

॥ श्री लक्ष्मीहयग्रीव नमः ॥
॥ श्री गुरुभ्योनमः हरिः ॐ ॥

STRANGE MATHEMATICS

This topic is an extract from the king Nala's story appearing in Vanaparva of Sriman Mahabharata. Mahabharata is a popular epic well known to the people of India from a long time. The Mahabharatha is also known as Ithihasa (history). The whole of Mahabharata is the story of the cousin brothers of kaurava dynasty. The two groups were known as kauravas and Pandavas.

With the progress of the story of Mahabharata text the two parties developed rivalry, hatracy, enmity etc. Duryodhana from kaurava side once said that they can't coexist with pandavas together, "either we or they can live".

With the progress of story of Mahabharata text it so happens that at one instance kauravas and pandavas played the game of dice (Dyuta). Kauravas were professional in the game and experts too. Pandavas were new to the game and were reluctant to participate in the game. The then, circumstances were so compelling that pandavas had to agree finally to participate in the game.

They played the game twice. The conditions of the second game was such that the losers had to stay in forest for Twelve years and one year in exile. If the losers were to be detected during the period of exile the ordial of twelve plus one would be repeated. Pandavas put every valuable as the bet and lost everything. They even lost their kingdom too, put as the bet. The Pandavas went to the forest life as per the rules of the game. This time all the five brothers and Draupadi were together. From royal life and comforts the life suddenly shifted to the hard forest life. Alas! What a sharp contrast!

In the forest, time and again they were remembering and discussing that Yudhishtira, instead of ruling the kingdom unfortunately became the victim of misfortune at the hands of kauravas and lost everything. During the stay of Pandavas in the forest, part known as kamyakavana a sage known as Brihadashva happen to visit them.

The sage was received with respect and they offered him hospitality. A little later while they were relaxing, Yudhishtira narrated every event in detail (including the game of dice) till their arrival to the forest. Yudhishtira asked Brihadashva, "Oh respected sage, were there or are there any kings who underwent such unfortunate unexpected hardships and suffered a miserable life as we are now facing, in the past or present seen or heard; tell us sir, if known to you."

Brihadashwa replied in affirmative. "Yes, there was a king who underwent more hardships than you are subjected to now". If you wish to listen I would narrate his story. Pandavas not only agreed but were keen to listen. Brihadashva proceeded with the narration.

आसीद राजा नलो नाम वीरसेनसुतो बली ।
संपन्नो गुणैरिष्टः रूपावानश्वकोविदः ॥

Sometime ago there was a ruler in the kingdom of Nishadha by name Veerasena. Nala and Pushkar were his two sons. Nala was a learned and a brave king. He was well versed in Vedas and weapons too. His speciality was knowledge of horses and his ability of horse riding and

chariot driving. He had great love in the game of dice. He was brave and powerful. He was reciting the Vedas and had the knowledge of Dharma Shastras. He was truthful and a man of worthy character. He was foremost among the Bowman and he was protecting the subjects well. He was extraordinarily handsome like the cupid.

Nearby, there was another kingdom known as Vidharbha. It was ruled by a king named Bheema, who was mighty and courageous. He was ably ruling, and his subjects were happy. With all this in plenty, he had no issues. But, to get a heir to his throne, he went to a great sage named Damana. The Bheema couple approached him for progeny and served him well to his satisfaction for years. Pleased by the unique service rendered by the couple, sage Damana blessed them with a beautiful daughter and three brave sons.

The girl child was known as Damayanti. The other three boys were named Dama, Danta and Damana. All the three children grew brave and powerful. Damayanti was the most beautiful girl. She was outshining with royal appearance. With passage of time Damyanti grew and attained marriageable age.

King Bheem thought of her marriage. So, he arranged for a "swayamvara" (a grand event of bride choosing bridegroom). For this great occasion, king Bheem announced as well as invited many princess in the country.

That Swayamvara news reached the heavens through Narada. In that congregation, king Nala was present. The devas like Indra, agni, varuna also attended the function. Although the bride and the groom belonged to different countries visitors of either countries whenever they met Damayanti they praised Nala before her. Whenever they met Nala they praised Damayanti before him. Without seeing each other merely on the hearsake from the people they fell in love due to the continuous praise from the people.

On one occasion, while King Nala was relaxing in his garden, he observed a flock of swans descending in the garden. He caught hold of one of them. The swan requested Nala not to kill him. He would do some favour to him.

The swan said, "I will go to Damayanti and highlight all your worthy qualities before her in such a way that she will never think of any person except you". Having said this the swan flew to Vidarbha and landed near the palace of Damayanti and started moving near the garden. One of the servants caught the swan and brought it before Damayanti.

