

PANDAVA'S INCOGNITO STATE OF AFFAIR AND THE IMPACT OF ECOLOGY AND CULTURE AS SIGNIFICANT FORCES IN MAKING THE ENDEAVOUR A GREAT SUCCESS – AN ANALYTICAL ELUCIDATION

Shib Sadhan Chattoraj

The study of the Mahabharata has been continuing the world over down the centuries and newer understandings of the relevant inherent messages have been dawning upon the newer generations.

Some of the episodes and events that have been appearing absurd and incredible are now appearing as feasible and credible strangely with the advancement of science.

Kouravas, the descendents of Dhritarashtra and Pandavas, the descendents of his brother Pandu are contesting each other for the Apple – The Throne. In the stratagem they are, as in Part-IV of the epic, engaged in the game of Hide and Seek. Pandavas are in the hide and Kouravas are on to seek them within a year to achieve the target.

Owing to variance of meaning of some words in letter and spirit, differences of opinion are prevailing as to the actual place of Pandavas' hiding.

Attempts have been made in this discourse to go through the episode in the light of science of relevant streams in search of THE TRUTH.

The author has been experimenting to highlight the various episodes of the Great Epic Mahabharata which reflect the monarchial virtuosity, outlandish socio-political context as well as multiplex behavior patterns of the people of the time as a whole which help us in comprehending the diversified eventful occurrences. The study reflects the author's boldness in taking up the efforts for untwining the different intricate eventualities though, as a matter of course, all the attempts do never claim to explore the entire reality, but these demand a courageous venture to focus light to the darkest phase of the remote past.

–Editor

Marvels of the Mahabharata

One of the evergreen Epics in the Earth, the Mahabharata enjoys the marvel of eternizing its exquisite charms that have been attracting closer attention even up to the E-age. In its mega canvas Vyas, the versatile creator, has portrayed INDIA from the vertex of her crown to the borders of the outskirts, with the vivid décor of variegated topics on its Ecology, Culture and Human activities. The mountainous mass of the verses are marshaled in eighteen parts (Parba), each part with individual caption. The Epic may resemble an 18-Coach vestibule heritage express train loaded with the micro-chips of the physical and metaphysical exhibits of India and running

Address for communication: **Shiv Sadhan Chattoraj**, Life member, Birbhum Sahitya Parshad, Vill – Narayanpur, PO – Churor, Dist. Birbhum, 731 133.

down the millennia in the mission to train the minds of millions to sing in full throat the saga of Humanity, the grand total of the TRUTH, LOVE and FAITH. The under-current of humane culture flowing beneath the texts of the Mahabharata, soothes the universal human mind which continues to be wounded by wars. Surprisingly, the topics are proximating clearer understanding with the advance of science. No wonder, that the age-old spirit of the Epic has found a modern flask in the Hollywood Cinema directed by Peter Brook.

Excellence of the Diction

The Diction deployed in the topics is innovated by the marvelous mixing, merging even moulding of the element of Art, Science and Conscience. The unique use of Parts of speech, Figures of speech and Super blending of the “Expressed” and “Understood” modes of description render the diction ideally capable to convey or conceal the real message inlaid in the text. Variety in the meaning of a term or terms is the spice of the lively verses that have been providing points to ponder and prefer.

In Part-I, under the caption “ADI” (The Genesis) a dish of Geology has been served with the garnish of romance in the story of King “BOLI” and the birth of his five sons- ANGA, BANGA, SUMBHA, PUNDRA and KALINGA. The proper name “BOLI” as common noun means the biological phenomenon of “Wrinkled Skin”. In the dermatological metonymy, the plateau of Chotanagpur with wrinkled geological skin is transposed as King “BOLI”. In reality, it may be the tale of someone who is skilled in the surveying Plateaus and curving out five distinct Kingdoms with the Eponyms of ANGA, BANGA, SUMBHA, PUNDRA and KALINGA which are geographically situated in Eastern India. Dramatically it may prelude the advent of BHIM, the 2nd Pandav in this part of India in his mission to conquer the Eastern India.

Traces of medical science are dipped in the story of king YAJATI, as deeply as the gland in human anatomy. The queer feat of exchanging the infirmity of the king with the youth of his son is nearing feasibility in the light of modern medical technology of Limb transplantation. The curse shouted out by Acharya SHUKRA, the Divine Faculty of Human Physiology, to king YAJATI for his guilt of illicit sex may sound as Classical warning against the devastating prognosis of the disease recently identified as “AIDS”.

The high profile awarded to “MATSYA” (The Pisces, Fish) in Anthologies may seem reasonable on account of its being the First vertebrate creature, naturally associated with the ecology of water, the liquid form of life. Its direct dive to the bottom and steady surge up to the top of the water may symbolize the cyclical order of the UPS and DOWNS of the life. It moves in the water without leaving behind any trace of the track. The fish is credited with the merit of being the first incarnation of VISHNU, the Lord of Diffusion. Fish - the first vertebrate and Man

- the best of vertebrates are linked in the totem culture in India. They have gone global ecologically.

The legend of Mermaid comes to life in one of the episode as a female fish acts as the surrogate mother who gives birth to twin human babies-one male and the other female. They have attained the highest order of human life.

Wonders of the Texts

In Part-IV of the Epic under the caption “VIRAT PARBA”, Pandavas are projected attempting the near impossible feat of concealing their outstanding physical features and rare family structure so as to go beyond recognition of others including the KOURAVAS, while living in a populous locality for a year in performance of the stake pledged by them in the Game of Dice. In the event of their being detected during the period they have to live again in forest for twelve years and stay incognito for a year.

The crisis of life of the Dramatis Personae poses dilemma for the author as well. He has to concede to the demands of Drama for showing the movements and activities of Pandavas, at the same time adhere to the classical commitment of the Epic to uphold the ultimate triumph of the truth. VYAS is regarded as the store house of the abstract knowledge of the Universe. Also he runs the workshop to transform the abstract principles into applied forms and the product texts are dedicated to the people to enable them to choose the Right from the Wrong, to differentiate the eternal from the transitional phenomena.

