THE ESSENCE OF MAHA BHARATA

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THE ESSENCE OF MAHABHARATA
H.S. Brahmananda

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Dedicated

to the Lotus feet of the Lord
Shri Venkateswara Swmay Varu
the spirit behind my life and
mission and what not?

- Author

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FOREWORD

By the divine ordinance of Lord Venkateswara, I had the fortune of serving "Dharma Prachara Parishat" of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati as secretary for five years (1999 - 2004).

During my stay at Tirupati, I had the blessings of many Vedic and Puranic scholars from various parts of India. When I visited Mauritius, as a representative of T.T.Ds. to attend the 'Saptaha of Sri Venkateswara Bhakta Samajam', I found the impact that Indian Epics have on the minds of the young people abroad.

Then many parents for USA and other countries contacted me and asked me to prepare 'books for children in English particularly on Ramayana, Bharata, and Bhagavata, the great legends of India.

This is the first attempt to summarise the 'Essence of Maha Bharata' in English particularly for school and college going children, and elders as well.

In this connection, I recollect my fond memory with the T.T. Devasthanams Executives and DPP employees who worked with me throught the 'day' for 5 years.

I thank my beloved teacher Prof. T. Koteswara Rao, who guided me to work on 'Maha Bharata' a few years ago, to co-author a paper for 'Encyclopaedia in Asian Studies' Chennai.

In this short book, I do not claim an exhaustive study of the epic, but I am sure that children will benefit to have a clear thought about the entire epic in an abridged form, as rendered by Kavitraya in Telugu. I thank the TTD authorities for their financial help and seek the blessings of the Lord for the reestablishment of 'Dharma' in the present day 'busy' world of technological blowout, when the 'humanity' in Man and Woman is missing.

Let us add moral values to our education.

Anantapur
25-4-07

H.S. Brahmananda
CHAPTER - I

The Epic of Victory

Vyasa, the Puranic sage is the author of Mahabharata, which forms one of the two greatest of Indian Itihasas, the other being Ramayana, written by the Sage Valmiki.

The original work was called 'Jaya' (Victory). That is why it is referred to as Jayetihasa (The Epic of Victory).

What is this Victory? We know pretty well that in the war of Kurukshetra, Dharmaraja and his four brother became 'Victorious'. And so, naturally we assume that the war in which Pandavas won the kingdom was named as 'Victory', referring to that of Pandavas over Kauravas.

Nevertheless, Vyasa did not stop his epic at that point. If we look at the 18 parvas of the Epic, we would understand the meaning of victory, which Vyasa had in his mind. Now let us have a look at the sequence of the 18 parvas.

1. Adi Parva  2. Sabha Parva  3. Aranya Parva
10. Sauptika Parva  11. Stree Parva
18. Swargarohana Parva.

In the oral tradition, these 18 parvas are divided under 3 heads.

I. Adi Panchaka (1 - 5)
II. Yuddha ShaTka (6 - 11)
III. Santi Saptaka (12 - 18)
The five elements of earth (prthvi) water (apas) five (agni) air (vayu) ethen (Akasa), give rise to human body containing five senses (sabda, sparsa, rupa, raga and gandha).

The human being is a manifestation of these five elements. In addition he develops 6 enemies around him: Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsara. As a result there is an internal as well as external battle all around. This war is represented by the Kurukshetra war where the persons belonging to the same family, like the organs of the same body fight against each other.

The result is restlessness. The war brings 'victory' for one, and 'defeat' for the other. The one who has become victorious is never seen to be happy if the game is fought for a material gain.

That is how the 'victorious man' searches further and further to attain 'peace' (santi). In order to attain 'peace' he removes the seven masks (avaranas) around his 'soul'. The seven masks are Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya and finding the 'Ego' (aham), which does not leave the man so easily. 'Swarga' is 'bliss', the state of undifferentiated consciousness. Hence it is called 'divine'; and symbolised by the presence of gods.

Every human being is essentially 'divine' in origin. And hence the story of Maha Bharata starts with Adiparvam, where different gods and divine spirits take human forms as Pandavas and Kauravas; and ends with Svargarohana Parvam, in which the fighting heroes and ante heroes ultimately merge into an undifferentiated superior consciousness, where there is only 'bliss'. No sorrow: No need of greed, and hence no 'war'.

Attaining this highest state of 'divinity' is the real 'Victory'. It was Dharmaraja alone, who could complete his journey to 'Swarga' with the physical form, and later removed his seventh mask called 'aham', by way of submitting his material body in to the divine Ganga river flowing in Swarga. And so, it was Dharmaraja, who became the ultimate victor, the real man of the match, in search of 'self realisation'.
And so, for Vyasa, the ‘Victory’ is not simply the ‘winning over’ of a person in a war. It is fighting against his own senses and achieving self realisation, which is the real ‘Victory’.

Man throughout the millions of years of his development, has been fighting these 2 wars; one against the enemy outside, and the other fighting his internal enemies.

Maha Bharata has an eternal and effective message for human beings who prefer to become ‘victorious’ in their lifetime.

Most of us would stop at fighting external enemies. The real enemy is the ‘Self’ in the form of ‘Ego’, responsible for man's misery.

CHAPTER - II

Names Known and Unknown

When the look at the names of the characters in Mahabharata, we come to the conclusion that the names are symbolic and relevant to the content of the epic.

For example we find Dharmaraja in controposition to Duryodhana (thought he is Suyodhana as he was named). So naturally Pandavas symbolise the Dharma and Kauravas the Adharma. Since the prefix dur- signifies negativity.

But the other names are not so easy to interpret, and this is so because, Vyasa, was essentially a great authority on Vedic-lore. He was also called Vedavyasa, since he compartmentalised the Vedic lore into 4 parts - Rig - Yajus - Sama and Adharvana. Naturally we find that the characters reflect Vedic background.

Though the story of Mahabharata is generally supposed to be mythological the Vedic-scholar Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni, towards beginning of the 20th century had interpreted the Vedic background found in Maha Bharata, in one of the lectures (Bharata Veerulu ; Rigveda Sama Kaleeyulu in his work ‘Nayana’ (Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni Jeevita Charitra (1964 : 763 - 770).
The scholar says that the Maha Bharata story refers to the Rigvedic times, and the characters are of vedic culture originally. Here are his observations:

1. The great grand father of Pandavas, Santana was the youngest brother of Devapi, who was an author of many Rigvedic mantras.

2. The Sarngakulagni geeta, a mantra cited in the context of Khandava dahana in Sabha Parvam, bears many similarities to the one found in Rigveda.

3. The teachers (gurus) of Krishna, Angirasa, Ghora, Upamanyu and his father Vyacjrapada are all seers of Rigvedic hymns.

4. Dharumya, the Purohit of Pandavas was the youngest brother of Devala, was another famous seer of Rigvedic hymns.

5. Megasthanese had recorded that Sri Krishna belonged to the 15th generation of Daksha. Maha Bharata and Harivamsa also describe similarly. If Chandragupta was of the 153rd generation to Daksha, then Krishna should belong to the 138th generation to Daksha. This proves that the story should have occurred in the Rigvedic times.

6. Even the names of 'Pandavas' reveal 'The secret of Veda' embedded in the story of Maha Bharata. There was one Vedic seer by name Etasa, who was variously called as Kutsa, Ariuna, Arjuneya, Rijasva, and Dyotana. The star Uttara Phalguni according to astrology was also called 'Arjuna'. Rijasva means Svetavahana, a synonym of Arjuna in Maha Bharata. According to the Vedic episode, Rijasva was the son of Svitra, who had a skin disease of leucoderma (panduroga). It is clear their Vyasa took the clue from Vedic lore and described Arjuna as the son of Panduraja.

Svitra according to veda, is said to have 5 sons: Ambarisha, Bhayamana, Rijasra, Suradhasa, and Sahadeva. Ambarisha was also called Sama, Vrishabha, ands Ajata satu; who is no other than Dharmaraja of Maha Bharata. Similarly Sama refers to Santi (it is to be recalled that 'Sama' is said to be the sthayi bhava of 'Santa Rasa.
according to Indian Poetics). Vrishabha stands for Dharma. 
Ambareesha was called Nabhaga (he who is not unkind) - ie., having sympathy for others, which was the typical characteristic of Dharma Raja. 'Sama', and 'Dharma' stand for 'Yama', the god of Death, who is equal to all, or all are equal to him; the same divine spirit who taught 'Vidya' (the secret of jnana and mukthi) to Nachiketa (See Kathopanishat) Bhayamana (the terrible one causing fear) refers directly to Bheema. Suradhara, refers to a good brother (Nakula). The word sahdeva, is used as it is, from Rigveda.

Regarding Kauravas, Duryodhana's names are found differently as Kuyava, Kuyavak, Vriddhavak and Duryona. Kuryavak is 'the one with crooked words'. Duryona refers to 'the one with a bad origin' (astrologically).

As far as Draupadi is concerned, She was named as Ghesha, and is said to have been married to the five Maruths (the five wind gods), which is narrated as Draupadi being given in marriage to Pancha Pandavas.

Regarding Karna, there is an interesting feature. According to Rigveda, Sushna, Sukravasu, Asusa, Turvayana, Vrishakapi, Karna, Gau, Sura, and Surya were the names of the hero with whom Kutsa had to fight. The name of Sura, and Surya remind us the story of Karna being born to Kunti through Surya (the sun god).

The Veda says that Sauradeva, was the chariot driver of Kutsa, in his war against Sura. It is also said that Sauradeva broke the wheel of Sura's chariot and caused his defeat.

So we should bear in mind, that we find an inner meaning of the names of the characters, which is traditionally handed over in Vedic learning.

More clearly, Vyasa in Virata Parva discloses the meaning of 'Victory', as was described in the previous chapter, by indicating that the Pandavas had 5 other names as Gandharvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dharma Raja</th>
<th>Jaya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bheema</td>
<td>Jayantha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arjuna - Vijaya
Nakula - Jayatsena
Sahadeva - Jayadbala

It is interesting to note that all the five names have 'Jaya' as the main constituent. In the Vedic tradition it is said that the Devatas are fond of Indirect Reference (Paroksha Priyavaihi Devah). That is why Pandavas were referred to by their indirect names.

In addition we find other names for Pandavas in the same Parva.

Dharmaraja - Kanka Bhatta - (Kanka : Yama)
Bheema - Valala - (Vallava : Cook)
Arjuna - Bruhannala - (Bruhat : gnear ; Nara : Man)
- There is a sound change of r → l)
Nakula - Damagrandhi - (grandha : Ayurveda)
Sahadeva - Tanti (Tantri) Pala - (tanti : cowherd)

It is to be remembered that Nakula was a veterinary doctor, and Sahadeva was cowherd. Arjuna is known as a warrior: but he became a eunuch, by the curse of Urvasi, the celestial dancer. Dharmaraja took 'dice' as his profession, by which he had lost his kingdom. Bheema became a cook, in charge of Royal kitchen, where he could satisfy his hunger thoroughly and keep himself fit for the war.

