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FAMILIAL CLASH IN *THE MAHABHARTA*

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Abstract

The Mahabharata is traditionally classified as a great ancient oral Indian epic that has grown over the centuries to become a family of literary and performance traditions in most Indian languages. Countless interpretations, adaptations and allusions to *The Mahabharata* make it one of the most important systems of values and narratives for Indians to reflect on human destinies, births and deaths, the futility of war, the nature of divinities, the paradoxical nature of human action. The central theme of *The Mahabharata* is the rivalry between the Pandavas and Kauravas over the kingdom of Hasthinapura. The conflict begins when Dhritrashtra, the eldest son of the Kuru dynasty has to pass his crown over to his younger brother Pandu because of his blindness. After reigning for a brief period, Pandu renounces his kingdom due to his incurable illness and goes to the forest with his two wives Kunti and Madri. The five sons of Pandu – Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva grow up in the court with their one hundred cousins, the Kaurvas son of Dhritrashtra. The Prominent among the Kaurvas are the eldest son Duryodhana and his loyal Dushashna. Because of the enmity and jealousy that develops a clash between Pandavas and Kaurvas for the kingdom of Hasthinapura.

Keywords: Adaptation, Allusions, Conflict, Renounce, Dynasty and Futility.

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period, Pandu renounces his kingdom due to his incurable illness and goes to the forest with his two wives Kunti and Madri. The five sons of Pandu – Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva grow up in the court with their one hundred cousins, the Kaurvas son of Dhritrashtra. The Prominent among the Kaurvas are the eldest son Duryodhana and his loyal Dushashna. Because of the enmity and jealousy that develops a clash between Pandavas and Kaurvas for the kingdom of Hasthinapura. The Pandavas are forced to leave the kingdom. During their exile, the five jointly marry Draupadi and meet their cousin Krishna who remains their friend and companion thereafter. They enjoy some years of prosperity in a divided kingdom but are again forced to retire to the forest for 12 years and spend one

year of life in disguise when the eldest brother, Yudhishtra loses everything including Draupadi in a game of dice with the eldest son of the Kaurvas. Immediately after their defeat in the game of dice, Duryodhana sends Dushashana to bring Draupadi to the court. Dushashana forcibly drags Draupadi by hair into the court. Draupadi is humiliated when Duryodhana orders Dushashana to disrobe her in front of the pandavas and other helpless elders including Bhishma, Dronacharya and Kripacharya. Draupadi prays to Lord Krishna to help her. Lord Krishna appears and saves her from humiliation by growing the length of her sari. As it grows endless as it unwinds and tires Dushashana and he faints. Furious Draupadi vows that she would not tie her up hair till it is dressed with the blood of Duryodhana and Dushashana. After 12 years of life in the forest and one year in disguise, the Pandavas return to claim their kingdom but Duryodhana refuses to give even a pinhead of a land. Now a bloody battle occurs between the Kaurvas and the Pandvas.

This is a tale of empires crashing and brothers killing each other. It is a saga of a woman being insulted in the presence of her capable husbands. It is a story filled with revenge, disaster and despair. The Pandavas and Kaurvas, who were opposed to each other right from the beginning had actually descended from a common source. Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa was responsible for the birth of Dhritrashtra and Pandu, the ancestors of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, as they were called. As two rivers may have a common source and yet move in different directions. the same happened with Pandvas and Kaurvas that resulted in familial clash between them.

The Mahabharata is a story of heroes overcoming pettiness and striving for a purpose. It is the saga of a few brave hearts standing up for a cause, irrespective of who supports or opposes them. Here is a tale that puts the dignity of a woman above everything else.

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