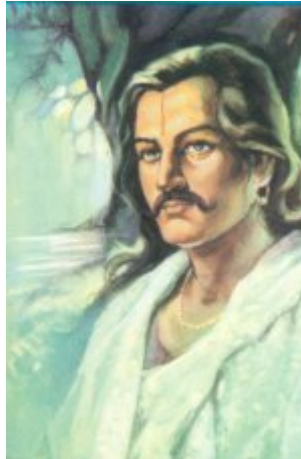


Yudhishtira



The 'Mahabharatha' is the story of the Great War between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. They both belonged to the race of King Kuru. The Pandavas were the sons of King Pandu; and the Kauravas were the sons of Dhritrashtra. They were brought up by Bhishma, the Grand Old Man of the Kuru race, with loving care.

Bhishma had given his word to his father Shantanu that he would never marry, and also that he would give away the kingdom to his stepbrother Vichitravirya. But unfortunately Vichitravirya died young. Thus it fell to the lot of Bhishma to take Pandu and Dhritrashtra under his protection and bring them up. He got them married in good time. Dhritrashtra's wife was Gandhari. Pandu had two wives - Kunthi and Maadri. Dhritrashtra was born blind; so Pandu became the king.

Before Kunthi was married, she played hostess to Sage Durvasa; he was immensely pleased with her hospitality, and taught her five 'mantras' or powerful prayers.

Pandu ruled the kingdom for a number of years; he went to a forest to spend the last years of his life in prayer and meditation. His

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two wives accompanied him to the forest. But Pandu had no peace of mind. His only regret was that he had no sons; he told Kunthi of his sorrow. She related to him all about the mantras she had learnt from Durvasa. With his consent, she bore Yudhishtira by offering prayers to Yama-dharma, the God of Death and Bhimasena and Arjuna by offering prayers to Vayudeva, the God of Winds, and to Indra the God of Heaven respectively. She taught the remaining mantra to Maadri, who, in turn, gave birth to twin babies by the grace of the Ashwinis, the twin Gods.

The world is a battlefield; and the mind of a man is also a battlefield. On both these take place the endless struggle between good forces and evil forces. Dharma is another name for all that is good in this world; the world rests on Dharma. Yama, the God of Death, is the embodiment of Dharma; he is not at all a cruel God. Pandu desired that his eldest son should be Dharma itself in human form. So he asked Kunthi to bear such a son for him by the grace of Yamadharma. -Accordingly she gave birth to the eldest son for Pandu as a divine gift from Yamadharma. So the child was called Dharmaputra or the son of Yamadharma. His mind was always on the side of the good, or Dharma. Thus he came to be known as 'Yudhishtira' or 'I one who is unshaken in war'. Throughout his life he was a living example of this great virtue. He always upheld Dharma and Truth, and became famous as Dharmaraja. He showed to the world that Dharma always wins.

After a while, Pandu died. Maadri observed 'sahagamana' and burnt herself to death with the corpse of her husband. The widowed

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Kunthi returned to Hasthinavathi with the five sons of Pandu and lived under the care of Dhritharashtra.

Gandhari had a hundred sons and a daughter. Duryodhana was the eldest and Dusshasana the second. Yudhishtira and Duryodhana were born on the same day.

Though the sons of Pandu and those of Dhritharashtra belonged to one and the same Kuru race, only the latter came to be known as Kauravas.

The Pandavas and Kauravas received training in the use of weapons of war from Dronacharya, a master of the science of archery.

Bhima and Duryodhana became experts in wielding the mace. Duryodhana hated Bhima from the beginning; his hatred grew as they grew up; he planned the murder of Bhima several times, but he did not succeed. He cherished the thought that he would rule the kingdom with his brothers and be happy, if only he could destroy all the Pandavas.

