

MAHABHARATA – Part 7 (Burning of Khandava Forest)



As you remember, Pandavas made Indraprastha as their capital after renovating the ruined Khandavaprastha into a beautiful kingdom. Yudhisthira ruled Indraprastha for many years, and never strayed from the path of dharma, which made all the people extremely happy. Everyone loved the king so much, and named him Dharmaraja. In the due course, Arjuna married Subhadra, who was a beloved sister of Lord Sri Krishna, and they were blessed with a son, Abhimanyu. Draupadi gave birth to five sons – one from each of five Pandavas.

Indraprastha was surrounded by a thick forest called Khandava. The forests had plenty of nagas (snakes) and demons. One day, a saint approached Arjuna and Sri Krishna when they were passing the Khandava forest, and sought their help. When Krishna assured to provide the help, the saint turned into Agni, the fire God, and narrated his story –

Once there was a king called Swetaketu. He was a good and great king. He conducted many Yagnas for several years continuously, and thus filled the kingdom with smoke. Finally, the Yagna place was surrounded by enormous smoke, and the Rishis found it difficult to even breathe, and they all left the place. This did not deter Swetaketu from performing Yagnas. He wanted to perform another Yagna with great splendor, which has never been done before by anyone. But none of the Rishis were ready to take part in that Yagna, which would take for 12 years to perform.

Swetaketu then prayed Lord Shiva for a solution, and Shiva gave him Sage Durvasa as his priest to perform the Yagna. Sage Durvasa performed the Yagna for 12 years pouring unlimited materials into the fire pit, which is called a Homakunda. Agni was now overfed and could no longer take anymore food. His brilliance started to fade and this started causing imbalance in the universe. Then Agni approached Lord Brahma for a solution. Brahma said that Agni's indigestion will be cured if he burns down the Khandava forest, which has become the abode of those people practicing Adharma. Agni immediately started burning down the forest, but Indra, the king of gods, poured heavy rain and put the fire out. Takshaka, the king of the snakes, who was a friend of Indra was residing in the forest, so Indra came to his help. Agni again approached Lord Brahma for His help. Brahma assured Agni that he will succeed in burning down the forest when Nara Narayan visited the place.

Agni knew that Arjuna and Sri Krishna are none other than Nara and Narayan and approached them for their help. At that time, Krishna and Arjuna did not have any celestial weapons to fight Indra. They told Agni of their limitations. Agni looked at them considering their request. He gave Arjuna a bow called "Gandiva". Gandiva bow originally belonged to the Supreme Being, and passed among the greatest of warriors, and was the greatest factor

which would decide the winner in any war. Agni gave Arjuna two quivers of arrows, which would be never empty along with Gandiva. Agni also presented them a chariot with horses that are as swift as the wind.

Arjuna and Krishna were satisfied with those weapons, and were ready to help Agni. Agni ignited the forest and in no time the entire forest was in flame. Indra was informed promptly, and he summoned orders to Varun, the god of rain, to subside the fire immediately. Arjuna and Krishna looked at the approaching dark clouds. Arjuna drew out the Gandiva, and fired arrows with such speed as never seen before. He built an umbrella out of the arrows surrounding the entire forest of Khandava with in no time. A heavy rain started, but even a single drop of the rain water did not touch the Khandava forest.

The inhabitants of the forest were surprised. The nagas and demons, living in the forest were shocked on seeing the forest fire that was spreading everywhere. Also they noticed that it was raining, but was not reaching the fires. The asuras then saw the two warriors at the edge of the forest protecting the fire from the rain. Angrily, the asuras attacked the two of them from all the sides. But, they were no match for Arjuna and Krishna, and within no time the asuras and nagas were destroyed and routed. Most of them tried to run away, but the forest fire had become so huge, and the asuras and the nagas were destroyed in the forest.

In between, when Agni was burning the forest, a demon called Mayasura, came running out of it. He went to Arjuna and begged him to save his life. Arjuna agreed and protected him from Agni. Finally Agni was satisfied, thanked Krishna and Arjuna, and left with a glow on his face. Mayasura was very happy. He said, "You have saved my life. I am Maya (illusion), the architect of Vishwakarma. I possess a miraculous skill in architecture. Allow me to do something for you in return for saving my life." Krishna asked Mayasura to build a magnificent palace that should be the best on earth for king Yudhishtira.

