



TITLE NO.102

MAHABHARATA

PART 7



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Having procured the lotus flowers from Kubera's garden, Bheema returned to the *ashram* and handed over the flowers to Draupadi who further presented them to Yudhishthir. A few days passed peacefully but all the four brothers and Draupadi were eagerly waiting for Arjuna's return.

As the four brothers and Draupadi were sitting before their *ashram*, a divine chariot drawn by a hundred divine horses came flying and landed near the *ashram*. Draupadi and the four Pandavas were over-joyed to see Arjuna getting down from the chariot. He was profusely adorned with ornaments and garlands. Coming to his brothers, Arjuna paid his respects to Yudhishthir and Bheema touching their feet and then embraced Nakul and Sahdev out of untold affection.

Arjuna handed over all the ornaments to Draupadi and showed all the divine weapons to his brothers. Yudhishthir was very eager to see how each divine weapon was to be used. So, he said to Arjun, "Brother Dear ! I have a keen desire to see each divine weapon in use."

"I show you just now, brother." Arjuna got up to demonstrate the weapons

Just at that time, Saint Narada appeared on the scene. Forbidding Arjuna with a raised hand to stop, the saint said, "Arjuna ! to use these weapons without any reason is a great sin. They are to be used only when they are needed most."



One day it so happened that Dhritrashtra was holding his court and all his nobles and ministers were present there. Just then, an old Brahman happened to come there. The king greeted him and offered him an honourable seat. During the conversation, the Brahman disclosed that he had seen the Pandavas in a forest. He related in detail the hard life that they were leading there.

Hearing about the woeful condition of the Pandavas, Dhritrashtra felt so sorry for them. Tears welled up in his eyes and he was very doleful.

Shakuni was also present in the court and he had heard everything that the old Brahman had told the king. Feeling overjoyed to know of the hardships that the Pandavas were suffering, he at once ran to inform Duryodhana and Karna of it. They also felt delighted to hear about the misfortune of their rivals.

Karna suggested to Duryodhana, "O Prince! it would be great fun to visit the Pandavas and see them passing their days in adversity." Duryodhana saw eye to eye with him and went to his father to ask for his permission to visit the Pandavas. Dhritrashtra granted the permission misunderstanding his son's evil design to be a gesture of goodwill and sympathy towards his nephews.



Accompanied by Karna, Shakuni and a fairly strong regiment of soldiers, Duryodhana along with his wives made for the forest where the Pandavas were staying. Locating the hut of the Pandavas, Duryodhana got his tents pitched at a short distance from the hut in an even tract of land. For a number of days, he kept enjoying hunting-trips along with Karna and his maternal uncle.

Then one day, Duryodhana thought of going for a bath in a nearby lake in the company of his wives. So, he sent his servants to clear the land by the bank of the lake.

By chance, Chitrassen, chief of Gandharvas, had also come for a bath along with his retinue that included several heavenly nymphs.

As soon as Duryodhan's men reached the lake, they were forcibly driven back by the Gandharvas.

Duryodhan's men, having been scared away by the Gandharvas, came running to him and told him everything that had happened at the lake. Hearing them, Duryodhana flew into a violent rage and taking Karna and Shakuni with him set out to deal with the Gandharvas.

Chitrassen, seeing the situation highly explosive, came out to face the proud Kaurava in a befitting manner.



As soon as Chitrasen came face to face with the Kaurva army, he began to shower volleys of arrows on them. As a result, the Kaurva regiment lost ground and the soldiers rushed pell-mell for their lives. Seeing this, the Gandharava chief used the *Sammohanastra* (Alluring Weapon), which made the soldiers stand still where they were.

Now Chitrasen turned to Karna and fought so violently against him that Karna's chariot came to be broken. So, feeling disheartened, Karna mounted another chariot and fled the battle-field. It was indeed quite unbecoming of a warrior and Duryodhana did not like Karna's action at all.

Before long, the Gandharava chief overtook Duryodhana and entangled him in a trap. Not only this, he imprisoned his wives as well. As the Kaurva soldiers were standing still at their places because of the spell of the alluring weapon, Chitrasen found no difficulty in carrying Duryodhana and his wives to his place.

Feeling ashamed of his defeat and Karna's betrayal, Duryodhana was silent while his wives, out of fear, sent some of the guards to run to the hut of the Pandavas and persuade them for help.

The Pandavas, at that time, were busy performing a yajna before their hut.



The guards reached where the Pandavas were busy performing the yajna.

They saluted Yudhishtir with folded hands and said, "Your Honour ! Prince Duryodhana had come for a hunting trip along with Karna and his wives. He was camping at a short distance from here. But Chitrasen, chief of Gandharvas, attacked the Kaurva regiment and took Duryodhana and all the royal ladies prisoners. He carried them to his place while Karna, having been defeated, fled the battle-field. The wives of Duryodhana (your sisters-in-law) have sent us to beg for help. Be kind enough to rescue them as early as possible.

Hearing the guards, Bheema burst into a peal of laughter and remarked, "Good ! Chitrasen has done what should have been done by us. It is really a happy news. We cannot say that there is no well-wisher of ours in the world. I am so happy to hear that the rascal has after all to lick the dust."

But sagacious Yudhishtir didn't relish what Bheema had said. He was rather cross to hear his words. So, he burst out at him saying, "Bheema ! learn to be wise. It is no time to settle scores with Duryodhana. Brothers can quarrel or even fight. They can be jealous of one another. But when any outsider tries to harm the interests of the family, brothers must be one to face that outsider. Spit all embitterment, take up your arms and proceed for Duryodhana's help."



Following the tough warning of their elder brother, Bheema and Arjuna marched to where Chitrasen had imprisoned Duryodhana and his wives. They made such a fierce attack on the Gandharva soldiers that hundreds of them came to lose their lives in the action. Seeing this, Chitrasen seated Duryodhana and his wives in his chariot and flew into the sky with a view to carrying them to his heavenly abode.

