

by force into his chariot and brought the last two, to Hastināpura to be given as wives to Vicitravīrya. On the way he sent Ambā back. Vicitravīrya married Ambikā and Ambālikā. But shortly after that he also died, before any children were born to him. Fearing that the Lunar dynasty would come to an end, Satyawatī brought her son Vedavyāsa, who was born to her from hermit Parāśara, before her marriage, to Hastināpura. In the night Satyawatī sent Ambikā adorned with ornaments and costly garments, to the bedroom of Vyāsa. But she could not bear to lie with Vyāsa who was clad in barks of the tree and wearing matted hair. Still thinking that it was not right on her part to stand against the wish of her mother, she approached Vyāsa and lay with him with closed eyes. Ambikā became pregnant. The child she gave birth to, was blind. That child was Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Next night Ambālikā approached Vyāsa. When she saw Vyāsa she turned pale at his uncouth figure and her face became bloodless. So the child born to her was pale and was called Pāṇḍu. Next night the maid of the queen approached Vyāsa with a joyful heart and so she got Vidura as son, who was extremely wise and intelligent. Thus Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura became sons of the same father.¹ (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapters, 63 and 105).

3) *Up to marriage.* After the birth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra Vyāsa returned to forest and since then Bhīṣma stood in place of father to the children. Bhīṣma performed 'Upanayana' (investiture with Brahma-string) and other rites of the children. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura had their education in Hastināpura. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 108).

"Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and the wise Vidura
The three were brought up as sons by Bhīṣma,
They became well educated, cultured and devotional,
Respectful towards vows and fasts, and
of good physique, earnest in work
And they became valiant youths.
Learned the Vedas and Veda of archery,
Clubbing, shield and swords play,
Elephant-keeping, laws of chastisement,
Veda śāstras, allied works and epics and the Purāṇas,
Pāṇḍu came out expert archer,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra the strongest of all.
None in the three worlds was equal to Vidura,
In wisdom and knowledge and righteousness."
(M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 109).

Because of his blindness Dhṛtarāṣṭra was not anointed as King. It is stated in M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 108 Stanza 25, that in the place of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu was anointed the King.

4) *Marriage and birth of children.* Dhṛtarāṣṭra came of marriageable age. Bhīṣma had heard about Gāndhārī, daughter of Subala, the King of Gāndhāra, as a beautiful damsel of good qualities. Moreover she had acquired a boon from Śiva that hundred sons would be born to her. Bhīṣma sent a messenger to Subala with a request to give Gāndhārī as wife to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Subala was not much pleased at the aspect of getting a blind man as son-in-law. Still he thought of the prestige his family would get by a marriage alliance with the kings of the Pūru Dynasty, and finally agreed. Gāndhārī submitted to the will of her father, and to live with a husband who

was blind. She tied her eyes with a cloth. Śakuni the son of Subala brought Gāndhārī to Hastināpura, and gave her to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. With the sanction of Bhīṣma their marriage took place.

Once Gāndhārī feasted Vyāsa who came tired with hunger and thirst. The hermit was pleased with her and blessed her to have hundred sons. Gāndhārī became pregnant. But even after two years no delivery took place. She crushed her womb by force and a lump of flesh came out. At that time Vyāsa came there. He cut the lump into hundred pieces and kept them in ghee-pots. Gāndhārī had a desire to get a daughter also. Vyāsa who had known it had cut the lump in such a way that there was a small piece in excess. The pots broke by themselves in due course and hundred sons and a daughter were born. The daughter was named Duśśalā. A son named Yuyutsu also was born to Dhṛtarāṣṭra of a Vaiśya woman. Duryodhana was the eldest of the hundred sons. The children grew up. Duśśalā was given in marriage to Jayadratha, the King of Sindhu. (M.B. Ādi Parva, Chapters 109 to 116).

5) *Till Bhārata-battle.* At this juncture Pāṇḍu incurred a curse from a hermit that he would die if his wife touched him. With that Pāṇḍu retired to forest with his wives. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was grieved at the separation of his brother. Pāṇḍu died in the forest and Mādri jumped into fire and died with her husband. Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked Vidura to perform their cremation rites. After that Yudhiṣṭhira became King. The Pāṇḍavas became more and more prosperous. This made the heart of Dhṛtarāṣṭra cloudy. He gave sanction to Duryodhana to transfer the Pāṇḍavas to the lac house in Vāraṇāvata. The lac house caught fire and it was rumoured that the Pāṇḍavas died in the lac house fire, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra shed crocodile tears, and ordered for the mourning and oblation to be performed. After the marriage of Pāṅcālī, it came to be known that the Pāṇḍavas were alive and that they were living with Drupada. Dhṛtarāṣṭra recalled them and gave them half of the country. The Pāṇḍavas made Indraprastha their capital and began to rule the kingdom. Yudhiṣṭhira performed the sacrifice of Rājasūya (royal consecration). Dhṛtarāṣṭra also took part in the sacrifice.

Duryodhana wanted to challenge Yudhiṣṭhira to a game of dice. Dhṛtarāṣṭra agreed but advised Duryodhana not to live in enmity with the Pāṇḍavas. The game of dice was played, and Yudhiṣṭhira lost everything the Pāṇḍavas had. Dhṛtarāṣṭra called Pāṅcālī and told her that she might ask any boon. She requested that her husband Dharmaputra might be exempted from servitude and the Pāṇḍavas made free. Dhṛtarāṣṭra compelled her to ask for more boons. She replied that according to law Vaiśyas were eligible for one boon, Kṣatriya women two boons, Kings three boons and Brāhmaṇas hundred boons, and since she had already taken two boons, she wanted no more. Dhṛtarāṣṭra who was pleased at this reply gave the Pāṇḍavas freedom and returned all their lost wealth.

Duryodhana wanted to challenge the Pāṇḍavas for a game of dice again. Dhṛtarāṣṭra agreed. This time also Yudhiṣṭhira lost the game. The Pāṇḍavas who had lost everything, were ordered to go to forest for twelve years and to live incognito for one year. The Pāṇḍavas went

1. It is stated in M.B. Āśramavāsika Parva, Chapter 31, Stanza 7 that Dhṛtarāṣṭra was born as the incarnation of a Gandharva having the name Dhṛtarāṣṭra. (See under Dhṛtarāṣṭra III).