Thus the names as well as their semantics point to a fact that it was not a mere 'quarrel' between the cousins, but a 'Yajna' (Sacrifice) which was planned and executed by the Divine will and presence in the form of Lord Krishna.
CHAPTER - III

The Meaning of the word Maha Bharata

Mahabharata episode is compared to a sacrifice (yajna). I would like to describe how the Kavitraya (represented by Tikkana) visualised the Vedic background of Maha Bharata, particularly from the point of 'war' which is the 'crucial' incident of the epic:

"The war sacrifice was conceived by Agni; Surya and Chandra (Fire, Sun, and Moon): the Yajna is in the name of Vishnu, who pervadas the Universe (represented in the story by Lord Krishna), while the yajna was performed by Arjuna and Karna actually"

(Karna Parva : 3 - 397)

According to Veda, Sauvadeva seems to be an incarnation of Indra (Vasava). Even the PauraniKas have named Krishna as 'Sauri' and 'Surah', and the name 'Vaasudeva' is associated with 'Vasudeva' his father according to Puranas. Vishnu Sahasranama records all these names of Vishnu, all of which refer to their Vedic background. It is well known that the Vedic Indra stands for the 'Supreme' God; the puranas too preserve the tradition by naming 'Vishnu' as 'Upendra'.

Similarly 'Sauradeva' driving the chariot is renaarrated as Krishna driving the chariot of Arjuna, and helped Pandavas to get their share of kingdom, as Sauradeva helped 'Svitra's sons in the Vedic narrative as described before.

And from a typological point of view, the story of Mahabharata revolves around the fact that Nara's (man) life is determined and directed by 'Narayan' (God).

Prof. Thadani, a great scholar of Vedic lore interprets the terms Maha and Bharata from the indirect method of Vedic exegesis as follows:

"This range from Sankhya to Vedanta is indicated by the very name Maha Bharata. (Maha + Bharata), meaning 'leading from
mahat (a term in Sankhya) to Bharata (breath or prana) refering to Vedanta. (See Sata Patha Brahmana (1-V-1-8)

(The Mystery of Maha Bharata Vol I - PP 1 - 4)

'Bha' means 'Yoga Vidya', which is in the form of 'light'. 'rata' means 'he who is interested' (See Kamakala Vilasamu P. 219). He is an Indian when deeply involved in Yoga Vidya, which is a way of combining 'real' with the 'ideal', 'macro cosmic' and 'micro cosmic', 'being' and 'becoming'.

These interpretations show that Maha Bharata is an interpretation of Vidya ie., Jnana, otherwise known as self-awareness (atmajnana). 'To know one's self, one needs to transcend from the 'mundane' to the 'spiritual'. This transition is the 'Victory' achieved by Dharma Raja at the end of the epic. He loses his mortal coil and becomes one with the eternal self.

What is the 'Spirituality' according to Vedavyasa? 'Dharmadvaita' is the ultimate stage of 'Jnana' according to him. From the broad spectrum of 'synthsising the opposites', Dharmadvaita can be better interpreted as follows:

1. Para and Apara (the manifest and unmanifest)
2. Go and Vrshabha (Ox and Cow)
3. Vak and Prana (Language and Conscience)
4. Mruta and amruta (death and eternity)
5. Stri and Purusha (Woman and Man)
6. Matru and Pitru (Mother and Father)
7. Dyava and Pruthvi (Sky and Earth)
8. Dravya and Atma (Matter and Spirit)
9. Agni and Soma (Fire and Moon)
10. Bandhu and Bindu (Circumference and centre)
11. Hari and Hara (Vishnu and Siva)

(See T. Koteswara Rao's preface 'Anusasanika Parvam' 1971: IV)

Tikkana (also Nannaya and Errana) seems to have captured
the idea of 'Dharmadvaita', because the concept of 'Hari Haranatha' (See Vireta 1-1) refers to the one-ness of Dharma. Nannaya's invocation about the Triad (Trīmutṛī tattva) is again an interpretation of generation (g), operation (o) and destruction (D) aspects of GOD from the Upanishadic point of view.

The 'Brahman' of the Upanishads is interpreted very clearly by Tikkana as follows:

"His form is Harihara, for a Vedic mind. He is the Supreme Power. His very name inspires the Goddess Śrī Gaurī (Personification of Lakshmi and Parvati in one goddess). He can be addressed either as Vishnu or Siva. He is the giver of all boons". (Virata parva 1 - 1)

Veda in fact talks only about 'Brahman' who pervades in all divine forms be it Brahma, Vishnu or Siva.

Sivaya Vishnu rupaya
Siva rupaya Vishnavē
Sivascha hridayam Vishnuh
Vishnoscha hridayam Sivah

(Siva and Vishnu are undifferentiable both in form and spirit. They appear in each other).

It we recall that Vyasa describes Vishnu and Siva in all forms on equal footing and complementary functionally, we understand that the supreme 'knowledge' that the Bharata epic provides is about 'Brahman' to whom every sacrifice (Puja too) is offered. Veda vyasa was a Brahajna, and he lighted 'Brahmajnana' through Maha Bharata which purely rests on the basis of 'one-ness of God', and the 'Unmanifest' characteristic of Brahman, which is the cause and the terminus. This point is explained in Bhagwadgeeta as follows:

aryaktadini bhutani
vyakta madhyani Bharata
avyakta nidhananyeva
tatra ka paridevana

(Bh.G.2 - 28)
The beings take birth in the unknown and end in the unknown. Only the middle is known and seen. Then where is the necessity of mourning over this issue (of death)?

This vision of Vedic culture lies in the background of Maha Bharata. Nannaya has captured the spirit of Vyasa in saying that, the three 'gods' and balancing the existence (See-Nannaya-Adi 1-1) otherwise called 'Sthiti', 'Srushti' and 'Laya' are the unknown aspects of creation. Tikkana goes a step ahead and says that Hari and Hara have been the gods of creation and destruction, the union of whose forces is symbolised as 'Brahman' i.e., the real essence of Vedanta.

When one achieves the state of 'Brahmatva', he is the most balanced (Yoga), most learned (jnani) and most active oriented to work (Karma).

Vyasa synthesised Yoga, Jnana and Karma by way of narrating the story, based on four purposes of life, Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha (Virtue, Prosperity, Desire and Liberation), four stages of life (Balya, Yauvana, Kaumara, Vardhakya corresponding to Brahmachary, Garhastha, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa), and four classes of people Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas and Sudras (intellectual, heroic, Commisariat and working classes).

Vyasa makes it very clear that in Maha Bharata we find excellent elaboration on Purusharthas.

Dharmècha Arthecha Kamecha

Mokshecha Bharatar shabha!

Yadihasti tadanyatra

Yannehasti nātatkwaic.

Regarding four purposes of life (as described above), what ever you find in Bharata is seen every where and what you do not find here, does not appear any where.
CHAPTER - IV

The Story of Pandavas and Kauravas
(abridged from Nannaya-Adi-1)

Since Maha Bharata is an epic, the story of Pandavas and Kauravas is narrated in such a way that the ancient history of Bharata Vamsa (the clan) is first described, and then the real story of the continued strife between Pandavas and Kauravas. Now let us look at the sequences of this epic story.

(1) ADI PARVA :-

There are 3 parts in the story of Adi Pārva.

(A) The story starts with king Janamejaya, son of Pareekshit performing 'Sarpa Yaga' (Sacrificing serpents). Then Astika comes to the thing, and persuades him to stop the sacrifice. Then Vysampayana, narrates the story of Pareekshit, who was bitten by Takshaka, a serpant king, and then narrates how the serpents were born. That is why the story begins with Paushya-Udanka Upakhyaṇa followed by the great episode of suparna (Garuda), in which the birth of serpents from Kadruva is described.

(B) The second part is the birth of Bheeshma, the central figure of 'Bharata', the grand father of Pandavas and Kauravas, who remained unmarried to keep the promise of his father Sautana made to his second wife Satyavati. Satyavati bears two sons: Chitrangada and Vicitra Veerya who die prematurely. Vedavyasa being the first son of 'Ganga' the first wife of Santana and the elder brother of Bheeshma, follows the custom of 'devaranyaya', by which a brother could give rise to the birth of a child through his sister-in-law in the event of the death of his brother.

As a result were born Dhrutarashtra and Panduraja through the wives of Chitrangada and Vicitra Veerya, Ambika and Ambalika respectively. Vidura was begot through a servant maid of the palace by Vyasa. Thus Bheeshma and Vidura became the defacto king
and minister of the Kaurava Kingdom for quite a long time.

Drona, a teacher in martial arts and expert in shooting of arrows (Dhanurvidya) becomes the teacher of Kuru-Pandava children. Dharmaraja is the eldest of all the children. Dhrutarashtra was blind by birth. Gandhari, his wife, gave birth to 100 sons of whom Suyodhana was the eldest.

Pandavas were the sons of Kunti and Madri, the wives of Pandu Raja. He was responsible for extending the frontiers of Kaurava Kingdom, but was cursed with 'Leucoderma' (white - skin), and was also cursed to die when he would mate with his wife. So he retired to live an asutic life, in the foest. Kunti had a boon of inviting Gods to fulfil her desire. With the permission her husband, she gave birth to Dharmaraja by inviting 'Yama' the God of death; Bheema, through 'Vayu', the God of air; and Arjuna through 'Indra', the king of Gods. Madri followed Kunti in inviting 'Aswins' the gods of Medicine and health, and begot Nakula and Sahadeva. Panduraja died of an unfortunate incident of his intercourse with Madri. Kunti brought the five children to the capital for better environment and royal dignity, on the advice of the sages of the forest.

As a result Pandavas, since their birth were looked down upon by the young Suyodhana. But by virtue of their physical and moral strength the Pandavas excelled Kauravas in every field. Sakuni, the maternal uncle of Kauravas, became the counsellor in guiding his nephews to ill-treat Pandavas even while they were children.

Mean while another important warrior enters the story: Karna, who was infact the son of Kunti, as a boon from Sun God. But unfortunately, being afraid of the society, the young kunti, deserted the child, by floating the child in a box in the river. A chariot driver 'Suta' brought the child up. The young Karna, exhibited the traits of a great warrior, in no way inferior to any son of Kaurava clan. As a result he challenges the abilities of Arjuna during a function where the Kuru-Pandava children exhibited their martial and military talents, and was acclaimed as an equal to Arjuna, in warfare, particularly in the area of arrow shooting.
Duryodhana wanted some one to stand by his side to check Arjuna. Kama was found be such a choice. He made him the king of Angarajya.