The swan started speaking to Damayanti in human language. It said, "Oh Damayanti in the kingdom of Nishadha, there is a ruler known as Nala. He is so handsome that he resembles Ashwins or Manmath (cupid). It appears as though the cupid has personified on the earth. We have seen earlier youths of the category of deva, gandharva, manushya, uragas, rakshasas etc. but we have never seen a person like him. If you happen to be his wife, your life will be meaningful."

Having listened to the swan, Damayanti said, "You go to Nala and tell him all that you told me". Thus the swan returned back to Nishadha told the contents of the conversation to king Nala.

Within the next few days came the scheduled auspicious day for the Swayamvara. Raja Bheem, the king of Vidharbha invited the kings and princess and the other dignitaries personally and cordially. The participants in the Swayamvara were separately seated in groups. Raja Nal was seated along with devas. At one place five participants well dressed,

looking alike were seated together. Damyanti too was brought to the Swayamvara mantapa. Damyanti was given enough clues as to, how to identify devas and men seating together.

At appropriate time, Damayanti holding the garland in her hand went on searching for Raja Nala, where the devas were sitting.

Inspite of the fact that she was given enough information to distinguish devas and men she could not surely identify Nala. At that time, feeling helpless, with folded hands she requested the devas "ever since the Swan established the communication between me and Raja Nala my heart is totally drawn towards him and totally dedicated. I have been adoring him ever since".

Now, as I could not surely identify him, I most sincerely seek your help. Devas understood the real plight of Damayanti and her dedication to Nala. Thus they made up their mind to help her, they did not actually help her by pointing finger at him but blessed her mental strength and ability to identify Nala. With their invisible help, Damayanti was successful in identifying Raja Nal and garlanded him.

When the Swayamvara was over, all the devas who attended the function, gave eight boons to the couple and blessed them. Kali(chief of evil force) and Dwapara his assistant were full of jealousy, hatred and anger. They were deeply disappointed for not getting Damayanti. In the fit of their arrogance and anger they decided to avenge Nala and trouble him to the maximum extent, including separation of couple.

After Swayamvara, with the departure of guests the couple spent some happy days. They visited naturally beautiful places, temples, rivers and hills.

Raja Nala performed Ashwamedha yaga and he begot two children, son's name was Indrasen and daughter's name Indrasena.

As devas and other guests departed from Vidharbha, Kali and Dwapar returned to the place, lived in the palace where Nala was residing.

स नित्यमन्तरप्रेष्टुर्निष्ठवसञ्चिरम् ।

अथास्य द्वादशे वर्षे ददर्श कलिरन्तरम् ॥

Nala was such a disciplined person who was observing every minor detail prescribed in the Dharma Shastra rituals strictly, Kali could not harm him. He was continuously observing Nala if he was violating some discipline in the Code of Conduct. Kali waited for Twelve years to find some religious lapse in Nala.

After a few days, Raja Nala's brother, Pushkar invited his for playing the game of dice. Raja Nal reluctantly agreed and the game started.

Raja Nala was a king and he had plenty of money and valuables to place as bet. Raja Nala, in spite of being an expert in the game due to Kali helping Pushkar, he lost in the game and everything he had placed in the bet. Finally he lost the kingdom to his brother Pushkar. Damayanti thought about the safety of children. She called Charioteer of Nala explained him the situation and left her children at Vidharbha. The Charioteer carried out the order. Raja Nala with his wife Damayanti walked out of the kingdom to the forest.

Raja Nala and Damayanti from royal luxury life suddenly changed to the state of atmost hardship.

One night in the forest when both of them were sleeping, Nala got up in the midnight and walked away in the jungle leaving Damayanti alone, all under the influence of Kali. Damayanti woke up in the morning, noticed the absence of her husband. She loudly called him several times. No answer. Shortly she joined a group of merchants, with their help she reached Chedha Raja's Palace. In Chedha Raja's Palace, Rajamatha treated Damayanti sympathetically, seeing her beautiful form and extraordinary features on forehead. With Rajamatha's courtesy Damayanti stayed there for sometime.

Nala after leaving Damayanti, walked in the Forest. There he saw the forest fire burning brightly. As he went near the fire, he heard some hissing sound coming out of the fire. He also heard a request in human voice, coming out of the fire " Maharaj Nala please know me I am Nag Karkotak. Sage Narad got angry with me on one occasion and cursed me. " Stay there immobile till that day when Maharaj Nala visits this place and take you out. Then only Karkotak will be free from my curse".

Due to Narada's curse " I am not able to move even one foot. Maharaj, please save me and I will be of some help to you. I will initiate you some valuable knowledge. I will be your friend. I will be light weight so that you can carry me far away". Having said this Nag reduced himself just to the size of a thumb. Then Raja Nala took that Mini Nag to a place far away from fire and heat. While leaving, Nag spoke to Raja Nala.