As a way out the words are turned into terms by fortifying them with multiple layers of meanings, leaving the onus on the readers to choose the right meaning out of multiple options. Moreover the data of Anthropology, Ecology, Culturology and other streams of Science are dressed in the attire of Arts and presented in the texts which consequently defy easy grip and gulp. Some of such neatly crafted and tempered terms arrayed in the texts may seem as ONYX emitting meaning of different colour from its different layers, or may look like oysters simple in form with the pearl of vital data concealed within. Some may float as icebergs that display only a minor fraction of their dimension, while some others are capable of creating the mirage of flowing river over a desert.

One of such wonder-words has been brought to focus by M. JEAN Claude Currier, the eminent script-writer of Hollywood fame in his “ASHOK KUMAR MEMORIAL ADDRESS” delivered on 31.1.2005 in Kolkata Book Fair-2005 (ABP Press report). He has admitted his taking of several flights to India for clearing the understanding about the word “DHARMA” in the Epic, while finalizing the scripts for the Cinema - “The Mahabharata”.

The Strategy of Site Selection

Out of several countries suggested by Arjun, the 3rd Pandav, Yudhisthir selects the country of MATSYAS, for their safe and secret sojourn. The crux of the strategy

gravitates in the difference of opinion as to the number of Matsya countries. Geographic location of some places mentioned in The Mahabharata are specified in the Anthology, The Manusamhita edited by Suresh Chandra Bandyopadhyay (2001). The number of Matsya countries are indicated as three, as detailed below:

- (1) The Region of Bharatpur and Alowar in Joypur state of Rajasthan.
- (2) Koorg.
- (3) Prachya Matsya Desh (Matsya Country in the East) comprising of the Southern parts of TEERHOOT (including Boishali).

Dr. D.C. Sarkar in his book "THE COSMOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHY IN EARLY INDIAN LITERATURE" (1967) has indicated the number as four excluding the place of incarnation of "Matsya" in Northern India:

- (1) Matsya people and country located in Southern region
- (2) In the Eastern region
- (3) In the western region and
- (4) In the Vindhya region.

The Mahabharata testifies the existence of 2 (Two) Matsya countries - one conquered by Sahadev, and the other conquered by Bhim in course of his expedition in Eastern India.

Under compulsion of the penal clause Pandavas have to move far from the range of Kourav Radar. En Passant, it deserves mention that the "MAHARANYA" (Verse-17/ Chapter-26), the vast expanse of forest has been considered by the team of Korava Intelligence as "ATYAHITAM" (ATI- Very + "AHITAM-harmful"), extremely harmful. The secret abode of Pandavas is reasonably expected to be situated in a land beyond the so - called Maharanya.

In firm resolution to win the war of wits, Yudhisthir sets his mind to chalk out the route of escape from the vortex of complex problems. He is conversant with the strategic importance of ecology, its related culture and human activities and plans to make other members of his family to be conscious in this respect so that they are capable of changing lifestyles to suit the changes in ecologies.

Pandavas in the Greenroom

Chapter-4 appears the greenroom for Pandava to acquire the knowhow of changing their attire of attitude conformity to the ecologies they are going to enter in. DHOUMYA, the priest and mentor of Pandavas delivers a refresher course on the principles and practice of "LOKABRITTAM", the circle of folk culture. Rajsekhar Basu, in his vernacular version of the Mahabharata has interpreted the term as "LOK BYABAHAR" – the Behavioral pattern of the people. Prof. Bamdev Bhattacharya, the compiler and editor of the base Anthology, has converted it as Lok Achar i.e. the way of life of the people.

Pandavas are instructed to refrain strictly from exposing any manifestation of their Royal Heritage, Education and Experience. They are advised to use always the dresses, decorations, utensils, vehicles and other things given to them by the king and not to speak to him *Suo-moto*. They must restrict their movement in royal service only and not to indulge in activities of their own accord. The chapter closes with the handing over of the utensils, other objects and symbols of Vedic culture by Yudhishthir to DHOUMYA and Pandavas' darting in the dark.

The Direction of Route Taken by Pandavas as Indicated by the Light of Geology

The journey of Pandavas from their forest resort up to the entry in the capital of Matsya Kingdom is described in chapter-V. They become bearded and discolored at the border. Such a long journey is indited in only five verses – (1 to 5) as if the movements are conveyed in the form of cryptogram. The passage, therefore, requires to be study with due mediation in right earnest to choose the relevant meaning or significance out of the multiple options.

Verse – I declares that Pandavas have headed towards the river Kalindi (“KALINDIM” “OBHITOSHASU”). It serves as a pointer to the space of event in broad outlines. Verse – 2 spots them on the southern side of the river in the act of following on foot. The text reads as “TATASTE DAKSHINAM TEERAM ANWAGACHCHAN PADATAYAH”. meaning – they then (TATASTE) kept on following (ANWAGACHCHAN) on foot (PADATAYA). The element of absurdity in the epic drama emanates from the term “ANWAGACHCHAN” which is formed in the rule of vowel joining – ANU + AGACHCHAN (U + A = W) but the prefix ANU (Behind) compels the verb AGACHCHAN (Kept on going) to “follow someone”. The text may illustrate the “VYAS - KOOT type” of diction that acts as speed breaker to superfast understanding. Prof. K.N. Mallik, the most revered President of “Beerbhumi Sahitya Parishad”, Suri has graciously associated himself in the project of finding the way out of such an impasse. The X-rays of his faculty have formed the imagery of the dynamic stream of a river flowing in between its static banks and the act of “following” becomes feasible. Pandavas, in reality have been following the flow of the stream of river Yamuna, on foot along its southern banks.

Geological structure of the basin of the YAMUNA (Synonym of the KALINDI) tends it to flow towards Allahabad in the east. The Laser Lights beaming from the Geology show Pandavas moving to the east along the southern side of the Kalindi.

Course of Their Onward Journey in Geographic and Culturologic Perspectives

The landscape of dense forest hinted in the code word “PADATAYA” may coincide with the very harmful forest designated by Kourav intelligence network as

Maharanya. They prefer to overlook this forest on account of the sure chance of Pandavas' being the food of either Animals or Cannibals on the way.

In the urge of detection – free movements Pandavas may take cover of such primitive forest. The trend of direction of their movement would lead them towards the plateau of Baghelkhand with the veil of similar natural ecology.