Yudhishtira became perfect in the art of fighting from a chariot. Nakula and Sahadeva turned out to be excellent swordsmen. Arjuna learnt the use of all kinds of weapons; he excelled everyone in archery and became the favorite pupil of Drona. This fact made Duryodhana hate the Pandavas more than ever.

Yudhishtira had earned the good will of the people of the land. They used to say, "Yudhishtira is the only person fit to be king; he is

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righteous, truthful and patient; he is respectful towards his teachers and elders; he does good to one and all and wishes no one any evil."

The talk of the people reached Duryodhana. He approached his father, and expressed his unhappiness, if what the people were saying came true and Yudhishtira became the king, he and his brothers would have to serve the Pandavas - so lamented Duryodhana.

Dhritharashtra knew the good qualities of Yudhishtira. He explained to his son that it was only proper that Yudhishtira should succeed Pandu, as he was his eldest son. But Duryodhana's ambition was that he himself should become the king. He won over his father, and got a house of lac (a resinous substance secreted by a scale insect) built at Varanavata; he planned to burn the Pandavas alive in that house. Vidura, the younger brother of Dhritharashtra, warned the Pandavas beforehand about the danger. So the Pandavas managed to escape from the house through an underground tunnel; they themselves set fire to the house.

However, news reached Hasthinavathi that the Pandavas had been burnt to ashes in the house of lac (a resinous substance secreted by a scale insect). But they were out of danger; they wandered through many woods, and traveled southward; they finally reached a dense forest.

Wandering from one wood to another, they came to Ekachakrapura. There they found shelter in the house of a poor Brahmin. They were now forced to beg for their daily food.

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As days passed, a Brahmin traveler called at the house where the Pandavas were staying, and remained there as a guest. He gave the news that Drupada, the king of Panchala, was holding a swayamvara at which his daughter would choose her husband. The Pandavas went to the swayamvara in the guise of Brahmins.

Kings of many states attended Draupadi's swayamvara. The Pandavas - in the guise of Brahmins - sat in the midst of Brahmins in the swayamvara hall. Any one who aspired to Draupadi's hand had to prove his skill in archery by hitting a fish-shaped target. None of the Kshathriyas (the warriors) was able to wield the bow. Arjuna walked up to the bow, and hit the target. Draupadi garlanded Arjuna.

The Pandavas returned home with Draupadi. They stood at the door and cried out - "Mother, we have brought our collection of alms." "Share it equally among you as usual," replied Kunthi from inside the house. The Pandavas stared at one another and began to laugh. Kunthi came out. And she was amazed to see that the alms they had brought were a young woman!

Kunthi said in wonder, "What a thing did I say!" She then asked her sons, "Who is this girl? How does she happen to be with you?"

Yudhishtira narrated to Kunthi the swayamvara episode.

Kunthi: My son, I thought you had brought rice as usual, and said those words. It is not proper, it is adharma, for five of you to marry the same girl. Yudhishtira, you have to solve this problem.

Yudhishtira: A mother's word is law, it cannot be disobeyed. But yet, Arjuna should marry her, because he won her. That is just.

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Arjuna: What you say is ordinary law. But it is not Dharma. Do you wish that I commit an act of adharma? There is no greater act of Dharma than carrying out the wishes of one's mother. Whatever our mother said came from a pure heart. Therefore, we must abide by her words.

Yudhishtira: you have told us what you think. Draupadi is to be your wife. We should know what she has to say.

With these words, Yudhishtira turned towards Draupadi with a questioning look. She did not speak; she merely glanced at the Pandavas and smiled; and shyly she bent down her head. Her silence meant consent.

So she became the wife of the Pandavas.

