

and simple. Moreover there is the maxim that a man without a son has no right to aspire for heaven. Sad and silent, thinking of these things he walked on unwillingly and reached the vicinity of the Himālayas. Still, he was doubtful. He began to consider about the deity, before whom he had to do penance for the fulfilment of his wish. He could not decide. As he was sitting in thought, Nārada came there. From the talk of Vyāsa, Nārada knew that childlessness was the cause of his sorrow. Nārada advised him that for the attainment of Puruṣārthas (objects of life) penance was to be done before Devī. Accepting that advice, Vyāsa went to a place near Mahāmeru to do penance.

When Vyāsa began penance, the celestial maids also commenced their work of hindering the penance. It was Ghṛtācī who confronted Vyāsa. She took the form of a parrot of five colours and flew in front of Vyāsa. The hermit was excited at the beauty of Ghṛtācī and sat forgetting himself. As he sat there thinking of the infatuating beauty of the parrot, seminal discharge occurred to him. He became a slave to this infatuation, when he was engaged in making fire by attrition. In this amorous state of mind he was quite unaware of the seminal discharge or its falling on the pieces of wood used for attrition. He continued attrition. Then a very bright, divine person appeared from the pieces of wood. At the birth of a person, without attachment to a womb, all the worlds were delighted. The hide of black antelope, water pot, hermit's rod etc. fell from the sky. Birth rituals and ceremonies, according to the custom, were conducted by Vyāsa. As he was born from the semen discharged at the sight of the Śuka (parrot) the infant was named Śuka. As soon as he was born Śuka began to grow by divine power and shortly became a boy of shining radiance. After investiture with the Brahma-string, the boy was sent for education to the hermitage of Bṛhaspati, the teacher of the devas. Śuka completed his education with Bṛhaspati and having performed Samāvarta and offering of gift to the teacher, he returned home to his father.

iv) *Disciples.* Śuka commenced advanced study under his father Vyāsa. Besides Śuka, Vyāsa had disciples such as Vaiśampāyana, Sūta, Paila, Jaimini and others also, living with him. The hermitage of Vyāsa soon grew up to be a great educational institution, with plenty of disciples.

v) *Separation of son.* In the meanwhile Śuka married and lived the life of a householder in the hermitage of his father, for a time. Then forsaking his family and his father, Śuka went to the peak of Kailāsa and began to do penance meditating on Śiva. At last he became a divine person who had obtained complete attainments, and breaking the top of the peak open, he rose up into the sky and shone there as a second Sun. The devas who saw Śuka rising up by breaking the peak of Kailāsa and staying up in the sky, praised him.

This untimely separation of his son had undermined the firmness of the mind of Vyāsa. Filled with grief, he left his hermitage and wandered here and there calling out his son by name. He could not find his son. At last he reached the peak of Kailāsa where his son had been doing penance. Standing there he called aloud his son by name cryingly. Paramaśiva appeared before the lamenting father and consoled him. Thus getting a little bit of peace of mind, Vyāsa returned to his hermitage

and lived there. The sorrowing Vyāsa, was made still more sorrowful by the departure of his beloved disciples, Asita, Devala, Vaiśampāyana, Sumantu, Jaimini and others who had been living in the hermitage and who had departed, having finished their education. All the surroundings of the hermitage seemed to him filled with pain. At last he thought about his mother. (Devī Bhāgavata Skandha 1).

4) *His terrestrial life.*

i) *Preface.* Within this period many changes had taken place in Hastināpura and the bank of Yamunā. Śantanu the king of the Lunar dynasty had married Gaṅgādevī, who had disappeared after giving the king a son named Devavrata (Bhīṣma). Bhīṣma grew up. Once Śantanu was hunting in the forest when he was attracted by the sweet smell of musk. Tracing the origin of that smell, the king reached the fisherman's hut on the banks of the Yamunā. That smell proceeded from Kāstūrigandhā (Satyavatī) the mother of Vyāsa. The king fell in love with her. He returned to the palace, sad and silent. Learning the cause of his father's sadness, Devavrata went to the fisherman's hut and took Satyavatī to the palace to be given to his father. Devavrata had taken a vow that the kingdom would be given to the son born to Satyavatī and that he would remain unmarried, throughout his life. Because he had taken so terrible a vow, Devavrata came to be called Bhīṣma from that day onwards.

Two sons named Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya, were born to Śantanu. Citrāṅgada died when he was young. Vicitravīrya married Ambikā and Ambālīkā, daughters of the King of Kāśī. Vicitravīrya also died before any children were born to him. It seemed as if the family was about to become extinct. At this juncture Satyavatī thought about her son Vyāsa.

ii) *Vyāsa in Hastināpurī.* The mother thought about him, and instantly he reached Hastināpurī. Because of her compulsion, two sons were born, one each to Ambikā and Ambālīkā from Vyāsa. The son of Ambikā was Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the son of Ambālīkā was Pāṇḍu. Vidura was the son born to Vyāsa by their maid.

iii) *Vyāsa and the Kaurava-Pāṇḍavas.* From this time onwards we see Vyāsa as the spiritual teacher of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. Behind all the movements of these two families we could see the hand of Vyāsa. Thus though he came to Hastināpurī and gave advice to the members of the family frequently, his main abode was his hermitage. Vyāsa's contact with Hastināpura could be seen up to the Mahāprasthāna (the great departure) of the Pāṇḍavas. In all the administrative affairs up to this period, Vyāsa also had a part. The situations in which Vyāsa had taken part in the life-voyage of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas are given below.

(i) Vyāsa gave the boon that hundred sons would be born to Gāndhārī. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 114, Stanza 8).

(ii) Vyāsa cut the mass of flesh given birth to by Gāndhārī into a hundred pieces and kept them in hundred pots. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 114, Stanza 17).

(iii) Vyāsa consoled Gāndhārī by telling her that over and above hundred sons a daughter also would be born to her. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 115, Stanza 16).