The other part of Verse-2 contains the words “BASANTOBANA DURGESHU” and “GIRIDURGESHU”. The micro-chips sandwiched in the pair of this word are capable to provide playback of the dual ecology of Chattishgarh (Erstwhile Dakshin Koshal), in the east of Baghelkhand.

(A) *Basantobanodurgeshu*

This word may relate to the vernal and sylvan ecology prevailing in the plane land of Chattishgarh. The component BASANTO would release the vernal breeze perfumed with the fragrance of flowers blooming in the bowers to excite the sense of romance. The other part BANO is likely to present the panorama of pleasant sanctuaries e.g. Achankumar, Sitanadi, Udanti and others full of beauty and gaiety.

(B) *Giridurgeshu*

This word may relate to the ecology prevailing in the tableland of Chattishgarh. The micro-chip inside the word displays the picturesque waves of mountains with towering peaks, spacious valleys decorated with sanctuaries such as MOINPAT, BAGICHA and others (some of which are the play ground of wild life) and furnished with wonderful waterfalls.

Both the sectors are remarkable for the unique co-existence of natural and artificial ecologies.

The suffix “DURGESHU” in both the words may signify that it is a land of forts (Durga), may be 36 in number. It is generally as inaccessible as forts. It is inhabited mostly by people of martial culture.

The Topography of Jharkhand

(In the East of Chattishgarh)

The next Verse-3 opens with the Animal – names “SINGHAN BYAGHRAN BARAHANSCHA” i.e. Lions, Tigers and bears, apparently to highlight the frightful environments of the forest Pandavas are daring through. Later part of the verse reads “MARAYANTI CHA SARBASHA” means “killing all”, possibly to convey that Pandavas are competent to kill all such animals. This part may also confer on them the traits of hunting culture.

In other thought-waves the animal-names may emerge as TOTEM NAMES adored and adopted as surnames by people co-existing with the animals. In course of time the totem culture may condense into place-names such as SINGHABHUM,

BAGHRABHUM and BARAHABHUM - all geographically existing in the south-western parts of Jharkhand (Bihar in the past), in seriatim of animal names in the verse as if dotting the line of movements of Pandavas.

The Entry of Pandavas in the Kingdom of Matsys

The scene of the entering of Pandavas in the Kingdom of Matsyas is indited as **“LUBDHABRUBANA MATSYASYA BISHAYAM PROBISHAN VANAT”** in the concluding part of verse-4 purporting:- “Uttering the word LUBDHA entered (PRABISHAN) the Matsya Kingdom (MATSYASYA BISHYAM) from forest-(VANAT)”.

The word ‘Lubdha’ may appear as a PASSWORD used by Pandavas to get access to the domain of Matsyas. It may also stand as a chapter of Anthropology on the topic of “The Lodhas”, the group name of primitive hunting tribe living in the forest, on the resources of forest. The journey of Pandavas commences from forest, continues through forest and terminates in forest. The resultant orientation of Pandavas to forest culture helps the password to click well.

The genesis of the word Lubdha may relate cosmically to the dog named Lubdhak associated with a hunter figuring in one of the galaxies.

Some extracts from the Book, the “Lodhas of West Bengal” (Bhoumik 1994) are cited herein in the hope that data furnished in the book may help to decode the cryptogram reporting Pandava movement and site of the border.

The extracts are annexed below:-

1. “The Lodhas were considered as *Savaras*, a mythical forest dwelling community of legendary repute. This mythical Savaras had an easy access to the Hindu Society as are borne out by Hindu Epic Literature depicting the exploits of the Savaras. Thus, with the passage of time, the influence of the epic literature made the Lodhas (Who assert themselves as Savaras) consider themselves as a part and parcel of the greater Hindu community.” (Page 278).
2. “The Lodhas generally inhabit the jungle tracts of West Midnapur and have spread out in small numbers in some of the contiguous districts like Hooghly (West Bengal), Mayurbhanj (Orissa) and Singhum (Bihar)” (Page-10). “The tract along the western border now known as Jungle Mahals which is still covered with the remains of decaying forest was the home of the nomadic tribes who live on jungle products and spoils of the chase. Among them were the *Savaras*, a powerful race whose origin could be traced as far back as the Aitareya Brahmana, and other aboriginal tribes who spread over the country from the Ganges to the Godavari. Their descendants may be identified with nomadic Savaras of the present day and the Lodhas, a tribe of hunters as their name implies”. (Page-11).

3. "About the tradition of origin of this tribe, the Lodhas feel pride in declaring themselves as 'Savaras'. In the *Ramayana* we have the episode of Savari waiting for Rama at the time of his exile. The 'Kiratas' or the 'Vyadhas' described in the *Mahabharata* and in *The Mangal Kavyas* are regarded as their kinsmen. Their chief occupation is to gather edible fruits, tubers, and roots as also the meat of hunted games and they subsist on these like wild people. Lord Jagannatha of Puri is said to have spent some time with Vishvasu, the mythical Savara Chief and was worshiped by him as 'Nilmadhava' in Nilachal, somewhere in Orissa". (Page 11).
4. Clan organization is an important feature of the Lodha Society. All individual belong to one clan or another. Each clan has a totem name, and strict taboos or restrictions are observed with regard to them (Page 52-53).

Playback of the data recorded in the extracts may appear as photographs of the scenario painted on the canvas of the verses under review. Traces of Ethnic and Geographic element compressed in cryptic term come out in amplified and identifiable form.

The verse with animal names gains rational ground to precede the verse conveying the tribe name Lubdha. The animal - names Singha (Lion) and Byaghra (Tiger) ultimately transpire in surnames like Singha and Bagh adopted by some of the clans of the Lodha community. Their occupation as Chowkidar (Home Guard and Forest Guard) may provide answer to the question mute in the verse as to the situation necessitating Pandavas' declaration of identity. Proficiency of the Lodhas in fishing (hunting in water) may prove significant to the coincidence of Matsya border in Lodha localities.

The animal name – 'Baraha' may relate mythologically to the 3rd incarnation of Lord Vishnu credited with the retrieving of land out of water. Geologically it may relate to the alluvial soil forming the southern parts of Midnapur district girded by the Bay of Bengal . The ancient maritime port TAMRLIPTI is situated in this part. The spot has figured in the focus of Kourav Radar in the word URMI (Verse-17/ Chapter-26), in their surmise of Pandavas' going past the waves (The word URMI denotes waves and connotes the sea).