In no time, Mayasura built a majestic palace in Indraprasta for Pandavas. It was so beautiful that even the gods became a bit envious. Yudhishtira named the palace Mayasabha in tribute to its creator Maya. On an auspicious day, the Pandavas entered into the palace in the presence of Krishna and other relatives, and started living there happily.

One day, sage Narada paid a visit to Indraprastha, and advised him to perform the Rajasuya yagna. Yudhishtira thought about it for sometime and then consulted with his mother and brothers. Still he was unsure as to what he should do so, he sent for his close friend Krishna. When Krishna arrived Yudhishtira told him of his intention to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice

and asked His opinion. Krishna said that in order for a King to perform Rajasuya, he must first conquer all other kings in India, or at least have their support.

Krishna was skeptical about King Jarasandha because he was a powerful leader with a powerful army and was never beaten in a battle. Then there was Sishupal who was also a very powerful king, and the chance of Duryodhana and his team opposing them was also a possibility. Krishna's strategy was that He, Bhima, and Arjuna would go to Magadha and try overpowering Jarasandha in a dual. When the other kings hear of it, they most likely will not try to create any problems for Yudhisthira.

Questions:

- 1) What was the name of the Pandava's capitol?
- 2) Did they stay there a long time?
- 3) Who did Arjuna marry? What was the name of his son?
- 4) Whose sons did Draupadi have?
- 5) Who was the Brahmin that approached Arjuna and Krishna?
- 6) What did he want? Why?
- 7) Why was the Khandoba forest hard to burn down?
- 7) What did Krishna and Arjuna ask for to help them?
- 8) What did Arjuna get?
- 9) When the forest was burning, who asked Arjuna and Krishna to save him?
- 9) Did they save him?
- 10) Who built the palace – what was his name?
- 11) Was it a good palace?

Lingashtakam

Brahma Murari surarchita Lingam
Nirmala bhasita sobhita Lingam
Janmaja dukha vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (1)

Meaning:

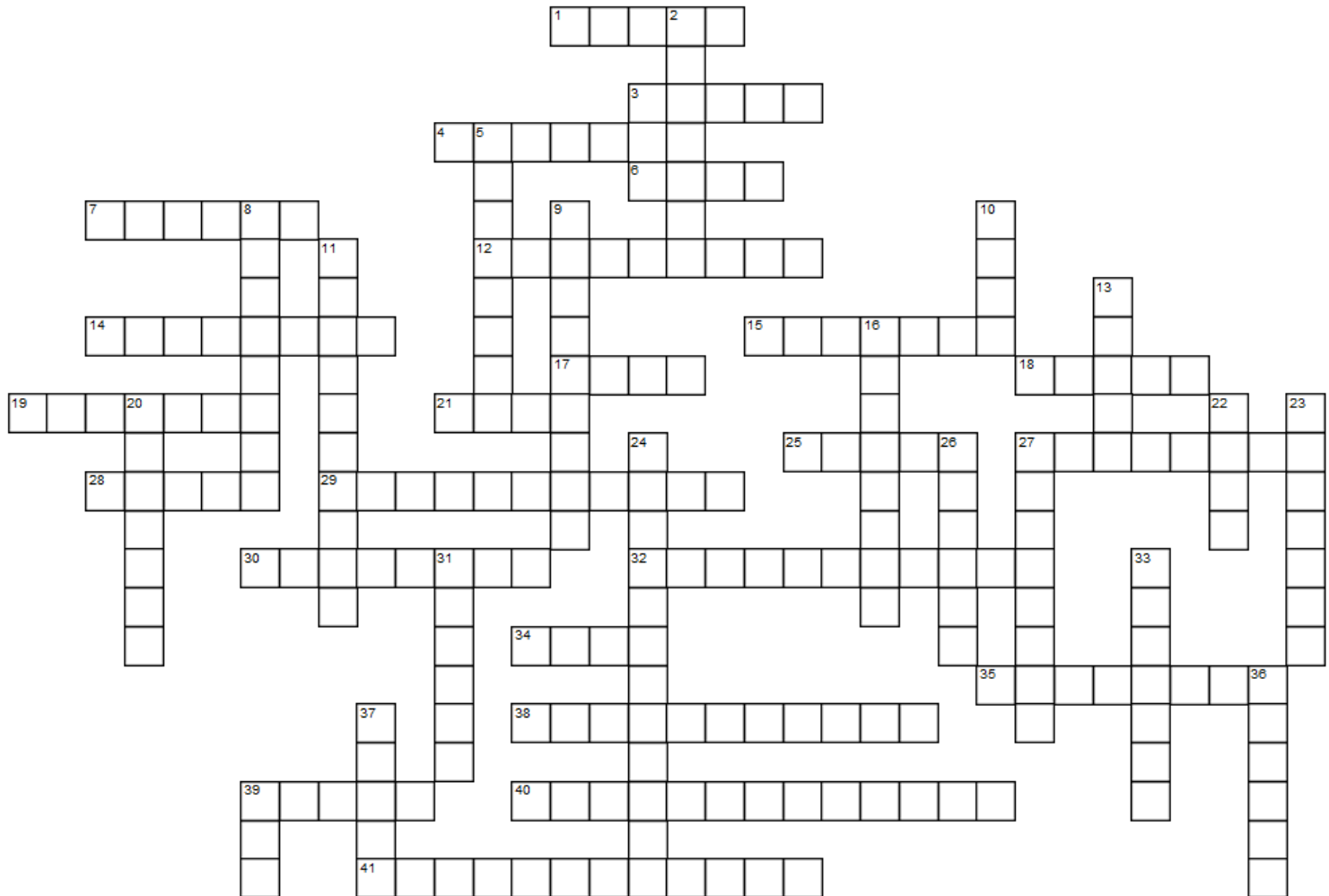
*I bow before that Eternal Shiva Lingam –
Which is adored by Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and the Gods
Which is Pure, Shining, and well-Adorned
And which Destroys the Sorrows associated with Birth (and human life)
I Salute that Eternal Shiva Lingam.*