"Maharaj please walk a few steps I shall bless you with rare reward. When Nala was walking he counted step number ten at that time Nala was beaten by Nag immediately the body of Nala from fair colour turned to blue colour(shamavarna). Nala surprised to the changed colour of his body.

Kali has entered in you out of jealousy and anger but no fault of yours. Because Damyanti selected you in Swayamvara , for that matter out of arrogance and anger he entered in you also he is troubling you. Now he is under going utmost sorrow due my presence in your body. He is living there suffering with the great agony. My poison will not trouble you but will be there till kali leaves your body.

Nag offered him a boon that no harmful creatures like snake etc. can do any harm. Enemies or sages etc. or anybody will not be able to conquer you in the war.

Raja Nala now you proceed to Ayodhya. There is a King by name Rituparna hailing from Ekshvaku dynasty(suryavamsha).

You approach him and introduce yourself as a charioteer(Suta or Bahuka). He will employ you knowing your competent knowledge in Ashwavidya.

He is expert in (Ashwavidya) game of dice. He will become your friend. You inform him that you are in utmost difficulty with regard to food and shelter. Maharaj may your generosity bless me with job and shelter with food. Raja Rituparna willingly agreed and accepted Guha and placed him in his Horse department. Within a short time in whatever task Rituparna put him, his performance was in par excellence. Rituparna was highly pleased and elevated him with the head of the Horse division.

Nal was a highly expert and highly skilled in "Ashwavidya" (every secret about the horse). Nal was an excellent Horse rider and chariot driver and he had in depth knowledge about the horse. This rare art and skill about Horse was closely noticed by Raja Rituparna and he was

highly pleased to employ Nal as the head of his Horse department. In that way Raja Nal always remembered Damayanti, spending his time in exile.

Vidharbha Raja Bheem, having come to know that raja Nal lost his kingdom in the game of dice. one Brahmin messenger Pranad detected Raja Nal serving as Bahuka with Raja Rituparna. With this news Damyanti thought a plan to bring Nal to Vidharbha.

She sent Swayamvara letter through Sudev so that he can deliver that message to Raja Rituparna.

Raja Rituparna having come to know Swayamvara of Damayanti made up his mind to go to Vidharbha and the swayamvara . For that he consulted Bahuka that if he agrees to go to Vidharbha in one day. Bahuka agreed.

Then they undertook the journey and commenced the journey in morning and reached by evening.

At one point of time in their journey they saw a Tree Vibhitaka bearing fruits and leaves. Raja Rituparna exclaimed, seeing the Tree, oh Bahuka, just like you know " Ashwavidya" it is so special, "I too know Sankyashastra".

HERE COMES THE STRANGE MATHEMATICS.I will now show you my strength in Sankyavidya. Then Raja Rituparna drew Bahuka's attention towards Vibhitaka Tree. And also "I know the secrets of Dyutavidya".

Raja Rituparna said to Bahuka, this Vibhitaka tree containing fruits, leaves, dry leaves. Some of the dry leaves and fruits have fallen down on the ground.

"I can give you exact account of all the these parts of the tree. You can see my amazing ability in Sankyashastra".

To this Guha said, it could be rough estimation.

All people do not know everything in the world. There's no one in the world who is omniscient. There is no person with whom all knowledge is stored. Oh Rajan you are predicting all these by guess work I do not know whether the Number told by you is correct or not.

Therefore, Oh Rajan 'I shall cut the Tree and count the number exactly. Rituparna cautioned time factor is important. We have to reach the Vidharbha capital by evening.

Bahuka said, tell Varshneya to hold the control of the horses approximately forty eight minutes I will finish the job'.

Raja Rituparna did not feel satisfied , "If you are in a hurry to go to Vidharbha then charioteer Varshneya will take you". But Rituparna insisted that he is fully relayed on Guha and there is no second choice. You are the only choice for my journey and reach the destiny in time.

Bahuka politely replied, 'I will finish counting the products of the Tree and then start the journey'.

Guha assured the king that they would reach Vidharbha in time. He could believe it. Rituparna agreed with Guha's suggestion.

Bahuka, in a short time finished the entire counting. Rituparna's prediction and Bahuka's exact counting correctly tallied. Bahuka was greatly astonished. Bahuka was amazed and stunned at Rituparna's Sankyashastra.

Raja Rituparna reached Vidharbha by evening as scheduled. The arrival was informed to king Bheema, with his consent the chariot was brought near the palace. Bahuka and Varshneya deposited the chariot and Horses in proper place. Raja Bheema extended Royal reception and royal courtesy.

In the mean time, Raja Rituparna personally did not see around any preparation or activities concerning Swayamvara. He was surprised but did not ask anybody. He silently observed what was happening.