In this context mention may be made of the Lodha settlement in village Balarampur under jurisdiction Kharagpur P.S. situated adjacent to the Railway Station Barabhum on Howrah-Bombay route of South-Eastern Railway running through the western parts of Midnapur district. Verse-5 concludes the running commentary of the secret journey of Pandavas from somewhere in southern valley of the Yamuna up to the line of border of Matsya Kingdom. Pandavas are described as VIVARNA (Discolored) and "SHMASHRUDHARINA" (Bearded), on the verge of finish mark of their trekking. The words apparently make Pandavas look like the people of the place. In depth these may suggest changes in their locus as well.

The dermatological change indicates their advance toward the zone of tropical climate with sharper sunshine causing changes in the colour of their skin. It also hints their drift toward the south while moving to the east. The other word appears as the biological stop watch that helps the computing of time taken to traverse the track on foot.

The geographical co-ordinate of Midnapur district as noted in the extract ranges from 21° 36'2" to 22° 57'2" north latitude and from 86° 33'2" to 88° 11'2" east longitude. Physiological changes in the appearance of Pandavas mentioned in the verse are in tune with the Meteorological Shift from the Starting point in the Yamuna valley.

The Border of Matsya Kingdom in the Light of Lodha Locality and Culture

The place of border of Matsya Kingdom has been figuratively indicated by the people and their culture. The people are identified by the tribe name Lubdha, (in conversion) the Lodhas. They are densely located in Jhargram areas of West Midnapur with forest covered undulated crust linked up with the plateau of Chotanagpur. It originates from the mount Vindhya in central India and extends eastward up to Rajmahal where the Ganges turns to the south for taking the final dip in the Bay of Bengal. The component "Chota" in the name may come to clearer understanding in the back drop of two divisions of Lodha clan - one known as "BARA" Bhakta and the other as "CHOTA" Bhakta signifying superior and inferior respectively.

One of the Lodha clans adheres to aqua totem of fish like 'Makar' a kind of shark, the mythological vessel carrying the deity of Ganges. Some other clans adhere to fish totem-"Sal" (ophicaphalus marulius) and Chanda (Ambasisis ranga) etc. confirms their culture related to The Fish as totem.

The Plateau of Chotonagpur

Vis-A-Vis the Plateau of Bengal

The plateau of Chotonagpur is also integrally linked with the forest covered undulated tracts of Bankura, Purulia (Formerly Manbhum), Bardhaman and Birbhum districts-Geologically known as the plateau of Bengal. All the districts including Midnapur are collectively and historically renowned as 'RARH' which is equated with the Kingdom of Sumbha, one of the five state sons of King Boli. The equation figures in the format "SUMBHA" :: "RARH" evolved by Nilkantha, one of the eminent commentators on the Mahabharata. The rude climate and ecology of the region have made MAN IN RARH shock - proof, weather-proof and resolute to win the struggle for life.

The plateau of Bengal is the fountain-head of major rivers e.g. the Subarnarekha, the Kangsabati, the Ajay, the Mayurakshi and the Bakreswar etc, valleys of each of the rivers enjoy global fame for their Eco-facts and Artifacts – primeval and coeval.

The plateau of Bengal is naturally guarded by the plateau of Chotanagpur in the north and west, by the Bay of Bengal in the south by the Ganges in the east and in the west by the mega-expanse primitive forest designated by Kouravas as Maharanya. The fertility, creativity and innate security of the region promotes the concept of the WOMB, the natural abode of the unborns.

One of the Passes in the eastern section of the plateau of Bengal is known as the Moshanjore pass in the Mayurakshi valley. A road runs through it connecting Dumka (Santal Parganas) and Suri (Birbhum). Another road from Suri proceeds towards south-west to reach Medinipore vis Raniganj, Bankura and Vishnupur crossing the rivers Bakreswar, Ajay and Damodar.

The realm of RARH is rich in Tableland, Terrain, Mines and plain lands abounding in pastoral and agricultural fields. The affluence of wealth presents problems of defence of the Moshanjore pass and Rajnagar-the Capital of Birbhum from time Immemorial. Rajnagar is also politically prominent for Santal commotion and British action to quench it.

Birbhum (District Name), Birat (The King's Name) and Rajnagar

Birbhum

The word BIR means forest or jungle and BHUM means land. The derive word Birbhum implies the land of forest or jungles. In the past the area of Birbhum covers the vast expanse of forest covered land from Devghar (Jharkhand) to Medinipur in West Bengal.

Birat the Matsya King

The king (RAJA) of such a vast forest land may reasonably be termed as “ Bir-Raj “ which may also be spelt as “ Bir-Rat following the rationale of the spelling “ Matsyaraj’ as “Matsyarat’ in verses 11 and 2 of Chapter 11 and 12 respectively. For the sake of phonetic ease Bir-Rat may be compressed to the form BIRAT which is used as the name of the King of a vast forest land.

Rajnagar

The capital name is also a derived one incorporating “RAJ” (The KING) and Nagar (City) denoting the city of the king. Rajnagar is well known locally in the cryptic and coded form “NAGAR” only.

Pandavas Inside the Matsya Kingdom

At a safe distance from the border Arjun breaks the silence to convey that they are moving along an upland path (UTPATH) through a forest full of deers (MRIGA) and snakes (BYAL). Also he confides their plan to leave the weaponry and other traits of hunting culture in a crematorium within the forest and thereafter they

would be going towards the city (GACHCHAMO NAGARAM PROTI – Verse-16 / Chapter-5). Surprisingly the capital is referred in the verse simply as NAGAR instead of Birat Nagar as mentioned elsewhere. In continuity of the theme the entry of Pandavas in Matsya capital has also been described in the words PROBISHAN NAGARAM MAHAT, in the concluding verse of chapter-5, meaning – “They entered in the great city or city of the great”. Significantly the episode concludes with the mention of the capital as Nagar. It appears that the city of Birat is referred in the cryptic form “Nagar” in the Strategy of diction as well.

