

KUNIGARGA. A reputed sage. By severe austerities he increased his spiritual powers, created a girl by his mental power, and afterwards entered into Samādhi. The girl, who did not relish the idea of marriage, began penance in solitude, and she grew old. In the Mahābhārata she is known as Vṛddhakanyā (Old Virgin). In the evening of her life she longed to give up her material body and to attain salvation. At this juncture Nārada told her that salvation was not for unmarried women. She, therefore, gave half the power of her penance to a young man called Śrīgavān and lived as his wife for one single night. She thus attained salvation (Śalya Parva, Chapter 52).

KUNINDA. A noble brahmin. He presented a divine conch to Yudhiṣṭhira at his Rājasūya Yajña. (Śabhā Parva, Chapter 51, Southern text).

KUṆJA. A reputed sage. Once he enjoyed the company of Pramlocā, the celestial woman. (See under Pramlocā).

KUṆJALA I. A warrior of Skanda. (Śalya Parva, Chapter 45).

KUṆJALA II. A wise parrot which lived on the banks of the river Narmadā. The Padma Purāṇa (Chapter 85, Bhūmikhaṇḍa) has the following to say about the parrot.

Kuṅjala, the wise parrot, had a wife and four sons called Ujjvala, Samujjvala, Vijvala and Kapiṅjala. These brothers used to feed themselves on sweet fruits etc. on the planes, mountains and other places. They also used to carry tasty fruits to their parents. The four brothers thus led a happy life in every way. (See under Subāhu).

KUṆJARA I. A great monkey. Añjanā mother of Hanūmān was the daughter of Kuṅjara. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa; Canto 66, Verse 9).

KUṆJARA II. A well-known serpent. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 35, Verse 15).

KUṆJARA III. A prince of the Sāvīra country. He was a follower of Jayadratha, and was killed by Arjuna. (Vana Parva, Chapter 271).

KUNTAKA (KUNTALA). A Sanskrit poet who flourished in the eleventh century A.D. He was a contemporary of Abhinavagupta, and a critic who maintained that the 'life' of real poetry was Vakrokti (expressing ideas in an artistically round-about way instead of in a blunt and plain manner).

KUNTALA. The King of the country Kuntala. Kuntala was a Kingdom in ancient South India. The King of the country was called Kuntala and the people were known as Kuntalas. (Śabhā Parva, and Bhīṣma Parva).

KUNTĪ (PṚTHĀ). Wife of King Pāṇḍu and the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, Kuntī is a noble heroine in the Mahābhārata.

1) *Birth.* Kuntī was the sister of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva. Her real name was Pṛthā. Vasudeva and Pṛthā were the children of King Śūrasena of the Yādava dynasty. King Kuntibhoja was the son of Śūrasena's sister. He had no issues. Śūrasena had promised to give the daughter first born to him as the adopted daughter of Kuntibhoja, and accordingly his first-born daughter Pṛthā was given to Kuntibhoja, and Kuntī was brought up in his palace. From that day onwards Pṛthā came to be known as Kuntī. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 111).

Kuntī, Mādri and Gāndhārī were born from aspects respectively of the three celestial women Siddhi,

Kṛti and Mati. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 67, Verse 160).

2) *Kuntī and the mantra.* To treat brahmins who came to the court of Kuntibhoja with worshipful offerings etc. was the duty of Kuntī. Once sage Durvāsas visited Kuntibhoja, and as he knew that the sage was easily annoyed Kuntī was specially deputed for his service, and she served him to the utmost. One day, to test Kuntī, he asked her to be ready with his food by the time he took his bath, and he took practically no time to return after bath and sit for meals. By that time Kuntī had managed to cook his food, which she placed before him in a plate. The food was too hot and steaming, and the sage meaningfully looked at the back of Kuntī. Realising the meaning of the look, Kuntī turned her back to the sage for him to place the plate of food thereon. The sage placed it accordingly on her back and began eating. Though her back was really burning she showed no sign of it. Pleased at her behaviour the sage taught her a mantra and blessed her to the following effect.

"Repeating this mantra you invoke whichever Deva you like and thanks to his favour you will get children. (Kathāsaritsāgara, Lāvāṇakalambaka, Taraṅga 2 and Bhārata (Malayālam) Chapter 111).

3) *Kuntī tested the mantra.* After the departure of Durvāsas from the palace, Kuntī developed an irresistible desire to test the efficacy of the mantra. and one day she invoked Sun-god with the mantra. Thereupon Sūrya approached her in the guise of a brahmin youth. Kuntī got alarmed. Owing to disinclination to become an unmarried mother Kuntī could not make up her mind to welcome the brahmin youth. But, Sūrya deva argued that his coming could not be in vain, and Kuntī had to yield. She requested Sūrya for a son adorned with helmet, ear-rings etc. (Vana Parva Chapter 207 Verse 17).

Sūrya assured Kuntī that even though a child was born to her from him, that will not affect her virginity and departed. Kuntī delivered a son in due course of time in secret. She locked up the child in a box and floated it in the Yamunā. An old charioteer called Adhiratha picked up the child from the river and brought it up as though it were his own son. That boy grew up to become the famous Karna. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 112).

4) *Kuntī's wedding.* In due course Kuntibhoja celebrated Kuntī's Svayaṁvara and she chose King Pāṇḍu of the lunar dynasty as her husband, and Pāṇḍu took her to Hastināpura in all pomp and glory. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 112).

5) *Kuntī's wedded life.* Pāṇḍu married another wife also called Mādri, and all the three of them led a very happy life. During one of those days Pāṇḍu went a hunting in the forest and arrowed to death sage Kindama, who was making love with his wife in the forest, both of them having assumed the forms of deer. The sage cursed Pāṇḍu with death the moment he touched his wives, and grief-stricken at the curse he told his wives about it and decided to take to Sannyāsa. But, the wives told him that they would commit suicide in case he took to Sannyāsa. Ultimately Pāṇḍu went to Śataśṛṅga with his wives, and there he began the performance of penances.

After some time Pāṇḍu asked his wives to become mothers by some noble persons. But, Kuntī and Mādri did not agree to it. Then Kuntī told Pāṇḍu about the