

him in his chariot to Hastināpura. Preparations were made for the marriage of Vicitravīrya with the three princesses. Then Ambā approached Bhīṣma and told him that she had already dedicated her heart to the king of Śālva. Bhīṣma generously allowed her to return home. (For the rest of Ambā's story, see the word "Ambā"). Vicitravīrya married Ambikā and Ambālikā. He ruled over the country for seven years at the end of which he died of consumption. The dynasty faced a crisis, as there was no one to succeed him. Satyavatī approached Bhīṣma with a suggestion to beget children by Vicitravīrya's wife. But Bhīṣma stood firmly on his solemn oath to continue as a life-long bachelor. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Verse 100-104).

5) *Bhīṣma's Wire Pulling*. After that Satyavatī summoned Vyāsa to Hastināpura and sons were born to Ambikā, Ambālikā and their maid by him. Ambikā gave birth to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Ambālikā gave birth to Pāṇḍu and the maid gave birth to Vidura. They grew up and Dhṛtarāṣṭra married Gāndhārī and Pāṇḍu married Kuntī and Mādri. Duryodhana and his brothers were born to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, while the Pāṇḍavas were born to Pāṇḍu. Pāṇḍu died at the Śatasrīnga vana and Mādri observed satī by jumping into his funeral pyre and burning herself alive. After that, the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas who lived in the palace at Hastināpura, split up into two blocs. When the palace made of lac was destroyed by fire, the Pāṇḍavas went into the forest and came back to the country after their marriage with Pāncālī. They ruled over the country with Indraprastha as their capital. In the gambling contest between Dharmaputra and Duryodhana, the Pāṇḍavas lost their kingdom and everything and so they went to the forest again. They lived for twelve years in the forest and spent one year incognito in the palace of the King of Virāṭa. At that time the Pāṇḍavas reappeared in the battle which took place as a result of the theft of King Virāṭa's cows by the Kauravas. Duryodhana asserted that he would not give so much land to the Pāṇḍavas as to put a dot with a needle. With the failure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mediation, the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas encamped on the opposite sides of the field of Kurukṣetra, preparing for a grim battle.

Bhīṣma was the chief protagonist in all these events relating to the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. At every stage in the story we see Bhīṣma's influence. The main events in which this superman who used to give shelter to Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas alike, played a decisive role, are given below:—

- (1) Bhīṣma sent a messenger to Subala, king of Gāndhāra, to ask for the hand of Gāndhārī, to be married to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 109, Verse 11).
- (2) He went to the palace of Śalya, king of Madra and secured Mādri to be married to Pāṇḍu. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 112).
- (3) He brought about the marriage between Vidura and the daughter of Devaka. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 113, Verse 2).
- (4) The Mahārṣis who were the inhabitants of Śatasrīnga told Bhīṣma about the birth of the Pāṇḍavas. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 125, Verse 22).
- (5) Bhīṣma offered 'Jalāñjali' (worship with holy water) to Pāṇḍu at his death. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 126, Verse 27).

(6) He performed the death anniversary of Pāṇḍu. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 127, Verse 1).

(7) He engaged Dronācārya to teach archery to the princes. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 130, Verse 77).

(8) He burst into tears and wept bitterly on hearing that Pāṇḍavas were burnt to death in the palace of lac and was about to offer them 'Jalāñjali'. Just then, Vidura came to him and secretly informed him that the Pāṇḍavas were not dead. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 149, Dākṣiṇātya Pāṭha).

(9) He advised Duryodhana to give half the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 202).

(10) He had taken part in Dharmaputra's Rājasūya Yajña. Dharmaputra had entrusted to Bhīṣma, the arrangements for that yajña. (M.B. Sabhā Parva, Chapter 35, Verse 6).

(11) He advised Yudhiṣṭhira to give the highest place of honour in that yajña to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (M.B. Sabhā Parva, Chapter 36, Verse 28).

(12) Bhīṣma ridiculed Śiśupāla (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 33).

(13) Śiśupāla insulted Bhīṣma. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 41).

(14) Bhīṣma stopped Bhīma who rushed out to kill Śiśupāla. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 42, Verse 13).

(15) It was Bhīṣma who narrated the life story of Śiśupāla. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 43).

(16) In the battle against Śiśupāla, Bhīṣma selected powerful Kings to help Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 44, Verse 41).

(17) Once Bhīṣma asked the sage Pulastya about the value and importance of pilgrimage. (Vana Parva, Chapter 82, Verse 4).

(18) Bhīṣma advised Duryodhana to be on friendly terms with the Pāṇḍavas. (Vana Parva, Chapter 253, Verse 4).

(19) In the battle which was fought by Kauravas against King Virāṭa, Bhīṣma arranged the regiments in order, after sending Duryodhana to Hastināpura. (Virāṭa Parva, Chapter 52, Verse 16).

(20) A grim fight took place between Arjuna who went to help the Virāṭa army and Bhīṣma. At last, it was the charioteer who removed Bhīṣma, (who had fallen down unconscious) from the battlefield. (Virāṭa Parva, Chapter 64).

(21) When the Kauravas were contemplating to fight against the Pāṇḍavas who had returned after their incognito life, Bhīṣma ridiculed Karṇa and praised Arjuna. (Udyoga Parva, Chapter 21, Verse 16).

(22) At that time, he explained to Duryodhana, the greatness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. (Udyoga Parva, Chapter 49, verse 2).

(23) Duryodhana proposed to bind the hands and feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was expected to come as the envoy of the Pāṇḍavas. Hearing this, Bhīṣma in great anger, walked out of the council hall. (Udyoga Parva, Chapter 83, Verse 19).

(24) Bhīṣma strongly advised Duryodhana to make a treaty of peace with the Pāṇḍavas. (Udyoga Parva, Chapter 125, Verse 2).

(25) He declared that he would not kill the Pāṇḍavas but would kill 10,000 soldiers of the Pāṇḍavas everyday. (Udyoga Parva, Chapter 156, Verse 21).