The Rendezvous of Pandavas as Marked by Geo - Theological Co-Ordinates

On way to Biratnagar Yudhisthir decides to offer prayer to the omnipresent Goddess Durga for her blessing so that they may succeed in staying incognito for a year. The benevolent Goddess, true to her earlier promise appears on the spot and accords the boon that neither the people of the place nor the visitors from outside would be able to recognize them. The prayer and the boon suggest the prior presence of Pandavas in this region and the cosmopolitan feature of the capital. Moreover some words in the prayer may transpire as Geological and Theological data relevant to identify the place of occurrence.

In Geological perspective the mount Vindhya has been lauded as the greatest mountain (NAGASHRESTHA) and theologically asserted as the eternal place (SHWASHWATA STHANAM) of the Goddess Durga . The capital of the city of King Birat-Biratnagar alias Rajnagar alias Nagar is geologically related to the plateau of Bengal which, in turn is remotely related to the Mt. Vindhya. The prayer may as well illustrate Ecology oriented Theology.

In theological theme the Goddess is described in the prayer as KAMACHARINI, the energy guiding activities to fulfill the Desire (KAM). The paramount desire of Pandava at the moment is to succeed in staying incognito here for a year and they are praying to the goddess to guide their activities to score the goal. The geographic entity of Birbhum, in the alternative mode of spelling as BEERBHUM literally means the land of braves and spiritually means those who are capable of braving the Desire. Beerbhum is known in the synonym KAMKOTI in terms of the dictum “BEERABHU KAMKOTI SYAT”. In this context it requires mention that the Goddess Durga in her 2G manifestation is named as “TARA” (STAR) and the name is generally preceded by the word mother (MAA) connoting that she is the supreme mother. Scientifically too Galaxies are regarded as the ultimate mother of the daughter Earth. She is also proclaimed as “UGRA TARA” for her high temper against malevolence and high power to protect the Good Samaritans in their distress of highest degree. Her SANCTUM SITU, TARAPEETH is connected with Baidyanath Dham (DEVGHAR) by road through the Mosanjore Pass. All the Geo-Theological and Mytho Epical data converge to encourage that

Yudhisthir's prayer is prompted by the ecology and culturology related to Mt. Vindhya and its associate Plateau of Bengal.

The King, the Capital, the People and the Country of Matsyas

The king is named as Birat by Yudhisthir in verse-16 of chapter- I and described as BALABAN- Powerful, DHARMASHIL- Pious, BADANYA- Generous, BRIDDHA- Old, SUMAHADHANA- Very rich in well earned wealth. Yudhisthir feels that the King shall protect Pandava. The adjectives flow as if from firsthand knowledge.

The capital Rajnagar is flanked by the Mayurakshi valley in the north- west and the Bakreswar valley in the south-west. The Bakreswar valley enjoys global fame for the hand tools and domestic appliances from the PALAEOLITHIC to NEOLITHIC period of stone age and Hot Springs. It has also the antecedence of the divine sage ASTABAKRA, the spiritual mentor of JANAK, the king of Mithila associated with the epic the Ramayana. Roads from all directions reach the site of Bakreswar.

The people are depicted in the verses as HRISTA PUSTA-Happy (HRISTA) Healthy (PUSTA) signifying that they are psycho – somatically balanced and competent as human resources to make the optimum use of the natural and artificial resources of the country.

The country has been described as GABADHYAM and ANNASAMPANNAM in the verse. The former word means rich in cows and the latter means abundant in rice. The term cow includes cattle and other live stocks while rice includes other food grains and agricultural products. Importance of the cow may be brighter in the light of contemporary practice to reckon Cow as the measure of wealth and the medium of exchange. Matsya king Birat is credited with two large scale cow field in the verses as UTTAR GOGRIHA and DAKSHIN GOGRIHA (Noted by the eminent historian PURGITER as “Northern cowshed” and “Southern cowshed”). According to the relevant verses Uttar gogriha situates near the capital and Dakshin gogriha far away from the capital in the south. In ecological contour, the northern cow field may be pointed in the Mayurakshi valley and southern cow field in the Bakreswar valley in the south of the capital. The accruing enormous wealth makes the country economically viable and the king enviable.

The defence network of such a vast and prosperous country is headed by Keechak the brother-in-law of Birat. The reality of the shrine of the deity KEECHAKESHWARI in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa suggests the site as the Head Quarter of Keechak, the chief of Matsya Army. Presumably Keechak used to keep vigil over the strategic movement from the North, West and South. Matsya Army in the capital Rajnagar served the purpose of monitoring such movements from the north - west through Mosanjore pass and thus from the North - East through Raj Mahal.

Pandavas Interacting with King Birat

Pandavas presented themselves one by one in the court of King Birat as jobless servants of Pandavas. Their physical features raised some clouds of doubt that melted away by their submissive culture. He questioned everyone about the trade they are skilled in and placed them in respective jobs. Yudhishthir to stay in the court, Bhim to take charge of kitchen, Nakul to supervise the stable and Sahadev to take care of the department of Animal Husbandry. Droupadi to mind the beautification of the royal ladies. The king got Arjun medically examined by the female wardens before entrusting him with the job of training princess Utra in the arts of music, dance and drama. By dint of their orientation to folk culture they felt free to act naturally in the life style of the people of the locality.

Arjun is found speaking to the king terms of the 'Womb' to assure him that they had been staying incognito for a year in his palace as cozily as a baby in the womb, vide verse-10, chapter-71 reading as-

*“USHITASMO MAHARAJA SUKHAM TABA NIBESHANE;
AGNATA BASANIRATA GARBHABASO IBO PROJA”*

Purporting that they had been living as comfortably as a baby in the womb while performing the staying incognito in his palace. In unique nous the Womb is highlighted as an abode, the Waiting Room for those waiting for birth; for Pandavas, the Sojourn for re-birth.

The Site of Pandavas' Hide as Revealed by the Counter Activities of Kouravas to Seek Them

Details of Kourav activities in search of Pandavas are narrated in and from Chapter No. 25 to 66 of this episode.