Raja Bheem inquired Rituparna as to what would be the purpose of visiting Vidharbha. Raja Rituparna replied it was a goodwill visit. Bheema was not convinced with the reply. Both were silent for a while Bheem said to himself could anyone travel hundreds of Yojanas just for casual visit.

As Rituparna was tired with a long journey Bheem asked him to relax and he would see him in the next morning.

Damayanti, having suspected Nala's arrival, having heard the characteristic moving sound of the chariot (like rumbling sound of the clouds). To clarify her suspicion she sent one of her attendant Kesini, to inquire who exactly they were. She politely inquired Guha and others their whereabouts and thereabouts. Now and then she was often referring to Damayanti.

Kesini told Damayanti what all Nala narrated the part of story. Damayanti nearly arrived at the conclusion that he was Nala.

With the permission of mother and father he was permitted inside the palace for a close visit. Nala was changed but not Damayanti.

Damayanti saw Nala in changed form he was wearing dirty saffron clothes and big clustered hair. Then she spoke to Bahuka I had seen you earlier the person with knowledge of dharma and conduct. As a noble person how he left his wife sleeping by his side. I was always faithful, still left in forest alone. Right from my girlhood as far as I know I have not committed any offence still why did you leave me alone in the forest while I was sleeping due to tiredness.

You know, during Swayamvara, leaving all the devatas, whole heartedly I accepted you and followed you.

Not only I am mother of two children but also before Agni deva you took a oath that you would accept the bride as his wife (sahadharmini), how to forget all these Dharma, where all had gone.

Having heard these heart rendering words from Damayanti, tears gushed out of his eyes he could not control his sorrow.

Nala further tried to console and tried to convince Damayanti. Oh my love, what all misfortune had happened including losing my kingdom I did not do it on my own thinking. It was the wicked kali who was responsible for this. Out of vengeance this was made.

The Kali separated us, and we underwent untold hardships and miseries. Raja Nala said when you were alone in the forest, you cursed kali when he was living in my body, Kali suffered a hell. On one side your curse and on the other side poison of karkotaka nag he was also waiting to get out of my body. Ultimately time came when Rituparna inducted me the Dyutavidya (game of dice) he came out and I was freed from that kali thus I was able to come here and see you all.

Vidharbha Matha told all this to Raja Bheem convincingly and he came to know why Rituparna was there. It was the plan of Damayanti to bring Bahuka who was detected as Nala.

Raja Nala still carrying on with a single piece of saffron cloth, he remembered Nag who gave him pair of clothes. Nala changed his cloth to pair of clothes given by Nag and got his handsome personality back. Raja Bheem was overwhelmed with joy seeing Nal and his daughter together. Next day morning, Raja Nal and Rituparna met Rituparna was very happy to see Nishadha raj with his wife. Rituparna's puzzle was solved. He realised what for he was brought there.

Next day morning Raja Rituparna and Raja Nal exchanged their Vidyas, Raja Rituparna imparted to Nal the secrets of Dyutavidya (game of dice) in turn Raja Nal imparted to Rituparna the secrets of Ashwavidya. After this Raja Rituparna made separate arrangements and went to his capital.

When Nal and Damyanti were found together after a long time, Vidharbha had a festival mood. The couple was taken on procession around the city. Raja Nal did not stay long in Vidharbha, he took permission from Raja Bheem. While bidding goodbye to Raja Nal, Raja Bheem offered royal gifts in large quantities. He offered chariot, fifteen elephants, fifty horses and many other valuable things when Raja Nal was departing to Nishadha from Vidharbha. With all these raja Nal entered the capital of Nishadha.

Without loosing time he invited his brother Pushkar for dyuta game. Raja Nal said I earned a lot of money, and I will put everything as one time bet.

They started playing the game in first game itself Raja Nal won all whatever Pushkar had put as bet including Rajya.

Pushkar lost everything in his possession. Having won the Nishadha kingdom and all the treasury containing rare jewels Raja Nal laughed at his brother. Then there was least obstacle in ruling his kingdom said Raja Nal. He told Pushkar all of you are my slaves. You wanted to win Damayanti as bet now you cannot raise your eyes towards her.

Inspite of the fact that I have Won everything and you have nothing now, out of affection as brother your position, treasury and kingdom I shall return to you and lead a happy life and hereafter live happily. Like this, many sympathetic words Raja Nal consoled his brother.

Pushkar in turn appreciated Raja Nal's magnanimity, large heart, liberal mindedness and affection.

Pushkar on his part expressed utmost humility and love and regard stayed with brother for a month and made his own arrangements in the portion of the Kingdom. Both of them lead happy life there afterwards.

Mahabharata mentions that whosoever reads this portion of story they will be benefited and God will bless them with auspicious rewards.

॥ श्रीकृष्णार्पणमस्तु ॥