Advised by Bheeshma, Vidura and elderly sages, Dhrutarashtra made Dharma Raja, 'the Prince' (Yuvaraja) to succeed the throne, as the convention was to select the elder one.

Duryodhana was not happy with this act. He approached his father and pleaded that Pandavas could not be continued to stay at Hastinapura, the capital. He also made appeal to him to see that his sons would takenup the royal sceptor afterwards.

All these requests by the son had an immediate impact on the 'blind' king. A plan was worked out to put Pandavas at Varanavatha (the present Benaras) where under the advice of Sakuni, Duryodhana arranged to buildup a house made of 'lac', and burn Pandavas alive along with their mother.

Vidura came to know the plan, and on his advice, Pandavas with the help of Bheema escaped the danger of being burnt away. They moved further in the forests in the 'guise' of Brahamin youth. There Bheemasena killed the mightiest demon called Hidimbasura. Bheema married Hidimba, the sister of the slain demon. Ghatotkacha was born to Hidimba. Consequently, Pandavas moved away to Ekachakrapura and lived by way of begging for alms. There Bheema killed Bakaśura, another mighty demon, who troubled people.

At this point enters another important character, who played the 'key' role in the epic. That is Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. She was given an extra-ordinary boon by Lord Siva in her previous birth in which she was called Yajnaseni. She was blessed to possess five husbands, in order to satisfy her unsatiated thirst of family life. Dhrustadyamama was her brother. She was born out of fire to Drupada, the king, who had dishonoured Drona, when the latter approached for livelihood.

When Draupadi attained the age of marriage, her father announced that he would give her daughter in marriage to the one
who would shoot down 'a play fish' suspended moving atop, down the murals. Kauravas too came to win the hand of Draupadi.

Arjuna shoots down the 'Play fish' (matsya yantra) and under the advice of Vyasa, and with their mother's approval Pandavas plan to marry Draupadi.

Lord Krishna enters the story of Pandavas at this point, along with Bala Rama. Kunti is the sister of Vasudeva, the father of Krishna. As such Pandavas are the maternal cousins of Krishna.

The marriage of Pandavas with Draupadi takes place. Dhaumya, the purolit, performs the marriage with the Vedic hymns, and ablutions. Pandavas stay with Drupada for some time, and then reach Hastina, being invited by Dhrutarashtra, on the advice of elders including Vidura.

Pandavas stay at Hastina for 5 years, and afterwords, they are sent to Khandavaprastha. Lord Krishna accompanies them. Indra sends Viswakarma, who builds there a city called Indraprastha.

Pandavas under the advice of Vyasa, enter into an agreement of sharing annually Draupadi in family life. Arjuna, takes up a long pilgrimage for 12 months, in order to keep up the agreement, during which he happens to marry Ulupika, a serpent-virgin and Chitrangada to whom Babhruvahana is born, and consequently comes to Dwaraka, the abode of Yadavas, and marries Subhadra, the sister of Bala Rama and Krishna. Arjuna and the other brothers develop lot of respect to Lord Krishna for his kindness, love, compassion and especially his concern for Draupadi. Draupadi becomes a devotee of Lord Krishna, and takes him as her elder brother guide and philosopher. Abhimanyu is born to Subhadra.

(C) In the third part of Adiparvam, both Krishna and Arjuna acquire excellent weapons through the God of fire (Agnideva). Agni approaches Lord Krishna to help him in feeding on Khandava forest, to suppress the "acidity" produced, from the excessive 'ghee' used in 'homa' by a sage king Swetaki. In order to fight against the 'guards', Agni gives Gandeeva a divine bow, and a chariot, to Arjuna, and
Chakra called Sudarsana, and a gada called Kaumodaki to Lord Krishna. Lord Indra comes down to Khandava to fight with Krishna and Arjuna, but is defeated, and at this point it is revealed that Krishna and Arjuna are the rebirths of Narayana and Nara respectively. Indra gives many 'arrows' (astras) to Arjuna as a gift.

(2) SABHAPARVA:-

While Pandavas were happy at Indrapartha, Maya, one of the 'refugees' who escaped being burnt in Khandava forest, approaches Pandavas to do a favour to them.

Maya, was a student of Viswakarma the 'divine architect'. He builds a 'magic auditorium' for 14 months, and installs it in Indraprastha. Maya also presents a gada to Bheema, and a conch called Devedatta to Arjuna.

Dharma Raja enters the auditorium, being blessed by sages, and Narada preaches many 'dharmas' to Dharma Raja. Narada blesses the Pandavas saying that the king should achieve control over his senses, he should also seek the blessings of the God, and he should establish his name through out the kingdom, and should defeat the enemies around, if they are trouble some and unjust.

Narada also preaches that the king should be away from 14 defects namely (1) Disbelief in God (2) Falsehood (3) Leaving things to chance (4) Negligence (5) Taking the advice of those who are not well wishers and experts in the respective fields. (6) Anger (7) Mourning tendency (8) Continued misplanning (9) Meaningless concern on material wealth (11) Non-doing of things as planned (12) Failure in protecting secrets (13) Not-doing, auspicious things (14) Becoming a slave to bad habits like drink and woman.

At the end Narada advises him to perform 'Rajasuya Yaga' in order to satiate the passion of the late Pandu Raja, by way of suppressing the enemies and establishing peace in the country.

Later Krishna also suggests the same thing. Pandavas takeup Rajasuya Yaga. Krishna hints that there are a few kings like Jarasandha, Sisupala etc who should be subdued in future. Krishna
makes use of the mighty shoulder strength of Bheema to kill Jarasandha. The Rajasuya is performed. At the end there arises a question as to whom should the 'Phala' (the result) be offered. Bheeshma suggests that Lord Krishna is Mahavishnu in human form, and hence the 'Phala' should be offered to him in reverence. Sisupala objects to this. He shoots up may abusive words on Krishna. At the end, Krishna beheads Sisupala with his 'Chakra'. (the disc weapon with shining and sharpened edges).

Here occurs a major incident in which Duryodhana enters the Mayasabha, where every object seems to be illusionary and confusing. At a point, he falls into a waterpond, hoping that it is a false one seeing which Bheema and Draupadi laugh at the plight of the Royal prince Suyodhana.

Duryodhana gets depressed and wants to give away his life in the process of 'Prayopavasa'. Sakuni, makes use of this state of mind of the prince and provokes the impatient Duryodhana to take revenge against Pandavas, and in particular Draupadi.

As a result the 'Dice' (Dyuta) play is worked out in which Sakuni promises to make use of the 'Pacikalu (the old concept of 'Striker' with non-digital holes around) made of the vertebral column (spine) of his late father, by which he lured the Kauravas to win the riches of Pandavas, not through tough war, but through a playful game, and it is known to every one that Dharmaraja was fond of 'dyuta' (gambling).

Vidura is sent to 'Indrapastha' for the purpose of inviting the Pandavas for the play of 'dice'. Dharma Raja at the first instance quotes the preaching of Devalaka, who said that 'dyuta' brings all the troubles to the human being, that too for a king. Any how, being invited for a play, the king should have the minimum etiquette of attending to such pastimes as the Royalty would demand it to be.

Pandavas with Draupadi go to Indraprastha where they obtain a royal welcome, and the game starts. Sakuni is deputed by Duryodhana to play on his behalf, to which Dharma Raja opposes. And finally, he reconciles that it is a 'play' only, and the game starts. As any other player, Dharma Raja goes on bidding his property,
kingdom, jewels and gold reserves, his brother, himself, and at the end their 'wife' Draupadi too but loses the game.

Now Pandavas are 'slaves' under Duryodhana. The wife of slaves is also a 'slave', and so Draupadi is brought into the middle of the court. Dussasana asked by his brothers, begins to strip off the clothes of Draupadi. But by the divine grace, he could not succeed, because there appeared a fresh cloth to protect her modesty everytime.

Duryodhana asks Draupadi to sit on his thigh. Karna proposes that now she is a slave, free to select any one in the court as her 'mate', who could protect her, since her husbands had failed to take care of her.

Seeing all this, none in the court, Viz., Bhethma, Dhrutarashtra or Gandhari, or teachers like Drona and Krupa, nor even sages took objection to Duryodhana's bad deed, and inhuman behaviour. It was one Vikarna, the brother of Suyodhana, who objected to it, but his word did not carry any weight.

It was Bheema who became furious at this point and looked at his weapon to put an end to the atrocity of Kauravas, but Arjuna pacifies him that when Dharma Raja himself is calm and accepting defeat, there is no point in acting against his word. But due to the anger, restlessness, and sorrow he had, he could not control himself to burst out crying that he would strike the very thigh of Duryodhana, and would also strike down Dussasana in the battle, kill him and suck his blood from his chest.

Pacified by the pleads of Bheema, and Vidura again, Dhrutarashtra gives away as soon to Draupadi, both the kingdom and freedom from slavery of her husbands, and herself.

Now there is once more a crooked conspiracy to drive away Pandavas from the kingdom, and make them unfit to claim Royal share again in their life time. Now the 'bid' is kingdom. The one who loses the game should spend 12 years in forest (aranya vasa) and 1 year in exile as unidentified (ajnata vasa). If by chance, one gets identified in the second round, the cycle of aranya and ajnata lives would recur.
But the 'fate' as it works very cruelly, made Dharma Raja to play again with Sakuni. The end is favourable to Kauravas, and it is left for Pandavas to keep their aged mother at 'Hastina' and leave off to forests, fortunately with their weapons.

(3) ARANYA PARVA :-

Pandavas enter 'Dwaitavana' and stay there, when Bheema fights and kills Kimmeera, a mighty demon. In order to feed the Brahmins and sages who have accompanied Pandavas in the forest, the Sun-God gifts a 'gold bowl' called 'Aksaya Patra', which would give as much food items as needed once a day.

Dhaumya and other sages bless Pandavas, and Arjuna performs 'tapas' (penance) in order to obtain divine weapons (astras). Lord Siva is pleased to bestow boons on Arjuna. But his valour and commitment to duty had to be verified. Then Siva becomes a hunter and a forest 'pig' is shot at by Siva. Arjuna also shoots at the same 'pig'. Now it is a question regarding to whom the pig shall belong. There is a terrible fight between Siva and Arjuna. Being pleased with Arjuna's valour, Siva gives 'Pasupata' a divine arrow as a boon. Lord Indra takes Arjuna to 'Swarga' and offers his throne in honour of the latter. Urvasi becomes passionate about Arjuna and approaches him and proposes her love to him. Arjuna refuses her wish, and treats her as his mother, for Indra happens to be responsible for his birth. She curses him to become an eunuch. Indra appears and consoles Arjuna saying that the same curse would become a boon in Ajnatavasa, in not getting disclosed.

