

Discuss the significance of the game of dice in the Mahabharata=

The Mahabharata, the longest Sanskrit epic, is a story of two sets of paternal first cousin who became the bitter rivals with each other. The epic revolves around the struggle for the throne of Hastinapura. The two collateral branches of the family that participate in the struggle are the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Kauravas were collectively the hundred sons of the blind king Dhritarashtra and the Pandavas were the five sons of Pandu. The five brothers named Yudhistira (eldest son), Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva were always obedient and dutiful. Draupadi was the common wife of the five Pandavas. The Kauravas behaved viciously and brutally towards the Pandavas in many ways. Their malice displayed itself when they took advantage of the eldest Pandava, Yudhistira in a game of dice. Living in the new territory of Indraprastha, Yudhistira turns his poor land into a wealthy kingdom, and declares himself King of Kings. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, is jealous and humiliated on his visit to the magnificent palace. He mistakes a glass floor for a pool, then later falls into a pool thinking it is glass. Draupadi and Bhima laugh at him. He returns home bent on devising their destruction.

Game of dice=

Duryodhana follows the advice of his uncle, the cunning Sakuni, an infamous dice player, and invites Yudhistira to a game of dice. They know well that gambling is Yudhistira's one weakness. Vidura is sent to invite the Pandavas to visit Hastinapura and play a dice game there. Yudhistira accepts the invitation. Both Dhritarashtra and Yudhistira ignore Vidura's warning to avoid the game which may result to a destructive consequence. Sakuni was confident that he could defeat Yudhistira easily and thus Duryodhana could fulfil his ill-motive of outdoing the Pandavas.

Before the dicing, a lot of discussions were there, but Yudhistira is obliged to play. But Sakuni comes in to play for Duryodhana. During the dicing event Yudhistira stakes his wealth, jewelry, Indraprastha, and the belongings of his brothers one by one and loses one by one. Sakuni mocks and provokes Yudhistira at each stage and demands to stake. He thus loses his brothers Nakula, Sahadeva. The Sakuni mocks him that at best those are the stepbrothers he lost, but Arjuna and Bhima are not so and he won't bet them. This forces Yudhistira to stake Arjuna, and his liberty at the stake as demanded by Sakuni.

At this moment of his complete defeat including himself, Yudhistira is again mocked to stake Draupadi. Yudhistira stakes Draupadi and loses her also. There were strong reactions from the assembly when Yudhistira staked her. Draupadi questions the legality of staking her when she was forced and dragged in front of the assembly. There were favouring reactions to her questions. Interestingly, Vikarna, a younger brother of Duryodhana, reacts in support of Draupadi. He says courageously that Yudhistira is enticed to play the game deeply plotted by Duryodhana and Sakuni. And that a lost Yudhistira has not the right to stake Draupadi. The assembly supported him. But Karna silenced him, by saying that he is too young before the others in that hall.

Duryodhana in the open court chides Draupadi and invites her to sit on his thigh, patting and baring his thigh. He orders Dussasana to disrobe her in front of the court. Dussasana begins to execute the act. But Draupadi cannot be bared. She is endowed with the divine

grace of being in new dress to whatever extent the clothes are pulled by Dussasana .The strong Dussasana fails and becomes exhausted . The Assembly stands stunned at the miracle. Bhima sends shivering signals by oath that he will tear open the Dussasana's heart and drink the blood of him,and he shall break the thigh of the Duryodhana on which Draupadi was tauntingly invited to sit. The invincible Draupadi by the divine blessing made Dhritarashtra still more afraid of the Pandavas. He asks the pardon of Draupadi and releases all that was worn on the dicing events.

Of course, dissatisfied at Dhritarashtra's act Sakuni and Duryodhana once again plead before Dhritarashtra for another dice game with Yudhistira. In the second spell of dicing event, Yudhistira is again defeated and is forced to go on exile for 12 years.The condition is that they should live in forests and pass the 13th year disguise without being identified by anybody. If they are identified by anybody during the period of disguise ,they should repeat 12 years of exile in forest and the 13th year in disguise.

Thus losers in the deceitful act of gambling, and insulted by Kauravas, the Pandavas started for their exile in forest . Vidura told Yudhistira to allow mother Kunthi to stay back as she was old and weak. Yudhistira agreed .Draupadi, however , accompanied her husbands to the forest. Duryodhana became the de facto ruler of both Hastinapura and Indraprastha.

The Pandavas are not alone in the forest but are followed by many loyal Brahmins and servants.The gods give them an inexhaustible supply of food for all of them.The Pandavas reached Kamyak forest and decided to rest there for a while .Krishna came to help them. After inquiring about their well being, he advised Pandavas to be vigilant and not to lose heart. The ordeal they had to face was for their good. Good and bad experience are essential to get correct perspective and fulfillment of life. Suffering and sorrow bring requisite feeling of renunciation essential to seek higher goal in life.

The future of the Pandavas was determined by the game of dice . They had to undergo plight and suffering due to their defeat in the game. Yudhistira's temptation brought about that unexpected consequence. His wife Draupadi and his younger brothers fell victims to the horrible experience .The tragic fact of the Kauravas was another consequence of the dice game.

Gambling is an immoral action. It most often favours the evils. The gamblers do not hesitate to adopt unfair means to win the game anyhow.A man with morality is likely to get defeated in gambling. The ultimate result of the game of dice is the bloody battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The war of Kurukshetra fought between them brings about ultimate downfall of the Kauravas. The victory of the Pandavas symbolizes the victory of the virtuous over the evil.