As directed, the teams of Kourav intelligence come back to NAGPUR (KRITAKRITYANU BARTANTA CHARA NAGPURAM PROTI – Verse-6 / Chapter-26). There they find their king, Durjodhan in council with his brother Dooshasan, grandfather Bhisma, major generals like Drona., Kripa, Karna and others. In profound grief they submit their report of failure to trace Pandavas, even any clue relating to them. With glee, however the break the news of sudden demise of Keechak, the chief of Matsya Army. The message prompts Kourav King, Durjodhan to leave Pandavas out of the focus of relevance and to concentrate on plans to seek the cows and capital of Matsya King. The direction of movement is decided as south – east (“DISHAM VANHER” Verse-25 / Chapter-30).

The location of Nagpur is logistically ideal for movement in any direction and to any part of India. Kourav camping in Nagpur may probably be for the combing of the “MATSYA COUNTRY LOCATED IN VINDHYA REGION “ (- Sarkar D.C.) and they are now geared to move to the south – east to reach the Matsya country located in eastern region (*Ibid*). Kouravas are projected (in verse-22,

chapter-25) as intent to conquer the “immensely wealthy” (SUSAMRIDHDHAM) and well organized (SUSAMHATAM) kingdom (BISHYAM) of Matsya King (MATSYARAJASYA). Next verse-23 depicts them moving towards Biratnagar (BIRAT NAGARAM PROTI). Such targets are situated in the valley of The Mayurakshi and the Bakreswar. RAJPATHS (Kingsway or Broadway) as required for movement of Army in convoy are available only in plain tracts of the South-Eastern parts of Medinipur, Bankura, Bardhaman and Birbhum districts, collectively known as “RARH”. Surprisingly the roads of antiquity have resurged, perhaps in the cyclical order of Time, as National Highways. Nagpur is connected with Kharagpur in West Bengal by NH-6. The National Highway No. 60 now connects Balasore with Medinipur, Bankura, Raniganj, and Suri (Mayurakshi Valley, Birbhum). The antique versions of these Highway helped Kouravas to reach the southern Cow field and the capital Rajnagar alias BIR – RAJNAGAR alias BIRRATNAGAR ! Biratnagar surrounded by Northern Cow field.

In contrast, Pandavas entered in the Kingdom of Matsyas (MATSYASYASYA BISHYAM) through the border situated in North-Western part Medinipur under cover of forest and moved along a Highland Path (UTPATH) to some extent inside the Matsya domain. Kouravas converged with Pandavas in the common platform of the Kingdom of Matsyaraj Birat, through the South-Eastern parts of Medinipur district.

Kourav Army witnesses the coming out of an Arjun-like figure from the capital in a chariot driven by a boy going to the mountain pass and returning to the battlefield. The superb Archery established his identity as Arjun in the Northern Cowfield battle with Kouravas.

The Surfacing of Pandavas in Course of Kuru – Matsya Imbrolio

In execution of planning Susharma , King of Trigarta, unleashed onslaught over the Southern Cow field of Matsya King Birat. The report resulted in the egress of King Birat with courtiers and army from Nagar (here too, the capital is indicated by the word “NAGAR”-NAGARAT) and reached Bhimgarh area with the infrastructure of a line of defence dotted with three human forts, (THE MANUSAMHITA) e.g. Kendragarh in the west, Bhimgarh in the centre and Ishgarh in the east, founded in the Northern bank of the Ajay. The bracket in the east is extended further North, towards ‘Paigarh’ on the bank of a rivulet named Hinglo (Hingula) and ‘Garhgarh’ on the bank of another rivulet named ‘Shal’ or ‘Kopai’ (Kopavati). All the five human forts are manned by people with martial culture. Matsya defence went out of order in the absence of the army chief, Keechak and King Susharma scored easy win and captured Matsya King. Yudhishtir, the courtier of King Birat commanded Bhim, the chief of Matsya chefs to save their savior.

Displaying an incredible martial performance, Bhim captures Trigarta King Susharma and frees Matsya King Birat. For eternizing the superb performance,

King Birat dedicates the battlefield to the traditional Lord of Matsya Puran, Shib in the name “Bhimeswar”, specific in the feature of sudden manifestation to save his devotee from dire situation. And Yudhisthir , Bhim and other two Pandavas came back to Daylight.

Apropos the Second part of plan, Kourav King Durjodhan laid seize next day around the Matsya Capital and Northern Cow field. On the hint from Sairendhri, the beautician of Royal Ladies, Uttar, the only male member of the Royal family left in the city (Capital), took Arjun in the guise of Brihannala as the chariot driver and set out to drive away the Kourav army. On the way Arjun exchanged the role with Uttar, went to the pass, collected his arms and outfits with the help of Uttar, the Matsya Prince and made debut in the Northern battlefield in his own form.

Grandfather Bhishma announced that the period of Pandavas’ staying incognito in a populous place had already expired and advised Kourav King to retire from the futile fight and roll back to Hastinapur in self defence.

Yudhisthir, Bhim, Arjun, Nakul, Sahadev and Droupadi regained the Paradise of Pandava stature in a new culture combining the Vedic and folk cultures and the amalgam was complete with the negotiated marriage of Matsya Princess, Uttara with Pandava Prince Abhimanyu, son of Arjun. And the city of Matsyaraj glowed in glory (“NAGARAM MATSYARAJASY SHUSHUBHE BHATARSAVA”–verse-40, Chapter-72) and repeated within first bracket. The capital continued to be cited as Nagar only in this verse concluding the Part - IV.

Marks of Pandava Presence on the Soil of Rarh Bright in Cultural Light

Following the roll-back of Kourav army, a few Kourav soldiers (KURUSAINIKAH-Verse-2/ch.67) come out of their hiding places and surrender before Arjun who, in his characteristic mood, assures them rehabilitation. Some people with robust physique and totemic surname “Singha” are settled in the border areas of the Mayurakshi valley, enjoying free-hold land with the title termed as “GHATOWALI” i.e. remuneration for keeping watch over the ghat (Obviously the pass (Ghat)) of Mosanjore and related terrain border areas. The people claim their nativity in Northern India and circumstantially may be considered as living ethnic fossils that substantiate the validity of the concerned verses-2 to 6 of chapter-67.

The martial excellence that saved Matsya Capital inspired King Birat to propose Matsya-Pandava marital alliance and the nod of Yudhisthir Seals the negotiated marriage of Uttara, the Matsya Princess with Abhimanyu, the Pandav Prince. The marital alliance culminated into political alliance during the war of Kurukshetra, as King Birat figures in the Bhagbat Geeta as one of Pandav allies.

With the gift of 7000 horses, 200 elephants and other objects of wealth, Pandavas are now moving in convoy along Public thoroughfare. By this time, the ancient Suri-Raniganj road has become Part of National Highway No.60 connecting Moregram (Birbhum) with Balasore (Orissa) giving the lead towards North India

at Raniganj in the Damodar valley. The memorial Replica of the chariot of Arjun driven by Lord Shri Krishna has been installed astonishingly in the eastern side of N.H.60 at the Geeta Bhavan, Chaitanyapur, Panchra (Birbhum) in between the Mayurakshi valley and the Ajay valley.

Pandavas' route to Rarh has been indicated indirectly by animal names and Tribe name but the exit route has probably been dotted by the places named after their individual eponym "Bhimgarh" and collective eponym "Pandaveshwar"-both on the western side of N.H. 60. The specific features of the places are detailed below, in brief:

(1) **Bhimgarh:** Topographical and logistical overtones of Bhimgarh are open to easy comprehension. It is situated in northern bank of the AJAY which is noted as "AJAVATI" in the anthologies and as "AMYSTIS" in the Arrion version of "The Accounts of Megasthenes" – the Historical Greek Ambassador to India. Bhimgarh provides the ferry service over the Ajay to maintain continuity of movements in the rainy season. It is located in the western side of "Suri – Raniganj" Road (*Now a section of National Highway No.60*). It figures in the "India Road Atlas" in page-39 of the updated edition including Nepal and 3 new states, edited by Dr. R.P. Arya and published by INDIA MAP SERVICE. It has a rail station too in the name 'Bhimgarh Jn.' On the Andal-Sainthia link line of Eastern Railway, with a line branching out to the terminal station Palasthali in Jharkhand. Bhimgarh is in reality the gateway to Birbhum and North Bengal including North-Eastern India from Pandaveshwar situated in the southern bank of the Ajay in the district of Bardhaman.

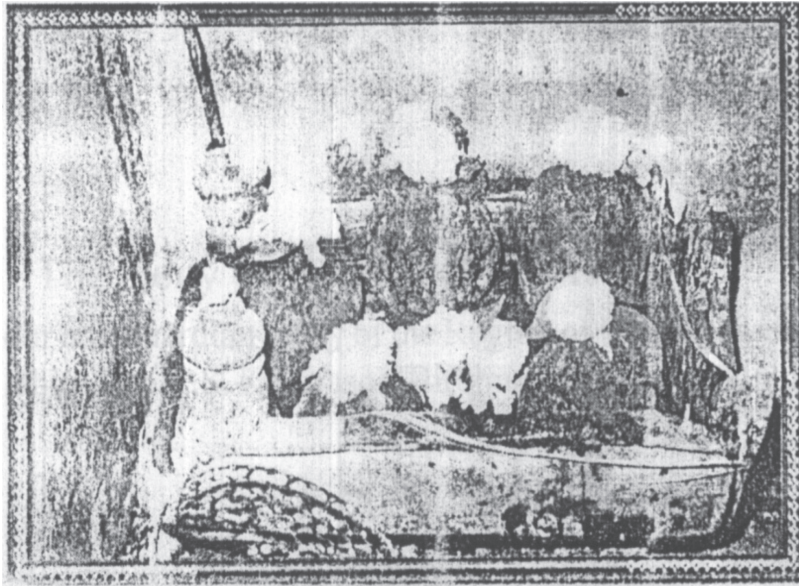
The antiquity of Bhimgarh , Pandaveshwar and Raniganj (In the Ajay and Damodar Vallies) may be gauged from the multiple layers of coal in the mines underneath these places and the time taken for transforming the massive green fields to the mines of Black Diamonds. The finely thought - out and neatly finished Pandav-oriented and sanskritized place-names in such a region are startling and brain-storming.

Two pond-lets in Bhimgarh village, named as "MarhGore" and "Gheegore" are contextually relevant to mention. The former means "The pond of left-out liquid of boiled rice" and the latter means "The pond of heated butter-Ghee". Ostensibly to illustrate the adjectives of Matsya Country as "ANNASAMPANNAM"-rich in rice and "GABADHYAM"- abundant in cows. These may come as corollary from the staying of Matsya King with army and four Pandavas in the southern battlefield in the night obviously to celebrate the victory and organize a grand feast for all including Yudhisthir and Bhim in particular honour. The enormous quantity of rice boiled may leave liquid sufficient to form a pond-let to be named as "Marh" (boiled rice liquid) Gare (pond-let) and the generous use of heated butter (Ghee) in the feast may require a pond to store named as "Gheegore". The southern battlefield may as well be remarkable as a field of virtue

in view of recommendation of Yudhisthir to king Birat for pardon of Susharma, the King of Trigarta, in the Kangra valley of Punjab. The incidence may be the originating point of Bengal Punjab amity that has defeated time.

Bhimgarh is also unique for its inherent spiritual traditions and archaeological artifacts. In the three centers of Power – **Kendragarh, Bhimgarh and Ishgarh**, the guiding energy is worshipped respectively as “Bama Kali”, the replica of the star mother, Goddess Tara, in the name “Garher ma”, the divine mother of the people of BhimGarh (Phonetically resembling to “GADAN Ma” worshipped in Asia minor) and at Ishgarh, in the name “Phalaharini Kalika” (worshipped by Sri Ramkrishna Param Hansadev in Dakshineswar temple complex). The archaeological artifacts include large lump of stone in about 32 x 22 x 12 size with caters crafted on the top in Neolithic smooth finish numbering 5,7,9 or more. Such stone crafts found in several places are primarily assumed as the weapon – stand hidden in the bushes by the side of rivers, probably for surprise use. One of such huge stone slab is retrieved from the pond “MarhGore” a few years back. Stone sculpture of a Horse-head has been found in the bed of the Ajay, in broken condition near Bhimgarh area. When the pieces are set in order, it looks almost alike the **Horse-head** found at Mas de Azil. In Bhimgarh village the deity of Dharmaraj is worshipped as Pandavas in five pieces of pebbles (the eco-fact tools used by men in self-defence)-Nakul and Sahadev set in the background of Yudisthir in the middle flanked by Bhim and Arjun in either side (Photo annexed below).