Devamuni pravararchita Lingam
Kamadahana karunakara Lingam
Ravana darpa vinasaka Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (2)

Meaning:

*I bow to that Eternal Shiva Lingam –
Which is Worshipped by the Gods and the Best of Sages
Which Burns the Desires, which is Compassionate
And which Destroyed the Pride of demon Ravana
I Salute that Eternal Shiva Lingam.*

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Bhisma's mother
- 3 The king of gods
- 4 Guru of Kuru princes
- 6 How many are Pandavas?
- 7 Who wrote down the Mahabharata?
- 12 Arjuna's son
- 14 Kauravas' mother
- 15 Duryodhana's uncle
- 17 Bhima was good at this weapon
- 18 Draupadi worshipped to get a good husband in her previous birth
- 19 How many were Kauravas?
- 21 The one built beautiful palace for Pandavas
- 25 Kunti's first child
- 27 Pandavas' wife
- 28 Karna's father
- 29 The capital city of Kurus
- 30 Five sons of Pandu called
- 32 Bhima kill in the forest
- 34 the author of Mahabharatha
- 35 Who did Bhima kill while living at Ekachtrapura?
- 38 Bhima's son
- 39 Why wasn't Dhritarashtra made king?
- 40 Kauravas' father
- 41 Pandavas' capital

DOWN

- 2 Arjuna's bow name
- 5 The Yagna name Narada suggested
- 8 Sri Krishna's sister
- 9 What was other name Yudhistira called by his people?
- 10 Who gave Gandiva to Arjuna?
- 11 The eldest of Kauravas
- 13 The physically strongest among all Kuru princes
- 16 Dhritarashtra's sons called
- 20 Who is Draupadi's father?
- 22 Bhima was son of
- 23 Bhima married in the forest
- 24 The best among all Kuru princes at statesmanship
- 26 Whom did Drona like among all his students?
- 27 Bhisma's childhood name
- 31 Pandavas' uncle
- 33 Who is Kuru princes' grandfather?
- 36 Who won the Draupadi Swayamvaram?
- 37 Pandavas' mother
- 39 Name Arjuna's favorite arm

Coloring exercise:

