, an adornment to their concerned mothers (Padhy 2016).

(Box 1). This shows that use of biotechnology was not only limited to the Kuru dynasty.

Torture to Pandabas

Pandabas lost their father Pandu and mother Madri in their childhood. They were brought up by mother Kunti and proved to be unique in their character, soberness and education. Blind Dhrutarashtra and his wife Gandhari (who observed the vow to be blind with a cloth band on her eyes) could not take care of their one hundred and one children. Of course all were under the control, supervision and advise of grandfather Bhishma and uncle Bidura. Dronacharya was the common teacher for all of them. However, Dhrutarashtra and the Kauraba brothers were not happy with the Pandabas. The jealousy of Dhrutarashtra towards his nephews directly and indirectly reflected on his own sons. He could not become the permanent king being the eldest son due to blindness and had no hope for the kingdom for his eldest son Duryodhan, as Yudhistira was the eldest in the family. Ultimately the whole situation of inner burning provoked the Kaurabas to be revengeful against the Pandabas and uncle Sakuni added wood of evil advise, as fuel to the fire. The whole sequence of tortures faced by the Pandabas is reflected in a gist as follows.

Bhishmasena Poisoned

Among all, Bhishmasena was the strongest and he topped in games, overall movement and was

also a voracious eater. He used to tease the Kauraba brothers physically in every activity including playing, swimming and tree climbing. Duryodhan and his brothers were very much annoyed with him. One day, taking the advantage of Bhishmasena's weakness for food, they fed him poisoned sweets at the riverbank of Ganga after a swimming competition. When he became motionless due to the poison's effect, the Kuru brothers immersed him in the river water tied with ropes. Again poisonous snakes in the river bit Bhishmasena. Poison counteracts the effect of poison. Fortunately, he recovered quickly and rescued himself. This incident shows the severe cruel thought of the Kaurabas from their childhood, not hesitant even to kill a cousin brother for small causes.

Public Show for Art of Warfare

After completion of general education and art of warfare by all his disciples, Guru Dronacharya reported the matter to King Dhrutarashtra and requested to arrange an open stage to show their abilities in public. Accordingly, an arena was constructed for the demonstration of their skills and bravery, with sitting arrangements for royal family members and the general audience. The show started and the royal participants demonstrated their combating abilities like horse and elephant riding, archery aiming at a point sitting on a running horse, wrestling, mace fighting, sword fighting

and advanced archery, etc. The public and family members encouraged them. But the mace fighting between Bhimasena and Duryodhan crossed the limitations of friendly fight and both of them attacked each other in anger. To stop them, suddenly the war music was discontinued and Drona's son Asvatthaamaa interfered to separate them apart.

Arjuna exhibited the best of his combating ability in archery and also demonstrated his efficiency in different war activities with various other weapons. Each and every one praised him. Suddenly a young man named Karna stood up from the audience, and entered like a hero into the centre of the field and proved his art of warfare equivalent to that of Arjuna. The audience appreciated him but the question of his not being from the royal family was raised and he was discouraged. He was belittled for his uninvited entrance and lower family background. The situation led to an excitation for war between Karna and Arjuna. Karna was strongly objected to fight with a member of the king's family, from every royal corner.

Duryodhan took the advantage of the situation, finding Karna equally efficient with Arjuna in art of warfare. He declared Karna then and there as the King of Anga country, elevated his royal status and embraced him as his best friend. Dronacharya's attempt to prove Arjuna as the top-most archer, almost failed. Karna proved himself as the best archer and this impression was carried by each and every one. The show ended that day, but Duryodhan felt elevated to face the Pandabas with the help of Karna in the forthcoming days.

Plan to Burn Pandabas Alive

One year after the demonstration of the art of warfare, Dhritarastra enthroned Yudhistira as crown prince. The Pandaba brothers proved themselves as noble with their rational character and praised by each and every one. Dhritarastra became very unhappy, comparing his sons with the Pandabas. He consulted one of his ministers named Kanika, who was famous for being malicious. Kanika's evil advice was that a poisonous plant should be uprooted and spoiled. A weak enemy also should not be neglected. He suggested that the Pandabas may be sent out of the country of Hastina and should be killed there. Finally, Dhritarastra consulted Duryodhan and planned for the expulsion of the Pandabas from the country.

Accordingly, Dhritarastra suggested the Pandabas to go for an excursion trip to a pilgrim place Barunabanta and enjoy some quality time there. A new palatial building was constructed there as the residence of the Pandabas. Yudhistira with his brothers and mother Kunti left for Barunabanta. Ironically, their residential house at the new place was built using highly inflammable materials like jute, grass, wood and lac mixed with ghee. The upper portion was covered properly and decorated nicely to maintain the secrecy.

Learned Bidura could know about the secret plan of Sakuni and Kauraba brothers. While taking leave from him before journey, he tactfully and symbolically conveyed the information to Yudhistira. The Pandabas became alert and remained vigilant. A tunnel was dug inside the residential house by an efficient man sent by Bidura to escape out in any contingent situation.

The name of the caretaker of that house was Purochana, who was expected to ignite the whole set up to burn the Pandabas. One day the Pandabas arranged a feast and invited the neighbours and surrounding people. Purochana could not guess their plan to escape. In the dead of the night, Yudhistira ordered Bhimasena to light up the house and they escaped through the tunnel. Crooked Purochana was burnt alive. Unfortunately, a tribal lady with her five sons, who took part in the feast and was taking rest there, and they were also burnt and died. The deadly news reached Hastina. Dhritarastra shed crocodile tears externally but was satisfied internally. All Kaurabas and their uncle Sakuni felt very much delighted due to the death of Pandabas. Bidura was aware of everything. Interestingly, the charred dead bodies of the tribal lady and her sons were mistaken as Pandabas and Kunti. Bhisma and other Kuru family members performed the last rites of the Pandabas.

The escaped Pandabas crossed river Ganga in a boat arranged previously by Bidura. They moved towards south and wandered aimlessly in different localities and forest areas saving their lives, escaping from the sight of the Kaurabas.

Draupadi's Marriage

There was a famous country named Panchal, ruled by King Drupada, a reputed personality. He had a beautiful and intelligent daughter named Draupadi. The King had the wish for the marriage

of his daughter with Arjuna. But the news regarding the death of Pandabas in the inflammable house at Barunabanta faded the inner urge of the king. Finally he arranged a *Swayambara* (a form of marriage in which the maiden selects her husband from among the shooters assembled for the purpose) for the marriage of Draupadi. It was a very difficult archery test of aiming on a point of a rotating object, observing its position reflected in a water pot. Young kings, crown princes and royal warriors from different parts of Bharat Varsa (the then India) were invited to join the competition. The activity started in a decently decorated vast meeting place. All royal participants failed to complete the test. The most efficient Karna when arrived at the spot, he was discouraged by Draupadi expressing her regrets to marry him. Subsequently the invitation to participate in the event for non-royals was extruded.

The Pandabas got the news of *swayambara* from public rumour when they were far away and they were confirmed about the same by Vyasadeba later. With the permission of mother Kunti and being encouraged by Vyasa, they joined the event in disguise. On open invitation, Arjuna rose from the group of *Brahmins* sitting there and successfully completed the task. Draupadi garlanded him. But suddenly the situation changed. The royal kings could not tolerate the marriage of the princess to a beggar *Brahmin*. Ultimately the confused voice turned to a war, and attacked Pandabas. Finally, Sri Krishna settled the situation. The Pandabas and mother Kunti were exposed of their impersonation. Finally, following certain family customs and as per some specific events of Draupadi's last life, she married the five brothers with the blessings of Vyasadeva. The marriage function was celebrated with pomp and ceremony.

The plan to kill the Pandabas failed, they succeeded the *Swayambara* and availed an excellent life partner and got the full support of their father-in-law Drupada, causing a lot of heart burn to Dhrutarastra. The Kaurabas along with Karna and Sakuni conspired to attack Panchala country to get back the Pandabas as prisoners. On consultation, Bhishma, Bidura and Drona strongly objected Dhrutarastra's view, and suggested him to extend friendly relations with Drupada and make arrangements to greet the Pandabas and Draupadi, who were under the strong support of Sri Krishna and Sri Balarama.

Pandabas Availed Kingdom Share

The Pandabas along with Draupadi returned to Hastina. They were greeted by the public and family members. All were very happy to get them back alive. After some days Dhrutarastra suggested Yudhistira to rule over fifty percent of the country in order to avoid family dispute for the kingdom. This order was placed in presence of Bhishma. The inner intention of the blind king was to protect his sons with this order. Yudhistira was allotted the Khandabaprasta area to develop his kingdom. Previously the earlier area was the kingdom of Kuru dynasty, but afterwards it was shifted to Hastina. The abandoned locality had turned to a deep forest. The Kaurabas felt delighted to push off Pandabas out of Hastina. The Pandabas cleaned the forest area and constructed a beautiful kingdom and named it Indraprasta. Yudhistira ruled the area sincerely following the justified norms. He celebrated *Rajasuya yajnya* (a sacrificial function by a monarch) with the help of Sri Krishna. The success of the Pandabas could not be tolerated by Duryodhan and his group. They became very much jealous and searched for new ways to torture the Pandabas.

Conspiracy of Gambling

Sakuni was an expert gambler. After the failure of the conspiracy to spoil the Pandabas, he planned for a gambling project to acquire their wealth and kingdom. Accordingly, Duryodhana and Sakuni discussed the matter and convinced Dhrutarastra to invite the Pandabas for gambling. In fact, Yudhistira had a weakness for gambling. He was not a perfect player, but was very eager to participate in the game as a vice.

Dhrutarastra wanted to consult Bidura for advice in this regard, but he was discouraged by Sakuni. Finally, the proposal was granted and Bidura was forced to go to the Pandabas with the messages of invitation for gambling. At this juncture, Bidura wanted to convince both the parties to avoid gambling, but his efforts went in vain. Of course, Yudhistira expressed that such game was played by knavish people and not a order for royals to play. His idea was turned down and in that situation he was almost forced to join the gambling. On the spot, Sakuni virtually played on behalf of Duryodhan with the application of duplicity. Yudhistira lost all his wager time to time.

He lost his kingdom, animal wealth, ornaments one by one and finally he kept his four brothers and himself as a bet, but was defeated. At last, by the provocation of Sakuni he betted Draupadi and lost her. Unfortunately, the whole gambling show was witnessed by elders like Bhishma, Drona, Krupacharya and Bidura, and each one reacted internally but none of them could object to it.

Duryodhan being over excited of his victory, and ordered younger brother Dushasana to bring out Draupadi from the inner palace to the royal court and snatch out her clothes to make her naked in the mid of the assembly. The order was carried out, but Dushasana could not make Draupadi naked, as she was blessed with the continuous covering of clothes by Sri Krishna from an obscure source. The divine miracle saved Draupadi and surprised each and every one. Dhrutarastra, to pacify the situation returned all the lost wealth to Yudhistira, released them from slavery and asked them to return back to Indraprasta and rule the country happily.

Twelve Years of Forest Life

The Pandabas returned to Indraprasta, mentally carrying the pain of insult to Draupadi. After their departure a great agitation developed in Hastina palace. Each Kauraba brother brought allegations against their father Dhrutarastra for the loss of a great opportunity. A new conspiracy was framed between Duryodhan, Sakuni and Karna to invite Yudhistira for the second time for gambling. Accordingly, Dhrutarastra was convinced and an invitation was sent to Indraprasta. Gandhari advised her husband to stop such activity for the betterment of the dynasty, but her words were not tasteful for Dhrutarastra. Again Yudhistira was forced to join in the game. During the Mahabharata period gambling was regarded as a royal challenge, like war. This time the bet was a proposal instead of any material. As per plan, Sakuni raised the proposal that "he who would lose the game, would go to the forest for twelve years and in the thirteenth year, expected to enter into secluded life". If identified during the last year, he would again go to the forest for another twelve years. It was a long-term plan to exile the Pandabas. The plan virtually worked. Again Yudhistira lost in the gambling and the Pandabas along with Draupadi left for twelve years of forest dwelling, leaving their mother Kunti in the custody

of Bidura. The citizens of Hastina become very unhappy and felt the loss of their real leaders. Each and every one blamed the Kaurabas for the injustice caused to the Pandabas. The bigger question raised was regarding the occurrence of all these events in the presence of elderly members like Bhishma, Drona, Krupacharya, Bidura and others. The Kauraba brothers, Sakuni and Karna felt delighted, but Dhrutarastra was shocked for granting permission for gambling and remaining silent during the insult to Draupadi. The blind king remained under constant tension thinking about the future of his beloved sons after thirteen years of the exiled period of Pandabas.

Time passed, and the Pandabas with Draupadi managed with the hardship of forest life. They moved from place to place and covered the different points of pilgrimage. They interacted with different saints, learned persons and availed their blessings. Arjuna took the chance to collect new varieties of weapons from different sources and learned their proper application. Finally, in the thirteenth year they spent their secluded life in the Matsya country, with different names and professions in the premises of King Birata's palace.

The Kaurabas were in search of the Pandabas, with an intention to identify them and send them again to the forest for a second term of twelve years. Somehow, they suspected the presence of Pandabas in Matsya country and attacked that country in association with King Susarma of Trigadrata country, who was an old enemy of King Birata. They robbed the animal wealth of Matsya country and spoiled their agriculture fields. An instant war was initiated. Comparatively the army of Matsya was weak without proper leader. With the decision of Yudhistira, the Pandabas joined war and scattered the joint venture of Kaurabas. The prominent warriors of Kauraba army tried to save themselves and Duryodhan fled towards Hastina along with the robbed animal wealth. The war ended with the victory of Matsya country but the Pandabas were exposed due to their unique war technique, especially that of Arjuna and Bhimasena. But fortunately, that day was the last day of conciliation.

CONCLUSION

All were happy due to the safe return of Pandabas from the forest dwelling except Dhrutarastra, his

sons, Sakuni and Karna. The whole scenario ended with a grand, marriage ceremony of Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna and Subhadra with Uttara, the daughter of King Birata in the presence of Sri Krishna, Sri Balarama and other well wishers. There were various discussions to settle the family disputes, but nothing could work. There were advices rendered by various important persons to convince Dhrutarastra in different times and situations, but every attempt failed, which finally led to the Mahabharata war.

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