Mean while Dharma Raja with his wife and brothers goes on pilgrimage to many places. Bheema and Draupadi, while strolling in forest come across a flower called 'Saugandhika' (a divine flower with excellent fragrance). Draupadi wishes to have some more flowers. Bheema goes to 'Gandhamadana' Hill, near which there was a 'pool of water' with 'Saugandhikas'. The area was a protected one, and Yaksas like Mani Manta were the guards. Bheema fights and kills many of them and presents the flowers to his beloved wife.
All the brothers meet again at 'Gandhamadana', where Lord Krishna visits with his wife 'Satyabhama'. Draupadi tells Satyabhama that 'confidence' in and 'love' for the husband are the only factors which would bind a woman to a man.

Even here, Kauravas do not want to leave Pandavas. In order to exhibit their grandeur and make fun of Pandava's exile, Kauravas visit the forest in the name of 'Ghosha Yatra' a sort of 'Safari' in the forest.

Chiträsena, A Gandharva, becomes furious with Suryodhana and snatches him away in his chariot. Bheema and Arjuna come to the rescue of Duryodhana. Dharma Raja warms him to be 'cautious' in future and frees him from the Gandharva.

This act depresses Duryodhana so deeply that the wants to die in 'Prayapavesa' again. Sakuni again consoled him in such a way that his cruelty level is maintained again.

Even in the forest and with her husbands around, Draupadi was not safe. Jayadratha, (Saindhava), the husband of Dussala, the only daughter of Dhrutarashtra, tries to abduct Draupadi, when Bheema comes to her rescue, and penalises him.

Pandavas come back to Dwaita Vana, and reside there for quite a long time.

Meanwhile, Indra in the guise of a Brahmin, approaches Karna for alms. Karna was known for his philouthrophic quality (danaguna). Indra begs the ear rings and (Kundala) body helmet (Kavacha) which were the source of his strength and undefeatable energy as boons from Lord Sun at the time of his birth. While knowing fully well that Duryodhana depended only on his strength, Karna did not go back in giving away what the disguised Indra wanted from him. As a compensation, Indra gives another mighty weapon called 'Sakti'. Karna reserved it for fighting against Arjuna in case of war.

At this point there is the story of a 'Crane' asking questions, and all the brothers excepting Dharmaraja failing to answer them. The crane was an 'Yaksha', who is none other than Lord 'Yama', the
god of death. The way Dharma Raja answered the 'Yaksha Prasnas' (the questions of Yaksha) reveal that he is a semi-human being full of divine qualities and detachment from the murdane world. Yama bestows many boons on Pandavas, who on his advice move west wards, in the forests.

(3) VIRATA PARVA :-

By this time, the 12 year warrant of forest living is over. Pandavas prefer to spend one year in such a safe place where their identify would not leak out. Dhaumya suggests 'Virata Nagara' as the best choice, since the 'Matsya desa' of which 'Virata' was the king was a supporter of Dharma Raja and Pandavas, which made them take shelter in Virata Nagara. They keep their weapons on a 'Sami' tree and enter the city.

Dharmaraja (Kanka Bhatta) became a court assistant to Virata Raja, and engaged him by playing with 'dice'. Bheema (Valala) became a palace cook. Arjuna (Bruhannala) by virtue of his being a 'ennuch', became a dance teacher to uttara, the daughter of Virata. Nakula (Damagrandhi) joined the duty of a veterinary doctor taking care of the horse stable. Sahadeva (Tantripala) became a cowherd talking care of the cattle of the palace.

Now it is left for 'Draupadi' to become a beautician and a servant maid in the palace, to assist Sudheshna the royal queen, wife of Virata, and sister of one Keechaka who was called 'Simhabala' (one possessing Lion's strength). Virata depended on him for the safety of his kingdom. Before joining the service, Draupadi makes it clear to Sudheshna that she had got five Gandhava - husbands, who in case of her modesty being tampered, would kill away any mighty person be him a human being or a demon.

Time passed, and Kauravas were in constant search of locating where Pandavas stayed in disguise. They sent many detectives to move round the country and report immediately to the king about their movements.

To a question as to how to locate the Pandavas, Bheshesha says that the country where in Dharma Raja stays, would have timely
rains, and the people attain prosperity, with productive flora and fauna.

Finding through the spies that 'Matsya-desa' is prosperous, Duryodhana, at the instigation of Sakuni sends a heavy weight boxer to the court of Virata. At the hint of Dharma Raja, Bheema wrestles with that boxer and puts him down and kills him. The spies following him were also killed, so that the news did not reach Hastinapura.

Keechaka once happens to see Draypadi in the palace. He is struck down win 'love' and amorous passion towards her. He beseeches his sister to send her to him. Sudheshna sends Draupadi to bring 'liquor' from her brother’s palace in the pretext of ill health. Draupadi is immolated by Keechaka. Nobody comes to her rescue. At the end Keechaka is killed by Bheema in the Dance - Hall (nrutyasala). The brothers of Keechaka try to kill Draupadi, but they too in turn were beaten down to death by Bheema.

When the news spreads that keechaka, one of the five mighty lion - strong heroes was killed by one cook in Viratanagara, Kauravas take it for granted that Pandavas are definitely residing at Viratanagara.

So they appoint Susarma to attack the property of cows (godhanam) from South side of Viratanagara, hoping that Pandavas would definitely help Virataraja in safeguarding cows from Susarma's attack. Pandavas, except Arjuna followed the king, and in a mighty war Susarma was defeated.

But mean while there was an attempt by Duryodhana followed by Bheeshma, Karna, Drona, Aswathama, Sakuni and his brothers from the Northern side (uttara go grahanam). There was no warrior available in the palace except Uttara Kumara (Bhuminjaya) the son of virata Raja for whom Bruhannala became the chariot-driver.

Uttara Kumara was not a courageous person, with no experience in war-fare. He became nervous and goaded Arjuna to take him back. Arjuna induced confidence in him, took him to the 'Sami' tree, got his weapon called 'Gandeeva' and 'arrows' down through him. Within no time, the real Arjuna appeared in the place of Bruhannala, and they reached the war-field.
Bheema and Drona recognise that Arjuna has come to take revenge on Suyodhana and Karna by way of turning back the cows. Arjuna takes no time in putting all the warriors in a hypnotic comdown by means of 'Sammohana astra'. All the warrios lie down in an unconscious state. The news reaches the palace that Bruhannala and Uttarakumara have won the fight.

Kanka says that it is because of Bruhannala that the war is won. Virata could not understand the implication, and boasts that Uttara Kumara is courageous enough to win the war, and in a bad fit of anger throws the 'dice' on the face of Kanka. Blood flows down. Draupadi rushes immediately and dresses the wound with her clothes. Virata asks why is it that she takes so much of care about a 'Sanyasin'. Draupadi says that 'Kanka' was a favourite friend of Dharmaraja, who in his moral and spiritual strength equalled him. She also says that in a country where drops of blood ooze out from his body by being hit, there would be no rains for so many number of years as the number of drops of blood.

At the end Virata recognises that those who have served him for a year were no other than Pandavas themselves. He begs pardon from them, and on the advice of Arjuna, Uttara is given in marriage to Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son.

(4) UDYOJA PARVA :-

Virata Raja gives as a gift to Pandavas, a city called 'Upaplayya', where in they live and are happy for quite some time. In the mean time Kauravas too understand that the strength of 'Yadava' kings is in no way inferior. So Duryodhana plans to seek the help of Sri Krishna hoping that it would add to his army if the Yadavas stand by them. Similarly Pandavas too send Arjuna to seek the help of Lord Krishna. Krishna gives the option to select either him, or 10000 Yadava warriors in his place. Duryodhana opts for the army. Arjuna knowing fully well the divine capacities of Krishna opts him. At the instance of elder's advice, Sanjaya acts as an ambassador to bring 'peace' between the two groups, but he fails.

Dhrutarashtra is grieved to learn that Krishna is besides
Pandavas, and that war is almost unavoidable. He avoids food and has no sleep. Vidura and Sanatsujatha teach many good things in order to pacify the emotion stricken blind king. Sanjaya informs the court that the Krishna - Arjuna friendship is unmatchable, and so it is difficult to win Pandavas.

At last, Krishna, taking pity on both sides, tries to advert the consequences of a great war which would result in the massacre of lakhs and lakhs of men, goes to Hastinapura to advocate for 'Peace'. Sakuni, Karna and Dussasana join Duryodhana and turn deaf-ear to the message of Krishna to avoid war, and to give Pandavas their due share. Elders like Bheeshma and many sages including Narada try to pacify the situation; but in vain. Kauravas plan to attack even Krishna. At the end Lord Krishna assumes a 'cosmic form' and takes pity on Dhruatarashtra and blesses him to take a view of his Omni Presence.

Krishna is left with no measure except trying to change the mind of Karna, who happens to be linked to Pandavas, as the eldest son of Kunti. Yet, Karna proved to be a committed friend to Duryodhana. Krishna feels proud of the great 'obedience' (probhu bhakti) of Karna to the Kaurava throne.

Now the minds of both the camps are ready for war. Even the warning of Krishna that there are no 'equals' to fight Pandavas, and in particular Arjuna and Bheema is not cared. Instead, they try to mobilise their own force to number 11 Akshauhinis : whereas the strength of Pandava's army is just 7 Akshauhinis.

During those days, it was a practice to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each warrior and rank him in order to fix his place and timing in the war. Being the eldest and the mightiest, Bheeshma, ranks Karna as 'Ardha Ratha' (50% in strength among Chariot Riders). Karna is dissatisfied with this ranking, and he takes an oath not to participate in the war until Bheeshma quits the war field. It became a negative point to Kauravas.
(5) BHEESHMA PARVA :-

The war was fought at Kurukshtetra, near Hastinapura. It is a sacred place where Parasu Rama filled 5 ponds with the blood of kings defeated by him, and gave away all the earth conquered by him as a 'gift' to Kasyapa, who in turn 'gifted it back to the sons of the kings who died in the battle with Purasu Rama. The place is claimed to be precious for those who fight and leave off their physical body there. They are said to attain 'Heaven', without fail, because the king 'Kuru' had performed a long-time 'Yaga' there and many sages had undertaken 'tapas' for quite a long time there. The war field was architectured as 'Jambushanda', where crores of infantry, elephants and horses could be stationed and fodder and water are sufficiently available on the banks of 'Yamuna' flowing there. Bheeshma is consecrated as the chief of the Kaurava Army. The war began with the honing of conchs held by the chiefs in both the camps.

Arjuna's chariot was driven by Sri Krishna. When the Chariot came into the midst of the army on both sides, Arjuna fell into a deep sorrowful mood by seeing the relatives, friends, teachers, and dependents. He requested Krishna to turn the chariot back, and recede from war.

Lord Krishna wanted to see that Arjuna gets a perfect understanding of the secret of Karma and Jnana, and the transitory nature of the 'human body', and immorality of the 'Soul'. So he preached Arjuna that incessant work (niskkama Karma) otherwise called disinterested endeavour is the characteristic of a yogi, who never goes back in work. As such Arjuna should fight in order to do justice to his 'Swadharma' (individual virtue) which is that of a king.

For a king the best way to attain salvation is to fight for justice, and do justice to the work, which is here 'fighting for kingdom and establishing justice and order'. This message is called Bhagwadgeeta.

Arjuna's passion is gone. His emotion is balanced, and he ready to fight the war relentlessly.
At the end of the 10th day when Bheeshma's quota of the war is up, Sikhandi (a eunuch) is made to face Bheeshma, with whom the latter would never fight. Arjuna shoots arrows at Bheeshma and is made to lie down on a bed of arrows awaiting for 'uttarayana' to end his life.

(6) DRONA PARVA :-

The next man to lead the army is 'Dronacharya', the teacher of Kuru-Pandava heroes. Drona works out a strategy called 'Padma Vyuh' (Lotus strategy) in which it may be difficult to enter or come out. Arjuna is the only hero who knows this art to break the lotus army. His son Abhimanyu is a powerful young warrior whom the Kauravas wanted to finish by this strategy. Arjuna is made to go to a far off place to fight against 'Samsaptakas' and thus Abhimanyu is left alone. Duryodhana, his brothers, Karna and Drona - all of them join together and kill Abhimanyu mercilessly. Arjuna takes an oath to kill 'Saindhava' who is responsible in this conspiracy. Crores of soldiers and 'Samsaptakas' are killed away by Arjuna. Most of the heroes like Alambasa, Srutayu, Jalasandha, Somadatta, Bhoorisrava, Bahlika, Virata, Drupada, Ghatotkacha, many sons of Dhrutarashtra, and the yadavas who fought for Suyodhana were no more by the end of 2 1/2 days war by Drona. Arjuna took the lion's share in the war. At the end Dhrushta Dyumna kills Drona by way of chopping off his head with his sword.

(7) KARNA PARVA :-

Now it is Karna's turn to lead the war. 'Salya' the brother of Madri, becomes the chariot driver to Karna. Salya wanted to discourage Karna, in order to help in his own way for the victory of Pandavas. He invites quarrel with Karna in words, and compared him to the 'crow' which is a parasite depending for his 'livelihood' on Kauravas. He also compares Arjuna to a 'swan' which is divine, independent and mightier than the crow. This makes Karna lose his confidence; but yet he gives a tough fight to Arjuna. Vrushasena the son of Karna is killed, which makes Karna grief stricken and disappointed.
Meanwhile Bheema attacks Dussasana, wrestles and boxes him down to the earth. He breaks his chest and sips the blood oozing from his chest. This creates a great impact on the Kaurava army.

Unfortunate and cursed as he was, Karna could not recollect the 'hymns' related to the divine arrows, and his chariot wheel got sunk into the earth.

Yet Karna did not lose his spirit and shot the Naga Astra (serpent arrow), to avert which Krishna pushed down the chariot into the earth, and thus Arjuna was saved. Karna had a sad death by being blown by Arjuna's arrows, and Karna's departure resulted in a deep sorrow, isolation, defeat and fear in Duryodhana.

8. SALYA PARVA :-

By the time 'Salya took over the army, almost all the warriors were dead. Salya died at the instance of Dharmaraja's plan and anger. Sahadeva ended Sakuni, who was the root cause of all the sorrowful events, and Sanjaya was too attacked but let off. Duryodhana enters into a pond of water called 'Dvaipayana Hrada', to hide. Pandavas, along with Krishna approach the pond, and rebuke Duryodhana with sharpest 'words to see that he comes out. There is a tough battle with 'gadas' in which both were experts. Krishna knew that the 'thighs' of Duryodhana were his 'Achilles foot' (vulnerable point) and hence signalled Bheema to strike on thighs to see his end. Bheema did likewise, and thus the chapter of Duryodhana, the mightiest prince who enjoyed uninterrupted 'prosperity', and whose word had no exception, was down on the land, with broken thighs, helpless, and not cared for by any body.

9. SAUPTIKA PARVA :-

The remaining warriors were Krupa, Krutavarma and Aswatthama, who came to see the tragic end of Duryodhana. The war was stopped, and in the night, when every one was asleep, Aswatthama in order to repay his debt to the king, killed all the Panchalas including Dhrushta Dyumna, who killed his father, and late in the night chopped down the heads of all Upa Pandavas, the sons of Draupadi through Pandavas. The ministers of Pandavas were also not left off.
By the grace of Lord Krishna, the five Pandavas; and Satyaki were alone left alive. Now Draupadi is aggrieved again and refuses food and water in the fond memory of her brother and sons, and Bheema chases Aswatthama in the open field. Aswatthama had a 'diamond on the head' (Siroratna) and was an expert of 'Narayana Astra', which he shot to see that the five Pandavas should be no more alive. Lord Krishna comes to their rescue. Arjuna shoots 'Pasupatha' to attack the Narayana Astra. Vyasa comes in the middle, and the battle is stopped. The 'head diamond' of Aswatthama is snatched by Pandavas, which renders him powerless. Since the Upa Pandavas were masacred in deep sleep (Supti=sleep) the Parva is named '-Sauptika'.

10. STREE PARVA :-

The wives of the slain warriors come in crowds in utter helplessness and grief, and cry aloud in the war field. Even Dhrutarashtra, and Gandhari visit the place and their grief is boundless. They become very angry over Pandavas and Krishna, and in particular on the merciless killing of Dussasana and Duryodhana, by Bheema.

Thousands of heaps of dead bodies are scattered all around and no body is able to identify the bodies and parts of limbs there of.Dharma Raja appoints Vidura to cremate the unidentified bodies of warriors and offer 'tarpana' (offering sacred waters) and 'dharma pinda' (offering balls of cooked rice for feeding the dead in groups). Dharma Raja, his brothers, Draupadi, Kunti and other family members join to offer 'tarpana' to the dead heroes, who are related to them.

It is at this point that Kunti reveals that Karna is the eldest brother of Pandavas, being born to her when she was a 'virgin'. Pandavas are terribly shocked to know of this, and return to Hastina in grief, dejection, and introspection as to what they have achieved.
11. SANTHI PARVA :-

Lord Krishna consoles pandavas by saying that they are 'instrumental' as far the end of Kauravas is concerned, and that it is because of their 'sins' that Kauravas had a sad end. Soothened by the words of their wellwisher Sri Krishna, Pandavas reconcile to some extent, and pacify Dhrutarashtra and Gandhari, that they respect them, and Kunti continues to serve them with the same love and regard. Dharma Raja is consecrated on the throne of Hastinapura, duly performing the Vedic rituals, offering gold and clothes to the Vedic Brahmins, and feeding the citizens and poor.

At this point, Pandavas rememeber that Bheeshma is still lying in Kuru Krishna on the bed of arrows, waiting for death to come, in Uttarayana. They approach thier grand father along with Lord Krishna. Bheeshma preaches many principles of ideal administration to Dharma Raja. He recites 'Vishnu Sahasranama' in reverence to Lord Krishna, and concludes that excepting having 'faith' in Him and offering all the 'deeds' good and bad as offering at His feet, there are no ways by which a man can attain 'Divine Wisdom' and consequently liberation from the mortal bondage.

12. ANUSASANIKA PARVA :-

Bheeshma continues his dialogue with Dharma Raja, who learns many 'secrets' about 'Dharma', traditions and customs related to ideal Hindu life, and also regarding the ways and means of leading an ideal human life, in order to understand and practice 'Virtue', 'Value', and essence of human existence. After this, Bheeshma attains 'Swarga' and his funeral rites are conducted by Dhrutarashtra and Pandavas.

13. ASWAMEDHA PARVA :-

Pandavas decide to perform 'Aswamedha' horse sacrifice, not only as a mark of Victory, but also as a token of attaining peace and prosperity for the people. Lots of gold ornaments are received by Dharma Raja, as presents from the regional chieftans and feudatories.
Meanwhile, the foetus of Uttara, is found burnt away by the arrow of Aswatthama. Lord Krishna brings back the foetus into life again by his Divine Energy. Pareekshit is born to Uttara. In sanskrit 'Pareeksha' is testing, seeing, looking on etc. Since the child in the womb saw the Divine Sakti he was called Pareekshit, the only survivor of the Kuru-Pandava family.

'Aswamedha' begins, and Arjuna follows the sacrificial 'horse'. The procedure is to defeat the warrior who questions, the sovereignty of the Emperpr. Arjuna had a son by name Babhruvahana through Chitrangada. Both the father and son have a tough fight in which the son wins. The 'sacrifice' is successfully completed.

There are many interesting episodes in this Parva. Anu geeta, Brahmana geeta, and the dialogue between teacher and student are very interesting.

Of these, there is kamageetha which is highly interesting. Here Vyasa interprets how Nishkama Karma with introverted limbs can result in adverting the evil effects of 'Karma' resulting in 'Sin'.

14. ASHRAMAVASA PARVA :-

Years passed away, but the anger of Dhruta Rashtra did not vanish, and the passion of Bheema in insulting the elderly couple continued. At last, Dhrutarahstra, with his wife Gandhari, accompanied by Vidura and Sanjaya opts for 'forest-living' (Vana Prastha) and live the life of a 'hermit' and spend the rest of his life in 'tapas'. Kunti follows the elderly couple and continues to serve them in continued reverence.

At this point, the king Dhrutarahstra his wife and many other women of the palace like to see the 'faces' of the dead warriors and relatives once again. Vyasa with his power of his 'tapasya', arranges to see them in the river waters, in the radiant form (tejorupa).

At last, the old couple and Kunti are caught in a forest-fire and leave their mortal bodies, and attain 'nirvana'. Vidura and Sanjaya too, leave their human forms. Vidura merges with 'Dharma', another form of 'Yama' the God of death. Pandavas come to know the end of Yadavas through Arjuna.
15. MAUSALA PARVA :-

Yadavas, of which Lord Krishna was a member, too were cursed by sages to quarrel and strike among themselves with the 'pestle' (Musala), that was born out of the stomach of a Yadava man in woman's garments. All of them die. Even Lord Krishna was shot by an arrow of a hunter. Thus ended 'Dwaparayuga' with the end of Lord Krishna and the 'Kali Yuga' began on the same day.

After Krishna passed away, Arjuna was left to be a mere 'human being' with no divinity to back him. He was rendered strengthless, and failed to protect the ladies of Dwaravati palace, all of whom submitted themselves to fire to end their lives. Even his 'Gandeeva' did not work. The purpose of the 'weapon' was over, and so he came back to Hastinapura - and reported the 'end' of Krishna and other Yadavas to his brothers and Draupadi.

Now Pandavas are totally rejected and deserted. They find no purpose in continuing to lead the royal life. They leave off all the mortal bondages and take up 'Sanyasa', (Saint hood).

Since the Parva explains the death of Yadavas by 'musala' (pestle) the Parva is named as 'Mausala'.

16. MAHAPRASTHANIKA PARVA :-

Pandavas decide to keep 'Yuyutsu' the son of Dhruvarashtra through a Vysya wife, in charge of the kingdom, and nominate Pareekshita to take over the kingdom as the prince, duly performing the 'Pattabhisheka' ceremony.

Now it is left for Pandavas to move away from the capital for taking up a very long journey called 'Maha Prasthanara' (long sojourn) in search of peace and bliss. This journey is well explained in this parva, as to how they crossed Himalayas and set on the path towards the terminal (Heaven).

17. SVARGAROHANA PARVA :-

When the Pandavas set on their journey a 'dog' follows Dharma Raja. Even after Draupadi, Sahadeva, Nakula, Arjuna and Bheema fell down in this long and tedious journey towards Heaven,
the dog continues to accompany him. Dharma Raja refuses to enter the portals of Heaven unless 'his' people and the 'dog' are allowed to enter in. 'Yama' and 'Indra' appear and preach in many ways about the 'illusion' of love and hatred, that has been still in Dharma Raja because of his mortal body with him. Even there he finds his brothers and wife to be in 'Hell' bearing all the tortures, while Kauravas and Karna are found to be treated as VIP guests in Heaven.

At the end Dharma Raja as advised by 'Yama' and 'Indra' submits his mortal body in the Divine Ganges river flowing in Heaven. Soon he finds that there is no 'conflict' between Pandavas and Kauravas: all of them are happily placed on their respective 'thrones' without pride prejudice and hatred.

'Draupadi', who was molested and dishonoured in the mundane would, assumed the divine form of 'Maha Lakshmi' (The Goddess of prosperity and happiness) who was seen worshiped by all the warriors of both the camps.

Vyasa has a message to spread at this point. According to him 'Punya' (virtue) and Papa (sin) are just like the wings of a bird, which fly alternatively to keep the bird move on and on. If one moves up, the other has to come down, to balance the existence.

"Similarly" says, Vyasa", man out of 'ignorance' and sheer 'illusion' feels that one is a friend, the other to be an enemy. But we should remember that the effects of Punya and Papa have to be experienced without fail by any human being". The 'Maha Bharata' story proves this fact.
CHAPTER - V

An Encyclopaedia of the Science of Dharma

We know well that Indian life is based on 'Dharma' (Virtue / righteousness), which is not 'logical', but yet scientific from the point of human psychology. It is from this 'Dharmic Consciousness' religion develops in any part of the world. Let me quote an example of giving 'dana' (or) doing 'dharma'. We have got money. We need not give it as a 'gift' to anybody. But we do it. Not necessarily we do it always with a view to get back something. If a 'gift' is given to a poor person, seeking nothing from him in return it is called 'dana', and the act is otherwise called 'dharma', because God is the 'owner' of the wealth of which 'Main' is a trustee.

Maha Bharata is an exposition of the Vedic Sutras reflected in daily life, so that the meaning of 'Dharma' is established satisfactorily. For example, speaking 'truth' is the highest virtue of the human being. Similarlys keeping up one's own word. Let me quote a few episodes :

(1) We have the episode (Upakhyana) of 'Sakuntala', to establish to Vedic Sutra 'atmavai' putra namasi : (The father himself is the son).

Dushyanta marries Sakuntala in the Ashram (hermitage) of Kanva. When Sakuntala comes to the king for legally accepting her as his wife and her son as his legal heir, Dushyanta rejects her and her son.

Then she asks him to place Bharata, her son in his lap and experience the physical contact of his son. 'If the touch is acceptable as one would experience with a sandal paste or a cool breeze, then Dushyanta might accept the boy as his son' (Adi - 1-4-90).

Sakuntala recites the Vedic authority as follows :

The husband enters the 'womb' of his wife, and is born as the son. The Veda says 'angadangat sambhava-si-jate parvani parvani - atmavai putra namasi' [from each limb the other limb is formed; and from each constituent the other constituent is structured.... so
that the son is a replica of his father's 'atman' and 'sarira' (mind and body)].

So in every episode we find a hidden layer of 'Poorva Mimamsa' (exegesis) of Vedic principles.

(2) Secondly we have an episode of an ideal teacher and student, described in Sukra-kacha episode.

Sukracharya is the 'acarya' of demons, under 'Vrishaparva' their king. He had mastered a technique called 'Mruta Sanjeevani' (bringing back to life the 'dead'). This made the demons excel in the wars, and the heavenly beings (devatas) wanted to see that they too become 'non-killable' as the demons, by the grace of Sukra.

So they plan to send one 'Kacha' (the youngman with hair-lock) who is well-versed in Vedic learning and is 'excellent' in character and conduct.

Sukra has a daughter by name 'Devayani', who falls in love with the 'modest' young boy, attracted by his 'conduct', 'knowledge' and 'service' to the family of the teacher.

Time passes away: The teacher does not initiate the student. But the student is patient enough to 'serve' him whole heartedly; yet waits for his teacher's blessing.

Mean while the demons kill him once. The teacher brings him back to life. Second time, they kill him, burn him away into ashes, which they mix with the 'liquor' the Acharya takes in the evening. Now 'Kacha' is in the 'stomach' of the teacher in ash-form.

The 'Guru' is unable to trace his disciple outside, but finds him in his own belly. Now he utters the 'Mantra', and Kacha becomes 'alive'. He has to come out, which means that the teacher dies after his stomach is torn off: so he discloses the hymn and advises his student to bring 'him' back to life again. So does the disciple'.

In this story, there is one Upanishadic authority behind the story.

Acharyah purva rupam
Ante vasyuttara rupam
Vidya sandhiih

[Taittireeya-Sikshavalli]

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[The teacher is 'former': the student is 'latter'. Their 'Samhita' (coming together) is 'Sandhi'. The result is knowledge (Vidya)].

In this story the 'teacher' and 'the student' are found in one form. That is the meaning of education. That is how 'Vidya' is transmitted from generation to generation.

(3) Now let us have a look at the story of 'Kausika' a brahmin boy and 'Dharma Vyadha' a meat seller. In this episode the anchor between the two is a 'house wife' who is devoted to her husband and family (Pativrata).

Kausika, neglecting his primary duty to serve his 'aged parents' starts reciting Vedas under a tree. A crane drops its 'faecus' on the body of the boy. He 'burns' the crane away by his power of 'tapas'. Yet he has no compassion for the dead crane.

In the afteroon, he approaches the house of a Brahmin for 'alms' (food). The wife of the Brahmin delays in serving the 'guest', in view of her duties to her children and husband. Now Kausika, becomes angry and shoots frowned looks on the house wife. She recognises that the boy had burnt a 'crane' in the forest. She advises him to become 'calm', 'dignified' and 'well behaved'.

In order to learn more about 'peace' as advised by the house wife, the boy sets on journey to 'Mithila', where king Janaka was ruling, from the 'butcher' called Dharmavyadha (a hunter of Dharma).

Dharmavyadha too recognises the previous story of the boy, and takes pity on him. At the end he shows the Brahmin boy his own old parents at the back of the shop, where they were seated quite comfortably and served with all their requirements. He advises Kausika to go back to his home and serve the aged parents, by which he would get all the 'wisdom' and 'peace' as well.

Kausika is 'modest' enough to accept that "a non-Brahmin with 'wisdom' and 'righteousness' is far better than a Brahmin without them".

The message in this episode is again the Vedic maxim:

Matru devo bhava!
Pitru devo bhava!

[Treat Parents as gods themselves]

(4) A few stories are narrated to emphasize that 'history repeats itself'. Such a story is that of 'Nala', who lost his kingdom by the same vice namely 'playing dice' (gambling). While 'Kali' (a form of 'Saturn') was responsible for Nala's defeat, Duryodhana (the manifestation of 'Kali' in Dwaparayuga) was responsible for Dharma Raja's defeat. 'Nala' and 'Damayanti' faced almost similar difficulties by way of thier exile into the forests and separation due to 'ill-fate'.

(5) A few stories are described to show how an ideal king should be: 'Yayati', says to 'Puru' as follows:

"He who speaks ruthlessly to others will never possess pity, righteousness, and balanced mind. First you must possess these divine qualities, and conquer your inner enemies (the six foes called Kama, Krodha etc., described in the previous pages). Then you will easily win over the external enemies".

(Adi 3-206)

'Mundakopanishad summaries the connection between 'polity' and 'philosophy' as follows while comparing 'knowledge' and 'action' (war).

"The Upanishad is the 'bow'. Upasana is the 'arrow'. The indestructible reality is the 'target'."

(6) 'Rajadharma' is supreme and it administers the other dharmas of a particular age, country, and people. To preach 'Rajadharma', a king needs the guidance of an 'introvert' who is 'intellectual' as well as 'practical':

Kauravas in the story, had ministers and senior leaders to stand by them, but no body guided them. There was no 'purohit' to instruct them. Kanika and Vidura taught them many political and moral principles; but they never cared for their teachings. For Pandavas, there was a purohit, and many sages who guided their action. 'Dhaumya' is their priest and guide, while Krishna was their friend, guide and philosopher, because of whom, they 'restrained'
from doing wrong things, and repeat what Kauravas did to them.

While teaching Rajadharma, to Dharma Raja, Narada asks the former as follows:

"Are you continuing the 'saddharma' path of your ancestral kings like Yayati, Puru, Dushyanta and Bharata? Is your mind committed to Dharma? Have you rightly separated dharma, artha, and kama, on the basis of 'time' and commissioned them properly?"

(Sabha 1-26)

The concept of 'Dharma' is crucial in the political science of Maha Bharata. Dharma ------- both 'action' and 'thingking'. Since it so many 'delicate' to decide upon what is 'good' and what is 'bad' one should rely on 'elderly advice' and 'Sastra Pramana' (what the scriptures say). Hence 'Dharma' should be protected in order to preserve the 'system' undisturbed.

**Manasmruti says as follows:**

Dharma eva hato hanti  
Dharmo rakshati rakshitah  
tasmat dharma nahantavyo  
mano dharma hato yadhit

[Manu smrthi 8-15]

[If dharma is killed - it kills the killer. If protected, it protects the protector. And so Dharma is not be overruled. At least, let us see that we do not become the killers of the already sinking Dharma]

Probably 'Manu' took the clue from Mahabharata in composing this sloka, which refers to the 'negligence' which the 'elders' of Kauravas showed towards the mis-conduct of Duryodhana; and as a consequence of which all of them had a 'sad 'end' in the Bharata 'war'.