The Pandavas now had the support of a powerful king like Drupada. This fact made Duryodhana burn with jealousy more than ever before; he was afraid that the Pandavas would snatch the kingdom from him with the help of Drupada, Krishna (whose prowess and genius had made him a formidable power) and Balarama (Krishna's elder brother). He was the master of the entire kingdom in the absence of the Pandavas. He, therefore, wanted somehow to get rid of them. Dhritrashtra wished in his heart of hearts that his son should get what he wanted. At the same time, he did not wish to go against the advice of elders like Bhishma and Vidura. After much hesitation, he invited the Pandavas back to Hasthinavathi; he also gave them half of the kingdom. The Pandavas built a beautiful city and named it Indraprastha; they lived there happily for some time.

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With the help of his brothers, Yudhishtira subdued many kings and performed the Rajasuya Yaga. Kings and leaders of important tribes such as the Yadavas attended the sacrifice; the Kauravas also attended. Yudhishtira honored Shri Krishna as the greatest person in the assembly; after this all the guests returned home. Only Duryodhana and Shakuni stayed on.

Yudhishtira had a splendid royal guesthouse built for the occasion. One day Duryodhana was going round the mansion, observing its splendor and beauty. At one time, he mistook a highly polished floor for a pond and walked on; at another time, he mistook a pond for a glittering floor and, fell into it! Bhima and Arjuna, who happened to be there, burst into laughter. Duryodhana felt greatly insulted. His jealousy had already been kindled when the Pandavas grew in power and prestige soon after Rajasuya Yaga; the disgrace he now suffered fanned his jealousy. He confided his Shakuni suggested a plan to get rid of the Pandavas. He said, "To overcome Yudhishtira is to overcome all the Pandavas. Yudhishtira has a craving for the game of dice, but cannot really play it, poor fellow. Invite him to play a game of dice. I will beat him, and win all his riches and his kingdom for you."

Duryodhana went to his father and unburdened his heart. He told him how miserable he was and explained to him insisted that his father should invite Dharmaraja for a game of dice. 'If you don't agree I shall kill myself,' he threatened. Out of love for his son, Dhritrashtra agreed.

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The unpleasant task of inviting Dharmaraja to the game fell on Vidura. He went to Indraprastha rather unwillingly, and informed Yudhishtira of the mission on which he had come.

I know that gambling is bad. That is the opinion I offer you, too. But, I have come to invite you as desired by Dhritharashtra. Do what you think is best," said Vidura.

"Who will play the - game for Duryodhana?" asked Yudhishtira.

"The chief player is Shakuni," replied Vidura.

At the very mention of the name of Shakuni, Yudhishtira felt as if he had been stung by a scorpion. He said, "Shakuni is a cheat. I would not like to play against him. But I cannot disobey the command of Dhritharashtra. I do not like gambling; but I do not refuse to play when invited. This is the code of conduct for a Kshatriya; and it is my vow also. So, I accept the invitation."

Before the game began, the players had to agree on the stake, on what the loser was to give up. Both Duryodhana and Yudhishtira offered their jewels as the stake. Shakuni threw the dice, got the count he wanted, and won the game. The match went on and on. Yudhishtira offered thousands of gold coins, chariots, elephants, horses and his retinue of servants, and he lost them all.

Vidura, who was watching the game, shuddered to think of what might happen. He begged Dhritharashtra to put an end to the game. His advice was not heeded.

Yudhishtira went on betting, and lost all his riches, his brothers, and even his own person.

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The cunning and vile Shakuni coaxed Yudhishtira to play another game, and said: "Yudhishtira, there is one excellent gem still left with you. That is Draupati, a gem of a woman. You may bet her and win the next game, and get back all that you have so far lost."

Yudhishtira was silent for a moment. 'That's an idea! Why not win back all that I have lost with one try?' So he thought, as all gamblers naturally do; and he declared, "Here is Draupadi, my bet for the next and last game." The assembled spectators sat spellbound, in anxious expectancy. Some were astonished at Yudhishtira's step. Some exclaimed angrily, "What is this that Dharmaraja has done!" some were pained at the thought of the misfortune awaiting the Pandavas. Bhishma and Drona were bewildered; Vidura did not know what to do. But Duryodhana and his companions watched gleefully.