But we know that Arjuna had learnt the use of divine weapons from the gods and from Lord Shiva Himself. So, he shot Mahakarshana Astra (highly captivating weapon) which forced Chitrasen to descend to the earth along with his chariot in which the Kaurava prince was being taken to heaven along with his wives. Chitrasen was indeed very frightened because Arjuna had won laurels for his art of warfare in heaven itself.

As soon as Chitrasen's chariot landed on the ground, Bheema rushed at it and set Duryodhana and his wives free from the trap. Chitrasen was acquainted with Arjuna. So, he extended a hand of friendship towards him. Arjuna responded cordially and asked him, "Friend! what made you imprison the Kaurava prince and the royal ladies? What was your purpose after all in taking this drastic step? Let me know clearly."

Chitrasen assured Arjuna to explain the matter in detail.



Chitrasen explained to Arjuna the reason of his action against Duryodhana as follows :

“Arjuna ! Duryodhana is very foolish as well as sinful. He had come here and camped at a stone's throw from your hut with the evil purpose of seeing you, your brothers and Draupadi leading a hard life and jeering at your misfortune. When Lord Indra came to know of it, he felt highly enraged. He knew of the friendship between you and me. So, he sent me giving certain instructions regarding how I should act.”

Continuing his explanation, Chitrasen added that he defeated Duryodhana and imprisoned him along with his better-halves. It was done to turn the tables on him so that he should be put in a position to be jeered at by others and learn a bitter lesson if he possessed even a tinge of sanity. He must be feeling ashamed having been rescued by you and Bheema from me.

Elaborating still further, Chitrasen said, “Arjuna ! royal luxury has turned Duryodhana's head. He had already disgraced Yudhishtir and Draupadi in the open court. He doesn't deserve to be excused. Yudhishtir has sent you for his help because he is not aware of the evil purpose of Duryodhana's coming over to this place. I would like to go and inform Yudhishtir of everything.”



Chitrasen accompanied Arjuna to where his elder brother Yudhishtir was sitting. Reaching there, he saluted Yudhishtir and sat beside him. Then he told the eldest Pandava all about Duryodhana and his evil purpose. But Yudhishtir was not a person who could think or act in any lowly manner. Despite having known all about the evil design of his cousin Duryodhana, Yudhishtir requested Chitrasen, "I am grateful to you that in spite of your immense power, you have not killed my cousin Duryodhana and his friends. I praise your generosity and at the same time I request you to let them off."

Yudhishtir further remarked, "I feel myself to be highly fortunate to come across you, O Chief of Gandharvas! At the same time, I would implore you that after having served the purpose of your visit to this place, be kind enough to return to your heavenly abode." So, complying with Yudhishtir's request, Chitrasen released Duryodhana, his wives and his supporters.

After the departure of Chitrasen, Yudhishtir addressed Duryodhana and said, "Brother Dear! it is not wise to behave unjudiciously as you have done. Such indiscreet and impudent steps often lead to disgrace and sometimes they may cause one to land in serious trouble. That is the only advice I want to give you.

Be at ease and return to Hastinapur with my sisters-in-law and your brothers.



Hearing the words of Yudhishtir, Duryodhana was highly ashamed and left the place for Hastinapur along with his wives and brothers. On the way, there lay a river at the bank of which, Duryodhana camped for the night. After a short time, Karna also reached there. He said to Duryodhana, "How lucky it is that the Gandharvas have left you alive. I am pleased to believe that you must have defeated them beating them in their miraculous powers as well. I had to flee the battle-field because I found myself unable to face their onslaught.

Duryodhana was very sad though he knew that Karna did not know the reality about his escape that had become possible only due to the Pandavas. This fact was, indeed, unbearably hurting Duryodhana's mind. So, he said, "Karna! you perhaps don't know what befell me in the war against the Gandharvas." Then he narrated the entire story starting from his imprisonment at the hands of the Gandharvas to his release through the good offices of the Pandavas.

With a heavy heart, Duryodhana remarked, "Karna! it is a matter of colossal disgrace for me to have been released from the prison of Chitrasen because of intervention by Arjuna. I wish I had fallen fighting in the action against the Gandharvas rather than be let off because of the Pandavas whom I consider to be my sworn enemies."



With a view to consoling Duryodhana, Karna remarked, "Why should you be so repentant of what has happened. As for death, it will overtake your adversaries—the Pandavas. Rest assured, I shall leave no stone unturned to restore your lost prestige whatever way I can. I take a vow that I shall not indulge in any sort of entertainment until and unless I have made short work of Arjuna."

The vow taken by Karna was a great solace for the disturbed mind of Duryodhana. His brothers also tried their level best to pacify him. All of them requested the Kaurava prince to forget about the disgrace he had suffered during his conflict with the Gandharvas and because of his subsequent release through the efforts of the Pandavas. So, Duryodhana decided to leave the place

As for the Pandavas, they kept passing their time peacefully in the Kamyak Forest where they had been living in a hut. One day it so happened that Dhritrashtra's son-in-law, Jaidrath, ruler of Sindhu Kingdom, chanced to pass through the forest where the Pandavas were staying. Suddenly he caught sight of Draupadi who was standing outside the hut. Captivated by her charming looks and proportionate figure, he stopped his chariot and sent one of his soldiers to go and discover who she was. So, the soldier proceeded towards Draupadi.



Jaidrath's soldier went upto Draupadi and said to her, "I am a soldier of Jaidrath, ruler of the kingdom of Sindhu. My king is on way to Hastinapur—his father-in-law's capital. Suddenly he has chanced to see you. My master wants to know who you are O Charming Lady! Let me know about yourself kindly."

"I am Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas. My husbands are away for a game at this time. We all will feel highly honoured to entertain you with whatever we have with us. I hope my husbands will return in a short time and they will be pleased to see your master as well," replied Draupadi.

The soldier returned to his master, king Jaidrath, and informed him of what Draupadi had told him. As soon as Jaidrath heard Draupadi's name, he became impatient and getting down from his chariot walked up to Draupadi.