That is why the Indian kings always combined 'Polity' with 'Spirituality', because, without the latter, the former has neither 'direction' nor 'purpose' 'Ananda'. K. Coomara Swamy says:

"The oriental and traditional monarch is not a 'constitutional'
ruler, whose actions merely reflect the wishes of majority of his subjects or those of a secular minister nor king by virtue of any social contract, but a ruler by divine right. This does not imply that he is an absolute ruler but on the contrary he is himself the subject of another 'king' the Dharma. (Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government P.16)

Bheeshma is said to have administered the kingdom, with Vichitraveerya on the throne, and with 'Brahman' (the God in Dharma form) as the ultimate authority

(See - Adi - 5-5)

If we recollect 'Vishnusahasranama' we understand that Lord Vishnu is 'dharmakrut' and he assumes the form of the ruler (niyanta), and also damayita with 'danda' (Sceptor) in his hand, 'Criminal law' was called 'dandaniti' in ancient India. Vasuhotma explains this factor to Mandhata as follows

"The Danda is God himself Brahma wanted to perform a sacrifice, but could not find a priest suitable for the purpose. Hence he bore pregnancy for over one thousand years and begot Kshuta (one who is born out of a sneeze). He began a Yaga (sacrifice) during which the 'danda' (sceptor) was lost. The kingdom was left in confusion resulting in chaos. At the end, Brahma and Vishnu approached 'Siva', who gave the danda, and made it as a source of 14 arts (Chaturdasa Vidyas)" (Santi - 3-129)

These 14 Vidyas are 4 Vedas, 6 Kalpas, Purana (1), dharma sastra (1), Nyaya (1) and Mimamsa (1). Added to these are Vaidya, Kodanda, Gandharva, and Niti Sastras which sums to 18, having their genesis in Dandaniti.

Maha Bharata also traces the origin and development of the concept of 'king' and 'kingdom'. In the earliest stages of human history there was no king - no kingdom. That was called 'Viraaja' (without king) state, and that condition was Vairajya (state without
king) (see Santhi Parva). Consequently the 'king' developed as a representative of 'Dharma' (na vishnuh prithivi patih).

Aurobindo describes how democratic and benevolent the mythical kings were:

"Manu even lays it down that an unjust and oppressive king should be killed by his subjects like a mad dog......... is sufficient to show that absolutism or the unconditional 'divine right' of kings was no part of the intention of the Indian political system".

(Foundations of Indians Culture p.33)

'Santi Parvam' records the story of a certain king called 'Marut', to whom Brhaspati, gives an instruction that "the king should not spare even the teacher, friend or son if one is at fault" (Santi 2-182), and he quotes the instances of sagara, who deserted his own son Asmanjasa who was cruel to children; and the story of Uddalaka who banished his son Svetaketu for being totally opposed to Brahmins (intellectuals). (Santi 2-183).

In the same Parva, Dharma Raja approaches Bheeshma to explain him "why and how a king is supreme in mundane and spiritual aspects of human life".

(Santi 2-162)

Bheeshma answers in the following way:

a). A king who wishes to prosper should adore the Gods in the Heaven and Brahmins on the earth.

b). If one is an ideal king, he will be helped by gods to achieve his end, and if he fails, he should take the defeat as a defeat in the hands of gods, and keep himself 'balanced'.

c). The king should have control over his senses (danti) victory over the self (vijjatman) possesses tranquility (Santi) and character (sila). Such a king alone will prosper (Santi 2-166 - 168).

d). The conduct of a king should be so restrained as "that of the pregnant woman who would take her diet so carefully that the embryo (foetus) is not affected" (santi 2-179).
e) The king should aim at Chaturvarga (purusharthas) sadhana, as the ultimate goal of his life. If we cannot guard these ideals, he is equal to Brahmin who can not protect 'Yajna' through his 'mantras'.

As such a king is 'Dharma' personified; while combing opposite forces of human traits in him.

'A king knows both merit and demerit, frugality and lavishness, philanthropy and taxing the subjects (Santi 2-296), neither too good nor too bad, nor too kind nor too harsh. If he is too kind, he will become a laughing stock; and if he is too cruel, people suffer. Hence he should be like a 'sun in spring season' (Vasanta Bhanu).

(Santi 2-178)

To achieve purursharthas, the king should be able to drive away the 'enemies' in spiritual life. So the king should follow 'Vedic rituals' and related conventions (Santi 2-184).

(6) In many places, 'Swardharma' (protecting and practising one's own profession or duty) is said to he preferable to 'Paradharma' (taking up the jobs of others).

When Dharma Raja, after the war wishes to get into forest and live like a 'Sanyasin' (ascetic), Arjuna rejects the proposal on follows :

"What you say is not the duty of a king. A king should develop the 'resources' of a country'.

(Santi 1 - 60)

Bheema intervenes and concludes the discussion with the following statement:

"Sanyasa is a Brahminical activity. A king should never neglect his 'work'. If non-work is the only criterion for salvation, then mountains and trees should also achieve salvation. If one has the tendency to renounce the result of the work (Karma phala tyaga) in the name of the 'Brahman', then automatically, the burden of work is relieved (Karma sama) and the man gets liberated (Vimuktah)".

(7) At a particular point in Aswamedha Parvam Vyasa discusses about 'false war' and 'real war'.

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Sri Krishna clarifies to Dharma Raja that he had so far fought a 'false war', and that he had yet to fight the 'real war' against his own senses.

In the real war, the enemy is 'manas' otherwise called 'Kama' (the god of lust) and Vyasa describes how the Vedic concept of 'Kama' refers to the supreme creative principle. This is called 'Kama geeta'.

Kama says 'no body can defeat him', for his presence is there everywhere including the minds of 'sanyasins' who wish ie., (Kama) to attain salvation (moksha). Kama says 'he is Sanatana' (oldest (or) perennial). This statement is based on Vedic authority which says as follows:

Kamastadagre - manaso dhijatah

- Nasadiya Sukta

[The wish to create was there long long before the emergence of work]. Hence to do a work with an intention is the 'Victory' of Kama, and doing a work with no intention (nishkama karma) is the 'defeat' of kama.

There are 4 ways of defeating 'kama'. They are: (1) not getting too much involved in work (2) Possesing an integral courage (3) not involving the mind into the work and (4) not even 'desiring' for getting relieved from 'desire' (moksha).

(Aswamadha Parvam : 1-132 & 133)

At the end of the discussion, Krishna asks Dharma Raja to perform 'Aswamedha' and transform 'Kama' into 'Dharma' with the aid of 'Nishkama' (not aspiring for the result).

(8) There is nothing that we can not find in Maha Bharata. We find description of hermitage Sacred rivers, pilgrim centres, rituals, philosophical schools like Sankhya, Yoga etc., various sects like Saivism and Vaishnavism, Sakti or Surya worship including sports, games and pastimes. The entire story is drawn into the
religious atmosphere of the country, which is basically a country of wisdom and peace (jnana and santi). All the characters repent over the war and prefer 'hermitage' to a 'palace' and aspire for 'moksha' (liberation from the mundane bondage).

Why is this so? Aurobindo says that "There are four main lines which nature has followed in her attempt to open up the inner being - religion, occultism, spiritual thought, and inner spiritual realisation and experience". (Life Divine 859-860)

In the 'Aranya Parvam' there is an incident of Saraswati replying Tarkshya, when the latter asked her to explain what is the 'ultimate good' (sreyas) of a purusha (man). Saraswati replies:

"He is the purusha par excellence, who knows the Brahman".

There is a story of 'Sarama' (a female divine dog) at the beginning, and at the end 'a divine dog' follows Dharma Raja in his 'Sojourn to 'Heaven'. Aurabindo explains the Vedic back ground of 'Sarama' as follows:

"Sarama who leads in the search for the radiant herds and discovers both the path and secret hold in the mountain, must be a fore runner of the dawn of truth in the human mind..... Sarama is the traveller and seeker on its path who does not herself possess, but rather finds that which is lost" (p. 207). This 'dog' is a replica of the 'hound of heaven' according to him.

Sarama stands for the Sixth Sense, the intuitive faculty of the human being to search one's own self.

Man is able to perceive that there is a phenomenon called 'Dharma' a quality of 'God', only through the sixth sense.

That is why we call Maha Bharata as an encylopaedia about the Science of 'Dharma'.

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CHAPTER - VI

The Role of Krishna in Maha Bharata

While Dharmaraja seems to be the 'hero' of the epic, Lord Krishna is the 'master' who guided the activity of the hero and his party. If we recollect what Bheeshma told Dharma Raja regarding the supremacy of 'Brahman' over the 'king', Lord Krishna is the 'Brahman' who is the 'master mind' behind the events of the epic.

(Dyutam chalayitamasmi)
(See.Bh.G. 10-36)

"Among the deceptions I am gambling" says Krishna. It means 'Sakuni' is an instrument in the hands of the 'Lord' in sending Pandavas into forest to prepare them for 'Kama Yoga'.

So Krishna is 'God in human form'. While describing 'the chaotic end of a yuga' (yuga pralaya), sage Markandeya, (in Aranya parva) describes Krishna not as a 'hero of the epic, but as the 'indestructible' and the eternal 'child', who sleeps on the leaf of the fig tree (vatapatrasayi), surrounded by the eternal spirit of the world (represented by the seven divine sages - sapta maharsis).

Lord Krishna's role is very significant in the epic in that he protected the path of 'dharma' and acted against 'adharma'.

Summarising what he has done in the epic, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna:

Yada Yadvah dharmaarya
ganirbhavat bharaata
abhyuttahana madharmasya
	tadatmanam srujamyaham
	panthrayanaya sadhunam
	vinasayaca dushkrutam
dharma sanstha panarthaya
sambhavami yuge yuge.

(Bhagawadgeeta 4-7 & 8)

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[When ever there is a threat to Dharma, and the adharma dominates, I create my self (in human form) to uphold Dharma. In order to protect the 'good' people and to destroy the 'bad' ones, and in order to re-establish the path of 'dharma', I take birth in each 'yuga']

So Lord Krishna was not an individual who lined his own life. He was a 'yogi' who lived his life 'fully' and 'actively', but at the same time with utmost detachment, like the drops of water on the lotus leaf. (Patma patra mivambhasa)

(see Bhagawadgeeta Bh.G.5-10)

Rightly Lord Krishna is called 'Jagadguru' (The world Teacher). In no other incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this 'title' of being the best teacher of the Universe has been bestowed on Him. That is why Vyasa says:

Bhagawan Vasudevas cha - keertyale tra sanatanah [Lord Vasudeva, who is the time-less phenomenon is described in this epic].

CHAPTER - VII

The Secret of Success

Vyasa in many plans makes it clear that one should become a 'pandita' (a wise person) to have 'samadarsana' (treating all equally). Who is a pandita? The tradition says as follows:

matruvat paradarmsca - paradravyani loshtavat
atmavat sarvabhutani - yah pasyati sa panditah

[He is the pandit who treats the 'other' woman as 'mother', 'other's' money as 'dust', all beings as one's own self].