Shakuni rolled the pair of dice, and exclaimed, I win!"

Duryodhana turned to Vidura and said, "Vidura! go and bring Draupadi. From now on, she is our slave!" Vidura, however, would not agree to do such a shameful act. Then, Duryodhana sent prathikami, a son of his charioteer, to bring her.

Draupadi placed her trust in God, and came to the gambling hall without even changing her dress. At the behest of Duryodhana, Dusshasana dragged her by her hair to the midst of the gathering. Draupadi cast an angry and anguished look at her husbands; Dharmaputra was unmoved. But his brothers were enraged, and looked to him for his word of command. Yudhishtira remained calm. But Bhima could not contain his rage, and stared at the huge door

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bolt. Yudhishtira understood that Bhima had lost his temper, and made a sign to him to be patient.

But Duryodhana's brothers were not men who knew decency or restraint. Dusshasana began to pull at Draupadi's sari; but by the grace of God, the sari grew endless. Duryodhana addressed Draupadi as his slave; he patted his thigh and exposed it to her. Draupadi felt outraged and cursed him: "Let your accursed thigh bring you death."

Draupadi had been subjected to the most shameful humiliation in the open court; and Bhima could no longer check his fury. He roared with rage, and vowed vengeance against Duryodhana and Dusshasana: I will kill Dusshasana in battle, and drink his blood. And I will break Duryodhana's thigh with my mace." Bad omens were seen in the palace at that time.

Dhritharashtra was now frightened; he feared that the omens foretold evil to his sons. Bhishma and Vidura said to him, "Comfort Draupadi." Accordingly, Dhritharashtra called Draupadi, and said, "My dear, you are like a daughter to me. You may ask of me any boon you like, and you shall have it." She asked for two boons: one was the freedom of her husbands from bondage, and the other the return of their weapons and chariots. Dhritharashtra granted the boons.

Yudhishtira approached Dhritharashtra and said respectfully: "Maharaja, we will obey you. Please tell us what we should do."

Dhritharashtra replied, "Yudhishtira, you have no enemy! You are an Ajatashatru; you are learned; you know what Dharma

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(righteous conduct) is; you are humble; you are forgiveness itself; you are peace loving by nature.

Therefore, please forget all the bad acts of my sons. Go to Indraprastha and be happy in your kingdom," and he wished them well. The Pandavas returned to Indraprastha.

But the 'Bad Four', namely Duryodhana, Dusshasana, Karna (Duryodhana's bosom friend) and Shakuni, did not like this arrangement. Shakuni again suggested a plan. Duryodhana went to his father with his three companions, and explained his evil design to get rid of the Pandavas. He persuaded his father to agree to carry it out. He said, "Father, let us invite the Pandavas once more to a game. If they lose, they will have to live in exile in a forest for a period of twelve years; in addition, they shall spend another year in exile anywhere, but without, being recognized. If we find them out, they will have to go back to the forest to live there for another twelve years. These are the terms of the game."

And so the Pandavas were once again invited on behalf of Dhritharashtra to a game of dice. On getting the invitation, Yudhishtira thought that things were happening according to Divine will, and that he could not act against it; one has to experience both pleasure or pain; and further, it was his duty to obey Dhritharashtra. And so he accepted the invitation to the game of dice. The match took place in Hasthinavati as before. Yudhishtira lost the game. According to the agreement, he retired to the forest with his brothers and Draupadi. Kunthi remained with Vidura.

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When the Pandavas were in a forest called Dwaithavana, one day the conversation turned to their condition. Draupadi mildly objected that Yudhishtira's tolerance, goodness, compassion and other noble qualities had rather exceeded reasonable limits. She argued that indignation was a necessary virtue of the Kshathriyas who were warriors; she said that the Dharma, which he was upholding, had not protected him. After listening to her, Yudhishtira said, "Draupadi, only we may suffer if we are too virtuous. But if our anger gets out of control, it harms others and us also. Anger is evil; all kinds of calamities result from it. Dharma should be followed for its own sake. We should not expect any benefit from it." Draupadi was not satisfied with what he said. Bhima also supported her views. They both wanted to raise an army and get back the kingdom by fighting with the Kauravas. Yudhishtira pacified them, and said:

"Bhima, both of you speak in this way because of your sorrows. Ponder over this. I had to take part in the match of dice, because I was bound by the code of kings. Shakuni's deceit was responsible for my defeat. It is our bounden duty to live in the forest, according to the terms we accepted. I cannot give up the path of Dharma just to please you, or to get back the kingdom before the stipulated period. We shall have our good times also. Let us bide our time and fight, if necessary, to get back our kingdom. Humility adds to the beauty of learning; in the same way, patience is an ornament to prowess. "

The Pandavas never stayed in one place for long in the forest. They visited many holy places. Wherever they went, they were warmly received and honored by saints and sages alike. They

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narrated sacred puranic (mythological) stories. As they listened to the stories Yudhishtira's faith in Dharma was being strengthened; and his brothers were getting mental peace.

While the Pandavas were living in Dwaithavana, Duryodhana wanted to derive pleasure by witnessing their hardships. He came near Dwaithavana with some companions and his army. There the Kauravas clashed with some 9 gandharvas ' who were visiting that place. Duryodhana and some of his companions were taken prisoners by the Gandharvas. Members of his retinue ran to Yudhishtira and prayed for his help. Bhima intervened and said, "The Kauravas have got what they deserved. We should not give them any help." But Yudhishtira corrected him and said, "it is the duty to Kshathriyas to render help to those who are in distress and ask for help. The Kauravas and we are cousins; and so they coveted our kingdom and looked upon us as their enemies. Apart from this, they and we are one family in the face of an enemy from outside." So saying, he asked his brothers to save the Kauravas. Accordingly, they attacked the Gandharvas, fought with them and made them set the Kauravas free.

A strange event happened while the Pandavas were residing in Dwaithavana. One day a Brahmin visited the Pandavas. He told them that his 'arani' sticks with which he used to produce fire for his 'homas' (making offerings to the Gods through the sacred fire) had been carried away by a deer on its horns; and he requested them to get back the fire sticks for him.

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Yudhishtira set out with his brothers in search of the deer. The Pandavas soon came in sight of the animal; but it ran away fast as the wind, and they could not catch it. All of them soon felt very thirsty. At the suggestion of Dharmaraja, Nakula climbed a tree and looked around for water. He caught sight of a lake nearby. Yudhishtira sent Nakula to fetch some water. Nakula went to the lake, and was about to drink a little water before taking some with him. Suddenly he heard a voice addressing him thus: "O Sir, this is my lake. You shall not drink water without my permission. You may drink after answering my questions." He looked all round and saw no one. He was very thirsty. Without heeding the words he had heard, he drank water; at once he fell down unconscious.

Yudhishtira sent his other brothers one after another, to look for those who had not come back and to bring water; but the same fate befell all of them.

At last, Dharmaraja himself hurried to the spot. He was taken aback to see his brothers lying dead 'on the ground. There was no one anywhere nearby! Nor was there any sign of wild animals! Dharmaraja could not understand the cause of his brother's death. As he, too, was fatigued with thirst, he also proceeded to drink water. And the same voice from the skies spoke to him. Yudhishtira addressed the voice: "Sir, who are you? You seem to be the cause of the death of my brothers. Humbly I ask you, who are you?" The voice replied, "Yes, I killed your brothers. I am a Yaksha, the owner of this lake. They drank water before answering my questions, and so they died. If you want to drink water, answer my questions first." With

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these words the Yaksha himself appeared before him. "I shall answer your questions as best I can," agreed Yudhishtira.