Draupadi greeted him and said, "Be seated, O king! I bring water for you to wash up. My husbands are away for a game in the forest. They will be back in a short time and will be pleased to see you—their brother-in-law."

Jaidrath considered the absence of the Pandavas to be a golden opportunity to entice Draupadi and abduct her to his palace. So, he said to her, "Why are you suffering hardship in the forest. Accompany me and be my queen.



Hearing the words of Jaidrath, Draupadi was beside her self with rage. She rebuked him hard and burst out saying, "Don't you feel ashamed to talk like that. We have already given you our daughter—Dushala. Just think about your relation with my husbands and me. I know that the rulers of your kingdom have been very religious-minded and God-fearing. And you have talked so low that the honour of your fore-fathers has become tarnished. Moreover, you must be aware of the fact that to offend the Pandavas is no less than inviting death."

"Darling ! such words do not become you. I have given you a suggestion for your own good. As for the Pandavas, I am not going to be frightened at the mention of their bravery," retorted Jaidrath. Then he advanced towards Draupadi, held her by the hand and forcibly seated her in his chariot. In spite of her best efforts, Draupadi failed to free herself from the grips of Jaidrath.

"Keep off from me, O Devil ! don't touch me with your impious hands," thundered Draupadi. Then she shouted for help addressing Ayudhaumya, their priest, who was living in a hut at a stone's throw from there.

The priest responded immediately and stood before the chariot. He said to Jaidrath, "Leave her, O Jaidrath ! otherwise you shall heavily pay for this misdeed of yours."

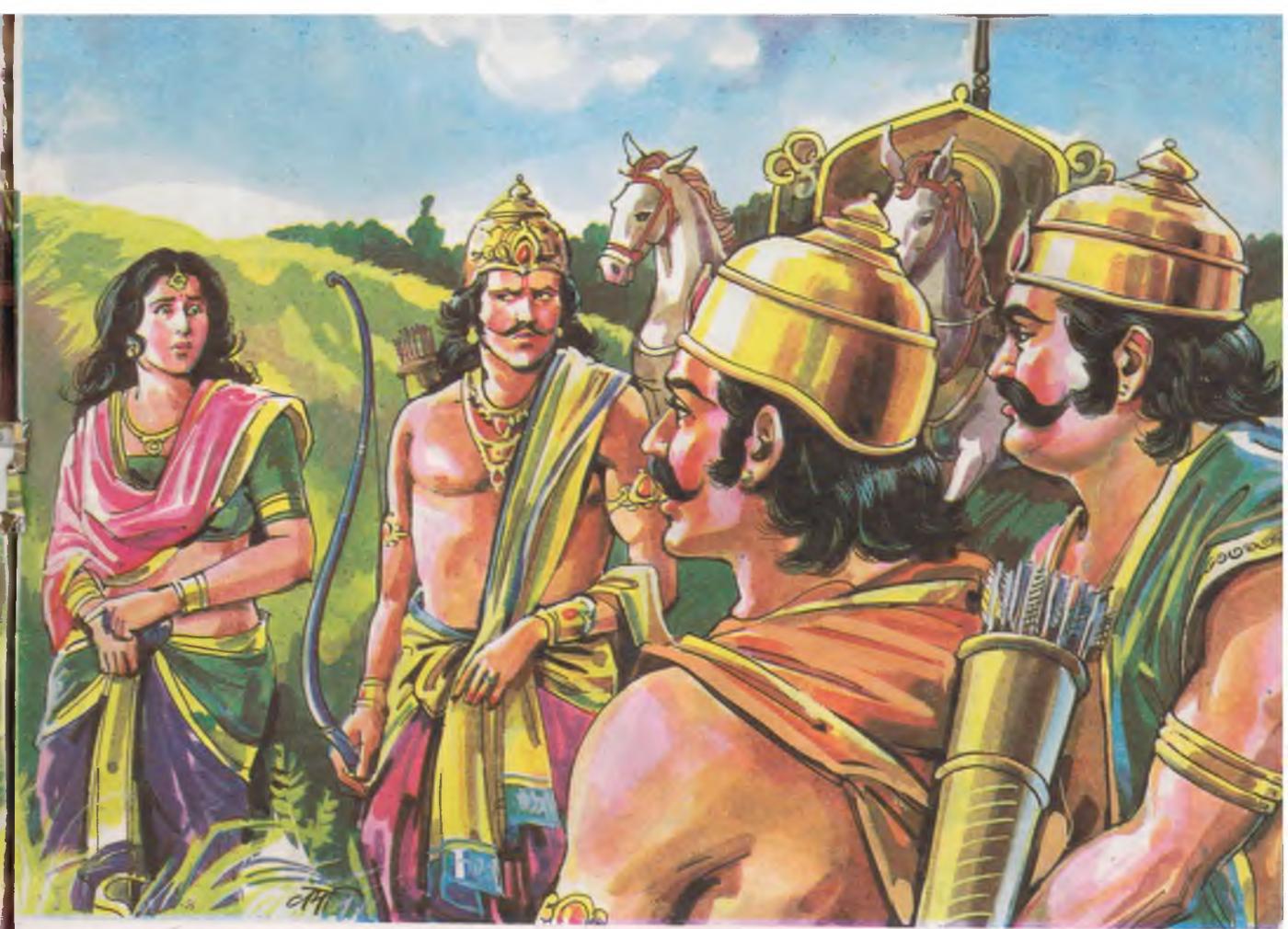


Jaidrath paid no heed to what Saint Ayudhaumya had said. On the other hand, he advanced his chariot further. As for the saint, he joined the soldiers of the king and began to follow him. Some of the soldiers were also speaking ill of what their master had done. They had full sympathy with Draupadi and the saint who was accompanying them.

In the meantime, the Pandava brothers returned to the hut. They were much worried to find Draupadi missing. When they enquired about her from her maid, she wept bitterly and remarked, "My Lords ! Jaidrath, ruler of Sindhu, has forcibly carried away Draupadi in his chariot. Follow him and rescue her from his cruel hands. The sinner is bent upon molesting her."

