

Chapter XXIII

Agnatavasa of Pandavas

The events of Virataparva that relate to the agnatavasa of Pandavas are described in 23rd chapter. After completing the twelve years period of Vanavasa Pandavas took leave of Dhaumya, other sages and Brahman's and made up their mind to undergo agnatavasa. They went to capital city of Virata. Before they entered the city they hid their weapons on a Sami tree in the outskirts of the city. The five Pandavas assumed the form of an ascetic, a cook, a eunuch, a charioteer, and a cowherd respectively. Draupadi assumed the form of Sairandhri i.e. a female artisan. Bhima assumed the form of cook for two reasons i) He never took food prepared by others ii) He did not want to reveal his great knowledge by assuming a Brahmana form. During their Agnatavasa they did not serve Virata or any other person. The younger brothers of Yudhishtira served Lord Hari and their eldest brother Yudhishtira in whom also God was present by the name of Yudhishtira. One day a wrestler who had become invincible by the boon of Siva came to Virata's city. The wrestlers maintained by Virata were not able to meet his challenge. The ascetic i.e. Yudhishtira suggested to king Virata that the cook who had the skill in wrestling well could be asked to wrestle with him. The cook i.e., Bhima, wrestled with him and killed.

Kichaka is Killed

Ten months after Pandava's stay at Virata's palace, Kichaka, the brother of Queen Sudesna came. He was away to conquer the neighboring kings. When he saw Sairandhri he was captivated by her charm. He asked his sister Sudesna to send her to him. Sudesna tried to prevent him; ultimately she was forced to send her. When Sairandhri went to Kichaka's place he tried to drag her. She pushed him aside and quickly started. Kichaka chased running her and tried to kick her. She prayed Lord Narayana present in Suryamandala. He sent a demon Heti who came in an invisible way. Vayu entered into this demon Heti who came in an invisible way. Vayu entered into this demon and pushed Kichaka to the ground. Bhima angrily looked at a tree. Yudhishtira prevented him. During that night Draupadi met Bhima and told him to take some action, He advised her to tell Kichaka that she would meet him in the Dance hall when nobody would be present there. Accordingly Kichaka was anxiously waiting for her in the Dance hall. Bhima pounced on him and killed him. When Kichaka was killed his one hundred and five brothers who had tried to tie and burn Draupadi, Bhima killed them also. Sudesna asked Draupadi to leave the palace as she was afraid of her. Draupadi asked her to wait for another thirteen days

Duryodhana attacks Virata kingdom to trace Pandavas

The spies of Duryodhana who were in search of Pandavas did not find them anywhere. They only reported that Kichaka was killed by someone. On hearing this Duryodhana planned to attack Virata's kingdom as he thought that without Kichaka Virata was weak. Susharma the king of Trigarta and an ally of Duryodhana proceeded first and attacked

Virata's capital city from the Southern side and captured the cows of Virata. King Virata confronted him. Excepting Arjuna, and would join other Pandavas followed him. Virata was arrested by Susarma. Bhima attacked Susharma and arrested him. Yudhistira asked Bhima to release him. The next day Duryodhana proceeded with Bhishma, Drona and others and attacked from the northern side and captured the cows. He had two objectives in mind i) to trace Pandavas ii) Subdue Virata in the absence of Kichaka. On learning this attack Arjuna proceeded with Uttara. He took his gandiva and the flag with the emblem of Hanuman. He won back the cows fighting with the Kaurava Maharathikas individually and also collectively. He employed sammohana astra and made Kauravas unconscious. He took away their royal clothes except that of Bhishma .He cut the chariot of Bhishma to pieces. When he returned Virata said that his son brought the victory. Yudhishtira said Brihannala i.e., Arjuna brought the victory, Virata hit him on the forehead with dice, the next day morning the Pandavas revealed their true nature. Virata requested Yudhishtira to sit on the throne and honored all of them. He offered his daughter Uttara to Arjuna. However, Arjuna said he would accept her for his son Abhimanyu. Abhimanyu's marriage was performed with all pomp.Duryodhana returned to Hastinapur and argued with Bhishma and Drona that since Arjuna was traced before the completion of agnatavasa Pandavas should undergo Vanavasa again for twelve years. Bhishma and Drona did not agree. If one goes by Chandramana one year was completed .But if one goes by Sauramana it was not complete. In respect of counting months and the year Chandramana has to be followed. Hence one year was complete. However, Duryodhana insisted that one year was not complete and refused to return the portion of the kingdom to them.