Yaksha: What equals the ocean? Who does well to the world? Who is the mother of all human beings? What can compare with the brightness of the Sun?

Yudhishtira: The sky equals the ocean. Devendra is the benefactor of the world. The cow is the mother of all human beings. Only Truth equals the Sun in brightness.

Yaksha: Who can be considered a Shrotriya among Brahmins? Who is the best among the Kshathriyas?

Yudhishtira: He who is learned in the Shruthi or the Vedas is a true Brahmin. The best Kshathriya is one who can wield weapons and fight without fear of death.

Yaksha: How can one earn money? Of all the riches which is the best? What is true wealth?

Yudhishtira: Money is to be earned by hard work. Learning is the best of riches. Health is wealth.

Yaksha: What is greater than the earth? What is higher than the skies?

Yudhishtira: A mother is greater than the earth. A father is loftier than the skies.

Yaksha: What is faster than the wind? What troubles a person always?

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Yudhishtira: The mind is faster than the wind. Worry troubles a person always.

Yaksha: Who is a great man?

Yudhishtira: One who practices nonviolence.

Yaksha: I am pleased with your answers. Which of your brothers do you wish to come back to life?

Yudhishtira: Nakula.

As the dialogue continued, one by one Yudhishtira got all his brothers back. "Why did you want your stepbrothers, Nakula and Sahadeva, restored to life first, and not your own brothers, Bhima and Arjuna?" - asked Yaksha. Yudhishtira replied, "I do not make any difference between my own brothers and my step-brothers." Then Yamadharma, who had taken the form of a Yaksha, appeared in his own person. He said, "Because you uphold Dharma victory will be yours."

With these words he blessed Yudhishtira and disappeared. Afterwards, the Pandavas brought the arani sticks and gave them to the Brahmin.

The Pandavas completed twelve years in the forest. They had to spend one more year somewhere in disguise.

They choose Virata Nagara, the kingdom of Virata. Before entering the capital of Virata, they changed their names and put on different guises. They then secured different posts in the service of the king.

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Yudhishtira appeared as Kankabhata, a Brahmin; Bhima put on the guise of a cook, calling himself Valala; Arjuna assumed the name Brihannala, and became a teacher to teach dancing to the king's daughter. Nakula took service as master of the stables. Sahadeva was appointed to look after the cattle-wealth, Draupadi as Sairandhri became a chambermaid to wait on the queen.

Before the year of the exile was over, Keechaka, brother of queen Sudheshne, fell in love with Draupadi. For this reason, he was slain by Bhima. The death of Keechaka indicated to the Kauravas the whereabouts of the Pandavas. With the object of finding out Pandavas, the Kauravas seized the cattle belonging to Virata. Arjuna went with Uttara Kumaras, the crownprince of Virata, as his charioteer, fought single handed with the Kauravas and brought back all the cattle. By this time, the thirteenth year of exile was over. The Pandavas announced their identity to King Virata. He was highly pleased with the happy turn of events, and gave his daughter Uthare in marriage to Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna.

Now Yudhishtira had fulfilled his vow; he had upheld Truth and Dharma. Like a serpent, which renews itself by shedding its old skin, Yudhishtira appeared with renewed radiance and added strength. He could now count upon the assistance of many leaders and kings like Sri Krishna, Virata and Drupada. His own brothers were second to none in courage and valor. If he had so wished, he could have got back his kingdom by waging war with the Kauravas with the help of these persons. But he wanted peace, not war. It was his intention to get his half of the kingdom in a peaceful way by following the path of

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Dharma. His brothers, however, favored war to regain their kingdom. But they were not prepared to go against the wishes of Yudhishtira.

As desired by Yudhishtira, Krishna tried his best to bring about lasting peace between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. But he did not succeed; a war had to take place.

The armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas ranged on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Both sides had huge armies. The Kurukshetra war was fiercely waged for eighteen days. Great heroes like Drona, Kama and Shalya were died in the war. Many heroes of the Pandava army, including Abhimanyu and Ghatotkacha, also died fighting. Yudhishtira was heavy with sorrow at the loss of his kith and kin. On the last day of the war, Bhima killed Duryodhana in a due fought with maces, and fulfilled his vow.

In the Great War of Kurukshetra, the Pandavas were always guided by Krishna, the very incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Yudhishtira never moved away from the path of Dhairna even in the most trying circumstances. When war became inevitable, he took up arms and entered the battlefield. He himself fought with the enemy on many occasions. He lived up to the name of Yudhishtira, and was firm in war and in peace. Thus, he won the war and became the lord of the entire kingdom of the Kuru race by virtue of his Dharma. He began to rule the kingdom along with his brothers. At the close of the war, Bhishma, the oldest and the wisest member of the royal family, had chooses to lie on a bed of arrows prepared by Arjuna. Krishna advised Yudhishtira to visit him. Yudhishtira went to the place where he lay and touched his feet with respect. The learned Bhishma

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explained to Yudhishtira the duties of a king and the means of securing the happiness of his subjects. Yudhishtira placed his doubts before the sage and Bhishma answered them all and enlightened the king. But Yudhishtira had won the victory after killing his cousins and a host of others. So he was not happy. He had no peace of mind. To atone for the sins he had committed, he performed the Ashwamedha of the horse-sacrifice, as suggested by Sage Vyasa.

After some time, Dhritrashtra and Vidura, Gandhari and Kunthi all retired to the forest for prayer and meditation.

Yudhishtira grew tired of ruling the kingdom and lost interest in worldly affairs. By this time, Krishna gave up his mortal body, Dhritrashtra and Vidura passed away. Yudhishtira gave Duryodhana's share of the kingdom to Yuyuthsu, son of Vidura, and his own share to Parikshith, son of Abhimanyu, and installed them on their thrones. Afterwards, he proceeded on the Great Journey, or 'Mahaprasthan' along with his brothers, to obtain spiritual peace. The Pandavas gave up all the worldly possessions, dressed themselves in fiber-cloth and bade farewell to the citizens. Though all the citizens returned, a dog followed them throughout their journey.

The Pandavas finally reached Mount Meru. As they climbed it, the dog faithfully followed them. On the way, all except Yudhishtira fell down and gave up their mortal bodies.

Though sorrowful and - alone, Yudhishtira went on with determination. The dog still followed him.

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Devendra came in a heavenly chariot. He invited Yudhishtira to enter the chariot and go with him to Paradise.

Yudhishtira: My brothers lie dead here. I do not want Paradise without them.

Indira: Dharmaputra, your brothers and Draupadi are not dead. They have given up their mortal bodies here. They have assumed divine bodies and are already there in Heaven. All the Kauravas and other heroes have reached Heaven. Do not be unhappy. Because you have earned very much more merit than all others, you have the privilege of entering Heaven just as you are, in your human body. Come now get into the chariot.

Yudhishtira: I cannot come. This dog you see has been following me from Hasthinavathi. And he has been so faithful to me. I do not want to leave him behind and come alone.

Indra: What are you saying? A dog's place is in Hell, not Heaven.

Yudhishtira: Lord Devendra, I can never desert those who have trusted me and those who follow me. I do not want that Heaven which has no place for the dog that has trusted and followed me.

The dog was not other than Yamadharma himself, Yudhishtira's father. He appeared before Yudhishtira and said, "You are indeed a great man, a righteous man; your compassion for all living beings is exemplary. A dog has been as dear to you as your own brothers. Your conduct will remain a shining example to all men for all times. Now, you can mount the chariot without any hesitation."

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Yudhishtira was now satisfied; he bowed down to Yamadharma and Indra, and mounted the chariot. He reached Heaven with Indra. He was glad to find his kith and kin in Heaven. He felt happy to join them in divine life.

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