At once the Pandavas began chasing Jaidrath hotly and soon overtook his soldiers. Seeing their priest running after them, Yudhishtir said to Arjuna, "Brother ! just see our revered priest is following the soldiers of Jaidrath. Kill all of them so that we are able to rescue Draupadi."

So, the Pandavas challenged the soldiers of Jaidrath and a fierce battle followed. The arrows showered by Arjuna killed many of them in a short time. The remaining soldiers, finding themselves helpless fled the scene for their lives .



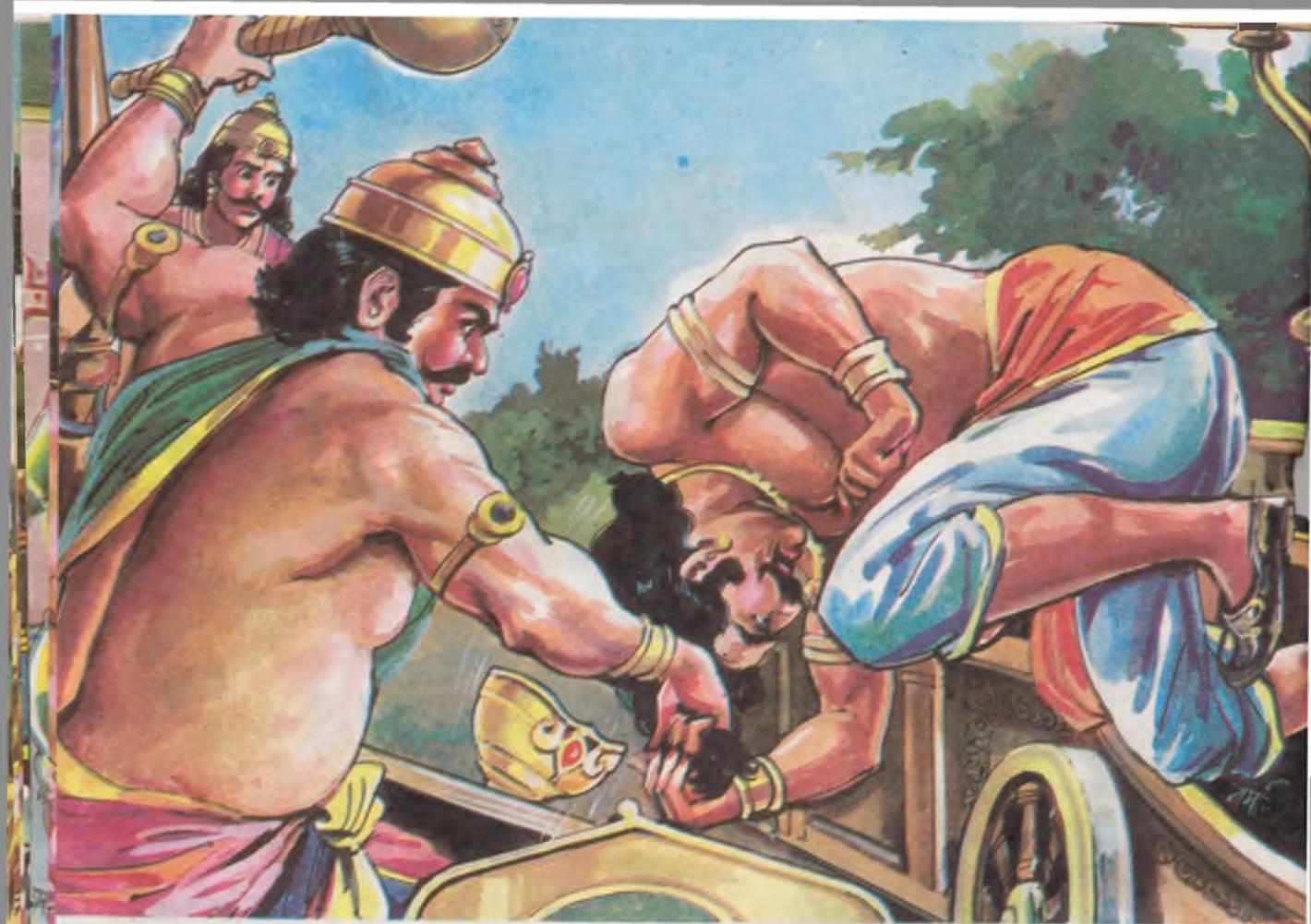
Having dealt with Jaidrath's soldiers, the Pandavas gave a hot chase to Jaidrath. Soon they were at his heels. Seeing them following his chariot like a shadow, Jaidrath lost no time to understand that his life was in danger. So, he gave up the idea of taking away Draupadi with him. Leaving her there, he raced his chariot as fast as he could in order to save his life.

Draupadi, weeping bitterly, said to her husbands, "The rascal finding me alone and helpless, forcibly dragged and seated me in his chariot. He was carrying me to his palace. Hasn't he played with your honour? If you are true Kashatriyas, capture him and put him to death."

Hearing Draupadi's bewails, Bheema was beside himself with rage. He lifted his mace and got ready to go after Jaidrath, kill him and drag his body back to their hut so that Draupadi could kick it and pacify her anger.

Seeing Bheema mad in rage, Yudhishtir said to him, "Brother! Jaidrath is the husband of our sister—Dushala. So, we must not kill him in spite of the fact that he has committed a grave social offence."

But Draupadi insisted on having her revenge and rebuked all of them with bitter words. So, Bheema and Arjuna left the place in search of Jaidrath with a view to chastising him for his misdeed.



Jaidrath was not aware that Bheema and Arjuna were still chasing him. But when he saw them quite close behind, he was at his wit's end. He ordered his charioteer to drive the chariot as fast as he could. But Arjuna soon overtook him and Bheema jumped onto his chariot. Holding him by the hair, the mighty Pandava flung him on the ground saying "You rascal! how low a blood is running in your veins? How did you take courage to commit the misdeed of laying hands on our honour? Had my brother not forbidden me, I would have killed you."

