

boon she had got from Durvāsas, and with his permission she bore three sons called Dharmaputra, Bhīma and Arjuna respectively from the three Devas, Dharma, Vāyu and Indra. As it had been ordained that the fourth and fifth children would bring sorrows and pain to the parents Kuntī satisfied herself with three children (Ādi Parva, Chapter 122, Verses 77, 78).

But, as Pāṇḍu desired that Mādri also should have children by Kuntī's mantra she used the remaining mantra and two sons, Nakula and Sahadeva from the Āsviniḍevas were born to her.

6) *Kuntī widowed.* During a winter when the forest was fragrant with flowers, Pāṇḍu forgot all about the Sage's curse and indulged in sexual joys with Mādri, and immediately he expired. Kuntī and Mādri competed with each other to end their life in the funeral pyre of their husband. But, as the sages and other relations insisted that one of them should live to bring up the children, Mādri alone ended her life, and Kuntī returned to Hastināpura with the five children. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 125).

7) *Kuntī at Hastināpura.* At Hastināpura differences cropped up between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. Kuntī and the five Pāṇḍavas removed themselves to the 'Lac palace' built at Vāraṇāvata. When the palace was gutted by fire Kuntī and her sons escaped through a secret tunnel to the forest, and Bhīma carried the worn out Kuntī on his shoulders. In the forest the Rākṣasa woman Hiḍimbī, requested Kuntī to permit Bhīma to become her husband, and Kuntī advised Bhīma to beget a child by Hiḍimbī, and thus was born Ghaṭotkaca. At the city named Ekacakrā, Vyāsa consoled Kuntī. There the brahmins complained to Kuntī about the depredations of Bakāsura. Kuntī got Baka killed by Bhīma and asked the brahmins to keep the matter secret. On the advice of a brahmin who came there accidentally Kuntī and others visited the Pāñcāla kingdom, and there Arjuna, having defeated all the Kings present at Pāñcālī's Svayamvara wedded her. The Pāṇḍavas who returned with Pāñcālī at dusk time were asked by Kuntī to enjoy that day's bhikṣā (Alms received) together among themselves. Accordingly Pāñcālī became the wife of all the five Pāṇḍavas. Vidura, at the court of the Pāñcāla King saluted Kuntī and presented to her various varieties of gems. Kuntī and Vidura talked about the painful incidents of the past, and Vidura escorted the Pāṇḍavas back to Hastināpura.

Arjuna led a solitary life in the forest for one year, and then returned to Hastināpura with Subhadrā whom he had married meanwhile. Kuntī received Subhadrā heartily. In the game of dice with Duryodhana, Dharmaputra was defeated, and the Pāṇḍavas again started for their life in the forest. During this period Kuntī lived in Vidura's house. Meanwhile Śrī Kṛṣṇa one day visited Kuntī, and she told Kṛṣṇa about the fate of her sons with tears in her eyes. Duryodhana refused to give half of the kingdom to the Pāṇḍavas, who returned after twelve years' life in exile in the forest and one year's life incognito. Śrī Kṛṣṇa prompted the Pāṇḍavas to war with the Kauravas, and both the parties began preparations for war. (Ādi Parva, from Chapter 135 to Sabhā and Vana Parvans and Udyoga Parva, upto Chapter 137).

8) *Kuntī before Karṇa.* War clouds grew thick and fast, and Kuntī at Vidura's house got restless. Her heart trembled at the disasters of war as described by Vidura. She went alone to the banks of the Gaṅgā where just then Karṇa was engaged in Japa with his hands raised and face turned to the east. Kuntī waited for some time after which they began to talk. With tears in her eyes Kuntī told Karṇa that he was her son and implored him to return to the Pāṇḍava side to which Karṇa replied as follows : "Oh ! noble lady, that is quite impossible. I have vowed to kill Arjuna. I will not kill the other four Pāṇḍavas. You shall always have five sons alive. If Arjuna were to be no more I would be there for you in his stead."

Kuntī shuddered at those terrible words of Karṇa, and thus did both of them part with each other. (Udyoga Parva, Chapters 145 and 146).

9) *Last days of Kuntī.* The great war ended. Thousands of warriors on the Kaurava side like the mighty Karṇa were no more. On the Pāṇḍava side also many were killed. Though the Pāṇḍavas won the war their hearts no more enjoyed peace or happiness. Kuntī suffered as though caught in a wild fire. She asked the Pāṇḍavas to perform the obsequies for Karṇa also. When she let out the secret that Karṇa was her first-born child Dharmaputra burst into tears. Kuntī consoled Subhadrā and Uttarā who were lamenting over the death of Abhimanyu. She requested Śrī Kṛṣṇa to cremate the dead son of Uttarā.

Then Kuntī went to Gāndhārī, who stood there bathed in tears. Grief-stricken, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī started for the forest. Holding Gāndhārī's hand in hers Kuntī led the way. The Pāṇḍavas prevented their mother from going, but she did not yield. She advised Dharmaputra to have a special eye on Sahadeva, not to forget Karṇa's name and not to show any displeasure towards Bhīma and Pāñcālī. But, the Pāṇḍavas wanted to follow their beloved mother into the forest. Pāñcālī and Subhadrā stationed themselves behind Kuntī, who shed copious tears at the sight. Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī, who also felt deeply pained at the sight tried their best to dissuade Kuntī from following them to the forest. But, Kuntī consoled her sons and daughters-in-law by means of sympathetic words and followed Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī to the banks of the Gaṅgā, where all of them lived together. The Pāṇḍavas felt acutely the absence of their mother at home. They went to the forest and paid their respects to Kuntī on the banks of the Gaṅgā. Kuntī embraced Sahadeva with tears in her eyes. Though Yudhiṣṭhira and Sahadeva wanted to stay with Kuntī in her service she did not allow that. Kuntī, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī performed penance in the forest near the Gaṅgā, taking food only once in a month. The three of them died there in a wild fire. (Āśramavāsika Parva, Chapter 37, Verse 31). Their relations immersed their bones in the Gaṅgā and performed the necessary obsequies. (Strī, Śānti, Āśramavāsika and Āśvamedhika Parvans).

10) *Kuntī in Devaloka.* Kuntī, Mādri and Pāṇḍu went to Devaloka. (Svargārohaṇa Parva, Chapter 5, Verse 15).

KUNTI II. A particular region in ancient India. The warriors there were known as Kuntis. (Sabhā Parva, Chapter 34, Verse 11).