Such a pandit has no 'enemy'. He is 'similar' to his 'friends' and 'enemies'. He does not distinguish the 'opposites'.

Vidyavinaya Sampanne
Brahmane gavi hastini
Sunichaiva Swapakecha
Panditah Samadarsinah

(Bhagavadgita 5-18)
[Let him be an educated and modest Brahmin, let it be a cow, or an elephant, or a dog, or be him an eater of dog's flesh. Pandits treat them all equally].

Such a 'Pandit' should possess 10 characteristics to be a 'dhamika' (a follower of Dharma path), because the following ten are the 'trails' of dharma.

Dhrutih Kshma damosteyam
Saucha Mindriya Nigrahah
Dheer Vidya Satya makrodho
Dasakam Dharma Lakshanam

(Manu smruti)

[Potentiality, forbearance, self-control, not Aspring for other's possession, purity of thought, body and activity, disciplining the senses and body parts, pure knowledge, wisdom, truth and being non-angry are the 10 qualities of Dharma].

If we look at the story of Pandavas, these qualities are fully expressive in Dharma Raja alone. Others like Bheema, Arjuna & Draupadi too become 'emotional' and at times 'unparliamentary' in words and action about their plight and their attitude towards 'Kauravas' in general, and Duryodhana and his gang in particular. Every time, their 'emotion' is balanced either by Krishna, or by sages, or by Dharma Raja himself.

The result is 'Success'.

That is why Vyasa says time and again that we should 'restrain' from doing 'harm' to others, even if they have 'harmed' us.

Sruyatam dharma sarvasvam
Yaduktam Grandha Kotibhih
atmanah pratikulani
naparesham samacharet

[What is not pleasant to you, you should never do to others even if you have a chance to do so].
This is the essence of all the scriptures in India.

This is a universal message either Krishna in the east, or Christ in the west spread to man-kind in order to protect 'humanity' from 'brutality'.

That is how, in the entire story, Pandavas do not resort to humiliate Kauravas their women or children, as the latter did to the former.

'Nigraha' (restraint) is the secret of the success of Pandavas, since they were continuously monitored by Krishna, the 'Dharma' in human form, and took shelter under the vast fig tree called the 'tree of dharma'.

The entire story would have been finished in 'Sabha Parva' where Bheema and Arjuna could have put an end to the tyranny of Kauravas. But on the other hand, they endured 'suffering' and 'humiliation'. They worked hard to prove their 'metal' and waited for the time to 'ripen'.

Even in the forest or in the Viratanagara they did not leave their 'duties' as princess and protected many sages and people from demons. Dharma Raja, even excused Suyodhana may a time and pleaded him time and again not to resort to 'Kama' and Krodha'.

Thus they could achieve success because of their total 'surrounder' (Saranagati) to Lord Krishna, and preparedness to do what he ordered them to do, as powerful instruments in His divine hand.

Lord Krishna at the end of Bhagawadgita advocates 'Saranagati' as the chief tool of adverting 'sorrow' (Soka or Vishada).

Sarvadharmaḥ Parityajya
Mamekam Saranan Vraja
Aham tva Sarva Papebhyo
Mokshoyishyani ma Suchah

(Bhagavadgita 18-66)

[Leave off all your knowledge regarding right and wrong. Surrender to me alone. I will remove all your sins. Don't cry].
Pandavas cried and wept all through their lives. But they had the 'contentment' of being blessed by the Lord. While it was so, Kauravas enjoyed and delighted very much in sport and prosperity. But they had a very sorrowful end.

**Hasad bhih kriyate karma**

**Rudadbhi rahu bhuyate**

[We do many 'bad' things laughing: but we reap their 'fruits' and experience them very sadly crying and weeping].

Throughout their lives Pandavas helped others in distress and yet their life either in the forest or underground was 'eventful' and 'heroic' (sportive too).

While Kauravas never went out of Hastina, nor had any problem, they were continuously 'stuck up' in 'misery', only because of their 'possessive nature' (greed).

That is why our elders say

'asantasya kutassukham' (Bhagavadgita 2-66)

[where is 'comfort' for the non-peaceful one]

The comfort is in feeling God's presence everywhere and offering whatever we do as 'nivedana' (holy offer) to the 'Lords' feet.

**Yat karoshi yadasnasi**

**Yat juhoshi dadasiyat**

**Yat tapasyasi kaunteya**

**Tat kurushwa madarpanam** (Bhagavadgita 9-27)

[Offer to me every thing - your deeds, food, pujas and sacrifices, gifts, and even meditation].

**mayaerva mana adhatsva**

**mayi buddhim nivesaya**

**nirasishyasi mayyeva**

**ata urdhvam nasamsayah** (Bhagavadgita 12-8)

[Lodge your 'mind' in me. Keep your 'intellect' steadily in me alone. Live in me throughout. You will definitely achieve the target of liberation].
Yes Pandavas did it. They knew 'nothing' and 'nobody', excepting crying like 'children' in search of their mother 'Krishna... Krishna'; and Krishna came to their rescue every time, whether they asked or not.

**Narayanam namaskritya**

**Narameita Narottamam**

**Devim Saraswatim chaiva**

**tato jaya mudeerayet** (Bhagavadgita 1-1)

[Having prostrated before Narayana (Krishna) Arjuna (Nara) who is a Narottama (raised to the level of 'Dharmajna'), and the Godders Saraswati we should render the 'Jaya' epic].

The 'ideal' man is a manifestation of the Divine qualities.

[See Daivasura Sampat Vibhga in Bhagavadgita]

The 'demon' in man is created out of 'greed' and 'possessiveness' (the meaning of Rakshasa).

Now we know that the story of Pandavas and Kauravas was a 'symbolic' representation of the eternal struggle of the man to 'possess' the world and to get 'detached' from the world.

Vyasa proposes a synthetic approach to 'liberate' one self from bondage and yet continue the 'active life' without misery. This is the secret of the success of Pandavas in following 'Karma Yoga' with 'Karmaphala Tyaga' at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna.

**CONCLUSION**

**Essence and Message:**

Bharata is a story of the cycle of birth, growth and Dealth. Veda Vyasa makes it clear time and again that the real 'Victory' in life is not over the external enemy, but on one one's ownself ie., on
senses which inhibit the man to realise his own identity with the Supreme Reality which is otherwise called 'God'. (Satya) whose existence is the 'Virtue' Dharma' and experienced as 'Tranquility' (Santa) of intellectual emotion (dhi). The story does not stop there. The man passes through many 'cycles' to realise in 'self'.

Most of the Scholars find it difficult to understand why the 'epic of victory' does not end with war. Vyasa wanted to establish that the 'ego' and 'possessiveness' of Pandavas and Draupadi should be completely eliminated before they enter the state of bliss (Swarga). That is why they are made to perform many 'Yajnas' and 'renounce' life, by becoming 'Sanyasins' (monks), before they take up 'Sojourn to Heaven' (Swargarohana).

Then who is the 'hero' of the epic? Whether it is Vyasa's work; or that of 'Kavitraya' in Telugu or that of Ratna Traya' in Kannada, the real 'hero' is Sri Krishna alone, who made use of Pandavas as his instruments to establish 'Dharma' again and protect the 'truth'. As Pandavas do not act independently ie., they act only on the advice of Sri Krishna, it only means that they are divine in birth with a sense of submission at the feet of Dharma (This is called Tatwajnana bija sanskara - as Abhinava Gupta called it). That is why they could not enjoy the fruits of the 'war', and were depressed so much, that every one repents at the end on the evil effects of 'ego' and 'possessiveness'. This is symbolised by their death on their journey to Heaven. The only person to enter with the physical body was 'Dharma Raja'. Even he, had to submit his mortal body into the waters of Divine Ganges to remove 'Ego' in him.

Hence both Pandavas and Kauravas were personifications of Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas in various proportions, and fought in their own way to achieve trivargaphala (Dharma, Artha and Kama) : That is why every character in Maha Bharata except Krishna and Vyasa are found to enter into their respective divine spirits in the Heaven.

Then what about Dharma Raja? " He was a witness to what was happening in Heaven. He was one with Dharma ie., 'Yama', 

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who had transcended the 'trivargaphala' and entered the galaxy of Divine forces in the hands of Lord Vishnu or Narayana, who is called 'Santakara' (Personified Bliss).

Abhinava Gupta, in his 'Abhinava Bharati' clarifies that after the 'trivaragaphala' is obtained, the Moksha (Santa) is experienced (tatah trivargaphala rasanantaram moksha phalakah santah).

What is Moksha? Moksha is understood by many scholars as the absence of rebirth (Punaravruttia rahita sthithi); the real meaning being 'enancipation' for bondage. Only Narayana, the supreme Lord is said to be the seat of Moksha. Then what about Pandavas in general and Dharma Raja in particular? They went to Heaven. Were they not born again?

Some scholars advise us to add 'Harivamsa' where the birth and glory of Lord Krishna is exhorted, to our experience of Maha Bharata, in order to feel the 'Moksha' aspect of Man. This is partly true.

But if we look at the invocation of Nannaya or Thikkana, we come to understand that they were concerned about the 'Sreyas' (the other word for Moksha or Vimukti) of Man. We need not differentiate the sanskrit and Telugu Maha Bharatas in this respect. 'Possessiveness' is death (Hell) and 'submission' at the feet of the Lord is 'life' (Heaven).

The reader is attracted by the balanced mind of Dharma Raja and his control over the other Pandavas. He is also wondered at the Divine play of Lord Krishna in protecting Pandavas, and making them reach the goal of undivided peace and prosperity (Swarga). They are 'set' on the path of salvation (moksha).

While Kauravas could be born time and again, Pandavas would definitely stop at a point where their 'sins' and 'virtues' get balanced under the Divine Shelter of Lord Krishna. Their possessiveness is removed once and for all. That is called 'Vimukti'. Probably Vyasa 'meant' this, to a reader with as 'introjective' mind.

So the reader should prepare himself to look 'into', rather 'look
outside' the realities of life. Don't take sides! Take shelter under the 'Divine' and work incessantly to make your life a meaningful one! Your life should remove misery for others' lives. If you protect 'Dharma', it will in turn protect you, to live in peace and prosperity. Follow the Vedic maxim 'Sarve Janah Sukhinobhavantu' (Let all be happy). Essentially this is the Indian message to the global peace, which also involves distributing prosperity (land) among all. Otherwise Bharata 'war' is sure to repeat.

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Epilogue:

1. Paropakarah punyaya
   Papaya parapidanam
   [Help Others : you will be blessed. To hurt others is to become sinful and get punished]

2. Mama (mine) is 'bondage'
   Namana (not mine) is to become free from bondage
   and attain peace and bliss.
   - Vyasa.
"With my shoulders up, I herald that there is nothing that man can not achieve if he follows dharma in this mundane world of ends and means. But Alas! no one hears me - still I say the same thing".