The Dharmaraj – the Saviour and Guardian Deity of the Rarh



It conforms to the sequence of events in the southern battlefield. Matsya King Birat engaged in protecting his cows becomes captive of Trigarta king Susharma. The almost incredible martial performance of Bhim alone retrieves Matsya King from the grip of Trigarta king Susharma. Overwhelmed by the experience, Matsya Army and people may be regarding Bhim as the incarnate of the divine savior and guardian deity of Rarh, DHARMARAJ Thakur and start worshipping Pandavas in totality as the divine deity “Dharmaraj and the memory is still going strong.

The deity of Bhimeswar is worshipped in the folk culture on the last day of Bengali year, in domestic rituals.

Pandaveshwar

The place is situated on the southern bank of the Ajay and in the west of N.H. 60. It is the name of the place, the name of the founder and the name of the pervading deity as well. It is formed in the ‘Eponym’ style as illustrated in the naming of states and sons of King Boli – Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Sumbha and Pundra.

The collective aspect of the nomenclature suggests re-union of Pandav family and the symbolic memory of mother Kunti installed in the shrine of the deity Pandaveshwar denotes the end of Pandavas’ staying incognito.

The worship of the deity in Vedic culture may hint the presence of Pandav priest Dhoumya to preside over the ceremonious return of Pandavas to the Vedic fold before proceeding to their Royal Circle. The Deity of Bhimeswar is worshipped in folk culture at Bhingarh and the difference of culture may tell some tale.

The deity name may also be construed as acknowledgement of Shib, the deity of the anthology -‘Matsya Puran’, as the savior of Pandavas while in Matsya Desh. The eponym may also be designed to declare existence of Pandavas and their determination to return to the corridor of State power.

Pandav related names on either side of the river Ajay appear as their signature of presence on the soil of Rarh and at the same time to imply that they are invincible as the river Ajay. The shrine of Pandaveshwar is also remarkable for the exhibit of a life-size memorial figure of Bhim in the pose of the landing of his exclusive weapon “GADA” on someone under his feet. The figure has been sculpted on a slab of stone weighing about 2.5 Qtls measuring 150 x 90 x 30 cm. preserved in the annex of the main temple.

Baidyanathpur

In sharp contrast of culture, in a village named Baidyanathpur in the east of Pandaveshwar, Keechak, the chief of Matsya Army is still hailed as a ritual of the worship of ‘Dharmaraj’, the prime deity of Rarh.

Factors of Success Achieved by Pandavas

A few of the major factors leading Pandavas to success in their near impossible tasks of concealing their outstanding physical features and unique family structure for a year in a well populated locality for a year are stated in nutshell:

1. Awareness of Ecology and Culturology : Utmost emphasis has been given by Yudhisthir to imbibe ecology and culturology awareness in the mind of each member of his family so that they feel free on the way and in the destination. He seems to have preferred the dictum-"CUJUS REGIO, EJUS RELEGIO" and translated it in action. Pandavas trekked through the forest as a Group of Hunter, glided over the posture and rural areas as Nomadic; marched past the Suburban area as job seekers and settled in the capital as Jobless Servants of Pandavas.

2. The Manual of Folk Culture: Chapter-4 of the Part-IV of the Epic may appear as the key to open the box containing the factors of success achieved by Pandavas. The chapter may stand as the manual of folk culture for Pandavas in leading life in the circle of folk culture. DHOUMYA deliver the refresher course on the folk culture ("LOCOBRITTAM" –Verse -8) so as to make Pandavas effectively operative in the circle of folk culture as well. This chapter may be regarded as the manual of Pandavas' life style for a year.

Pandavas are strictly prohibited from showing any sign of their Royal Culture. They are also refrained from moving as they like and from overseeing the activities of others unless asked by the King. They are advised to wear the dresses and use vehicles given to them by the King. Their change from Royal culture to Loyal culture is total and the success also achieved in total.

3. The Unity of Commands: Pandavas like The computers are activated only on command of Yudhisthir. Their plan of action and mode of execution appear as computer-aided and the yield is zero failure. In this chapter DHOUMYA seems busy in installing innovated software of folk culture in the hardware of Pandav family. Their computer sense is evident from the two-tier codification of their names-one set open for all and the other set restricted only within them. Chapter-4 is set as the manual for Pandavas to guide their activity for a year.

4. The team Spirit: There is no weak link in the chain of Pandav family. Every member has contributed sincerely to overcome the critical period of their life. Their collective will to win is crowned with success.

5. Humane Activities: Pandavas are popular in all ecologies for their amiable disposition and tendency to help others. They are remembered by the people down the ages for their humane activities and their firm stands against malevolence and their 'memory' has probably been saved in human mindscape.

The Triumph of the Truth

Pandavas have been changing the strategies as necessary during their critical period but they are all along constant in their loyalty to the truth. They are true to their

word of stake in the game of Dice, they are true in their activities to fulfill the stake. The truth takes the side of Pandavas to help them achieve success in continuing the process of incognito for a year and in winning the struggle for existence. The factors seem eternal and universal for others aspiring to achieve success in life to come under the green wood tree of the “SUMMUM BONUM”.

References

- Atreya, B. L. (1966). Indian Culture – Its Spiritual Moral and Social Aspects, in Indian Culture, Ed. By Sunit Kumar Chatterjee, Universal Publication, Delhi.
- Bandyopadhyay (2001). Suresh Chandra (Ed) – The Manusanhita.
- Basu, Rajsekhar, Chalantika (a Bengali dictionary), M.C. Sarkar and sons, Kolkata, a 1405.
- Bhattacharya, Bamdev Pandit – Sri Mahabharatantargata Birat Parba – a Bengali translation from the original book published by Gujrat Mudranalaya.
- Bhowmick, P. K. (1994). The Lodhas of West Bengal, Puthi Pustak, Calcutta.
- Kasombi, D. D. (1965). The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India, Routledge and Kagan Paul, London.
- Roychaudhuri – The Mahabharata: Some aspects of Culture, In Cultural Heritage of India, Volume – II The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1962.
- Sahay, K. N. (1994). Interaction of Cultural Traditions In India – an anthro-historical Perspective, Dept. of Anthropology, Ranchi.