Saying these words, Bheema dragged him towards their own chariot, tied his hands and feet and putting him into their chariot, they proceeded back to their hut in the Kamy Forest. Jaidrath was sure that his life was in danger and he must be killed by Bheema or Arjuna as soon as the chariot reached their place. So, he made up his mind to arouse Yudhishtir's pity through humble entreaties.

As soon as Arjuna's chariot reached their dwelling, they untied Jaidrath who lay prostrate at the feet of Yudhishtir crying bitterly to be excused. He begged Draupadi's pardon for his mean behaviour and calling her his sister begged to be pardoned. Yudhishtir, known for his lenience and sense of forgiveness, urged Draupadi to forgive him. Though she was very bitter, yet she could not go against Yudhishtir's plea.

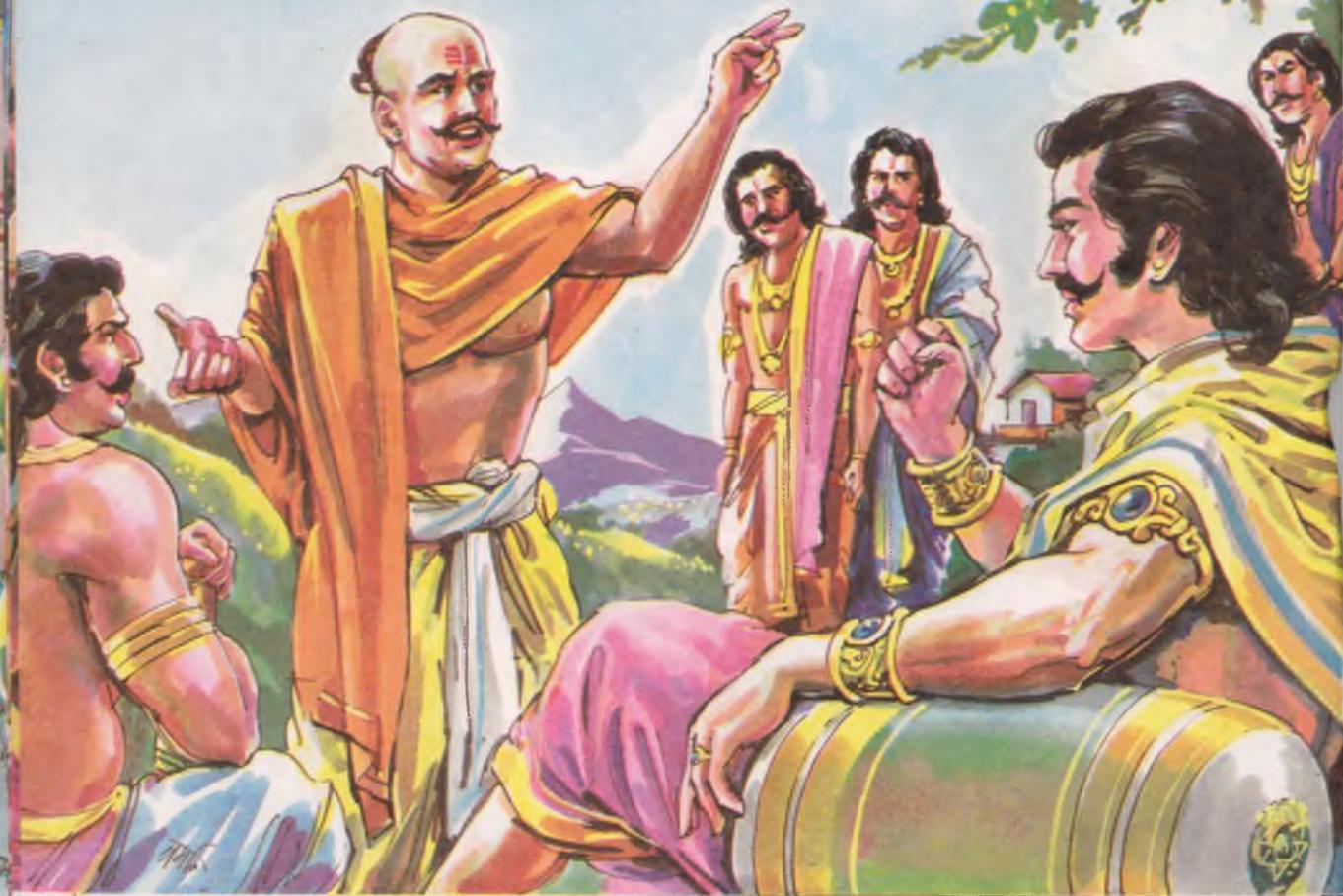


Draupadi then said to Bheema, "I have agreed to let him off on your elder brother's plea. But I will do so only after duly avenging my insult at his hands. Shave his head clean and then leave him so that when he reaches his palace, his low deed becomes automatically known not only to his queens but also to his subordinates."

This done, Jaidrath touched Draupadi's as well as Yudhishtir's feet and asked for their permission to leave. Yudhishtir, smiling to see his shaven head, said to him, "You are free now but mind that you shall not commit such a blunder again." Thus having been awfully disgraced, Jaidrath went his way. But he was very sore at heart. So, meditating at his insult sorrowfully, he resolved to seek revenge for the treatment he had been meted out at the hands of the Pandavas.

Not daring to go home with his shaven head, Jaidrath chose to sit at the bank of the Ganga and invoke Lord Shiva through meditation. He meditated so hard and with such concentration that in a few months Lord Shiva was pleased. He came and stood before his devotee saying, "Jaidrath, your meditation has pleased me and I want to grant a boon to you. Ask for what you want."

Jaidrath was very pleased at the assurance given by Lord Shiva to him.



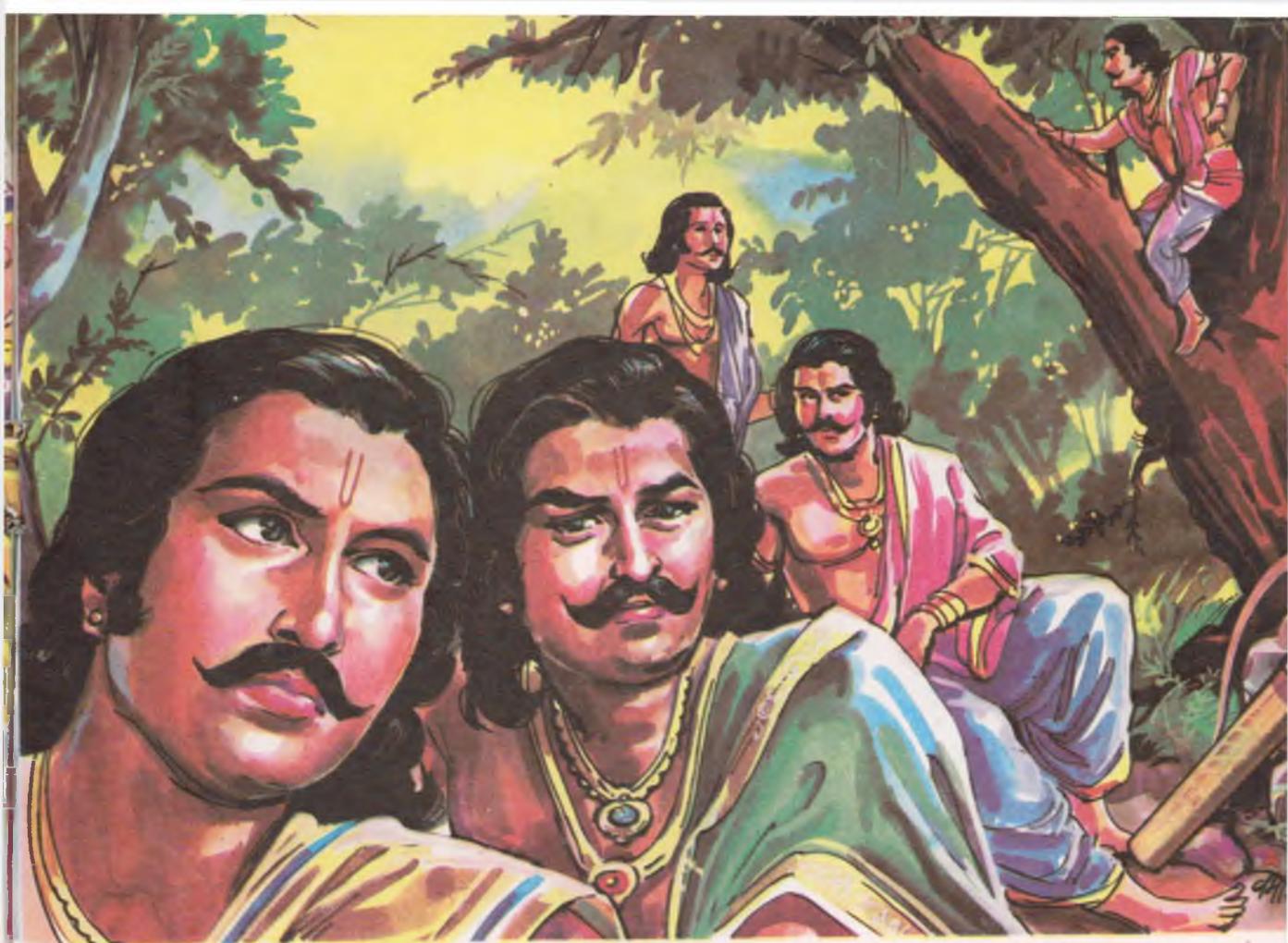
Jaidrath said, "My Lord give me a boon so that I may be able to defeat the Pandavas."

"It is not possible at all. The Pandavas are invincible and they will remain so for ever. The maximum I can do is that for one day you will be able to prevent the four Pandava from advancing further. But Arjuna would remain as invincible as ever," retorted the lord.

Soon Lord Shiva vanished and Jaidrath felt helpless and troubled at heart. By now, his hair had re-grown properly. So, he returned to his capital quite safe and sound.

As for the Pandavas, they left the Kamy Forest after the incident of Draupadi's abduction and moved to Dwait Forest. There they passed most of the time in religious activities—meditation, observance of fasts and yajnas etc.

One day a Brahmana approached Yudhishtir for help. He said, "O Pandava! a deer has taken away my churner and igniting rod. So, kindly get me both my things back. Without them, it is not possible for me to perform my yajnas and to carry out my worship. I shall feel highly obliged.



Yudhishtir humbly replied, "How will it be possible, sir? But how did it happen after all?"

"I had hung these two things from the branch of a tree. Suddenly a deer came there and began to rub its body with the trunk of that tree to pacify its itch. As a result, the things fell down and got entangled in its horns. When I rushed to get them, the deer ran away."

So, be kind enough to chase the deer and get my things back," explained the Brahmana.

All the five Pandavas went in search of the deer but they could not find it anywhere. Having been tired, they sat under a tree. They were hungry and thirsty as well. So, Yudhishtir asked Nakula to climb up a nearby tree and look around if any stream or pool of water could be seen.

Nakula at once got up and walked up to a tall tree standing near by. In no time, he climbed it up and cast a glance on all sides with a view to locating any source of water.

Suddenly he caught sight of a big pool of water at a large distance from the place where his brothers and Draupadi were resting.



Nakula climbed down the tree and came to his brothers. Addressing his eldest brother he said, "Brother I have seen a big pool of water at a distance from here. If you allow me, I shall go running and be back with water for all of you in no time." When permitted, Nakula took a vessel and made for the pool of water.

In a short time, Nakula reached the pool. He thought of quenching his thirst before filling the vessel with water for his brothers and Draupadi.

But as soon as he projected his hands towards the water, a fearful voice thundered, "Stop! this pool belongs to me. If you want to drink its water, you will have to reply to my questions first. Only then you can drink water and fill your vessel with it."

But Nakula paid no heed to what the voice had said. Ignoring it, he tried to drink water for quenching his thirst.

As soon as his hands touched the water, he became senseless and fell on his back on the bank of the pool.

His brothers kept waiting for him for a long time. Then feeling worried, they sent Sahdev to look for him.



Sahdeva, looking for his brother Nakula, reached the pool of water. Finding Nakula lying senseless on the ground, he felt highly worried.

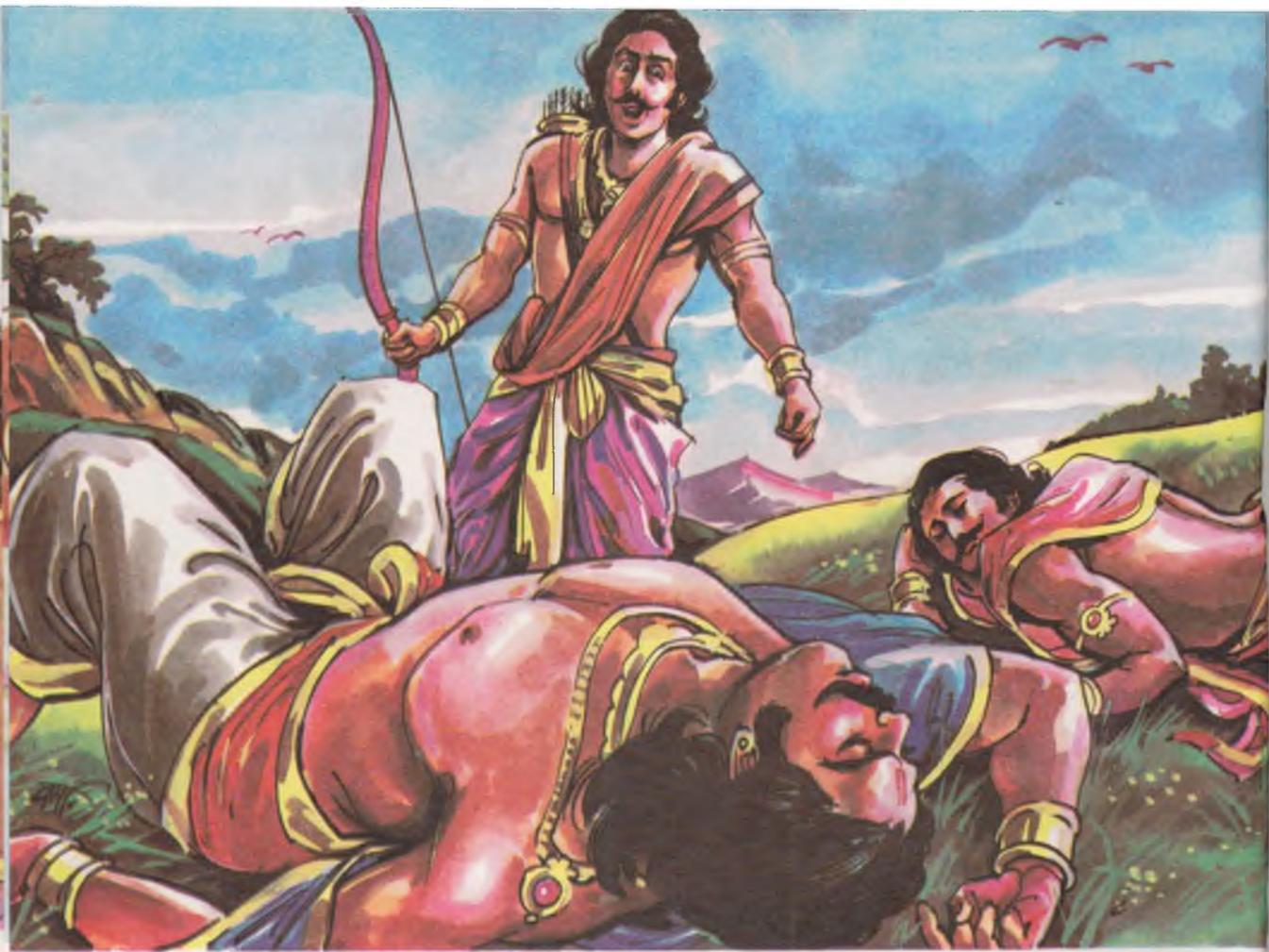
He asked himself, "What has happened to him? Has he fell down unconscious due to unbearable thirst? I myself am dying of thirst. I shall quench my thirst and then put some water in his mouth too."

Thinking so, Sahdev went up to the pool and spread his hands towards the water. Just then the same voice thundered, "Wait! first answer my questions and then drink the water from the pool that belongs to me. If you violate my instruction, you will meet with a similar fate."

But Sahdev was not in a position to wait any longer. So, ignoring the instrucion, he tried to drink water.

No sooner did his hands touch the water than he fell down senseless on his back just beside his brother Nakula.

Draupadi and the three Pandavas—Yudhishtir, Bheema and Arjuna—kept waiting for a long time but neither of their two younger brothers returned with water. So, they felt extremely anxious about their safety.



Now it was Arjuna's turn and so Yudhishtir sent him to look for Nakula and Sahdev and be back with them as soon as possible. So, Arjuna set out towards the pool at once. Reaching the bank of the pool, he found both his brothers lying unconscious.

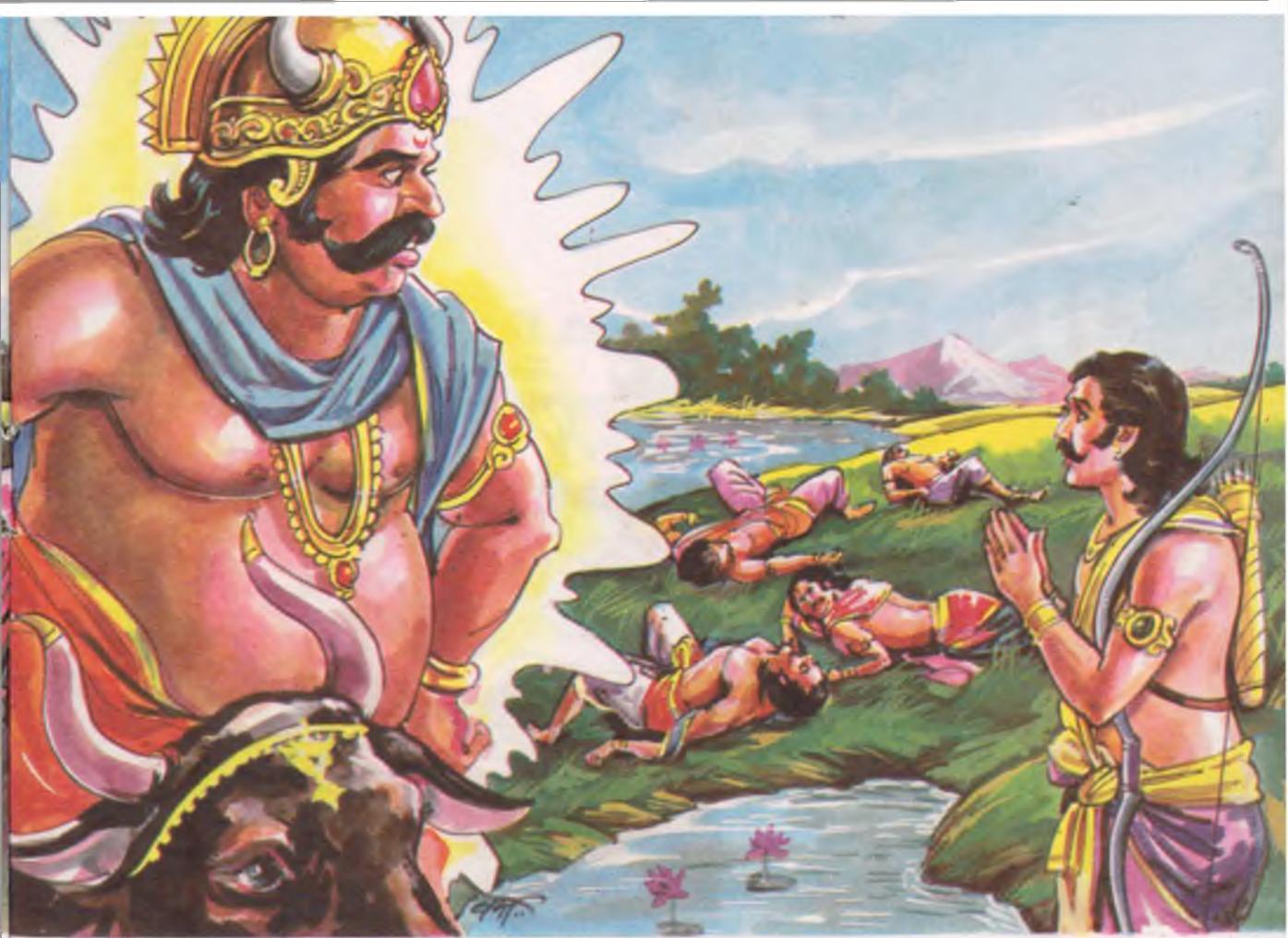
Arjuna's worry knew no bounds and he shouted in anger, "Who has raised his hands at my two younger brothers? Come before me ; I shall not leave you alive. You perhaps are not aware of the might of Arjuna. Come before me if you dare."

But nobody responded to Arjuna's call nor did anybody appear before him. So, Arjuna chose to quench his thirst and then look for the person who had sent his brothers into a swoon.

But as soon as he tried to drink water, the same voice said, "Arjuna ! answer my questions before you drink water from my pool otherwise you will also drop senseless like your brothers."

"Who are you ? Come before me and I shall pierce you with my arrows." Saying so, Arjuna advanced to drink water but as soon as his hands touched the water, he fell down senseless just beside his two brothers.

Draupadi, Yudhishtir and Bheema kept waiting for him too.



Next, it was Bheema who was sent to look for his three younger brothers. Yudhishtira was sure that Bheema, ocean of might, would certainly locate his brothers and bring them back even if they were in some serious trouble. But Bheema too reached the pool and met with the same fate.

When Bheema did not return for a long time, Yudhishtira himself went in search of his four younger brothers. Reaching the bank of the pool, he found all of them lying in a swoon. So, worry overwhelmed him. But he chose to quench his thirst before doing anything else.

As soon as Yudhishtira went near the water, the same voice thundered, "Stop, Yudhishtira! never touch the water of my pool till you have answered my questions. If you violate this instruction, you will also join your brothers."

The Yaksha now appeared in his real form before Yudhishtira. Seeing him, Yudhishtira folded his hands and said in a humble voice, "O Yaksha! I cannot touch anything without your permission. I request you to ask your questions.

Yaksha : Who is the best friend of man ? Yudhishtira : Patience .

Yaksha : What moves faster than wind even ? Yudhishtira : Thoughts .



- Yaksha : Who is the worst enemy of man ?
 Yudhishtir : Anger is the worst enemy of man.
 Yaksha : Loss of what makes a man wealthier ?
 Yudhishtir : Loss of greed makes a man wealthier.
 Yaksha : What is the greatest wonder in man's life ?
 Yudhishtir : When a man accompanies a bier to the crematory, he is like an ascetic (sanyasi). But when he returns home, he is again a house-holder. It is the greatest wonder in man's life.

The Yaksha was very pleased to hear the answers given by Yudhishtir. He said, "I am really pleased at your answers, O Pandava. So, I have decided to bring one of your brothers to life. Choose whom you want to be revived."

Yudhishtir replied with folded hands, "Sir, we the five brothers were born to two mothers—Kunti and Maadri. Out of Kunti's three sons—myself, Bheema, Arjuna—I am alive. So, bring to life one of the sons born to my mother Maadri." Yamaraj was indeed even more delighted to hear Yudhishtir's reply that was pregnant with moral logic. So, he brought all the four Pandavas to life instantly.

Yudhishtir was beside himself with joy to see all his brothers standing hale and hearty before his eyes. He kissed them out of affection one by one.

