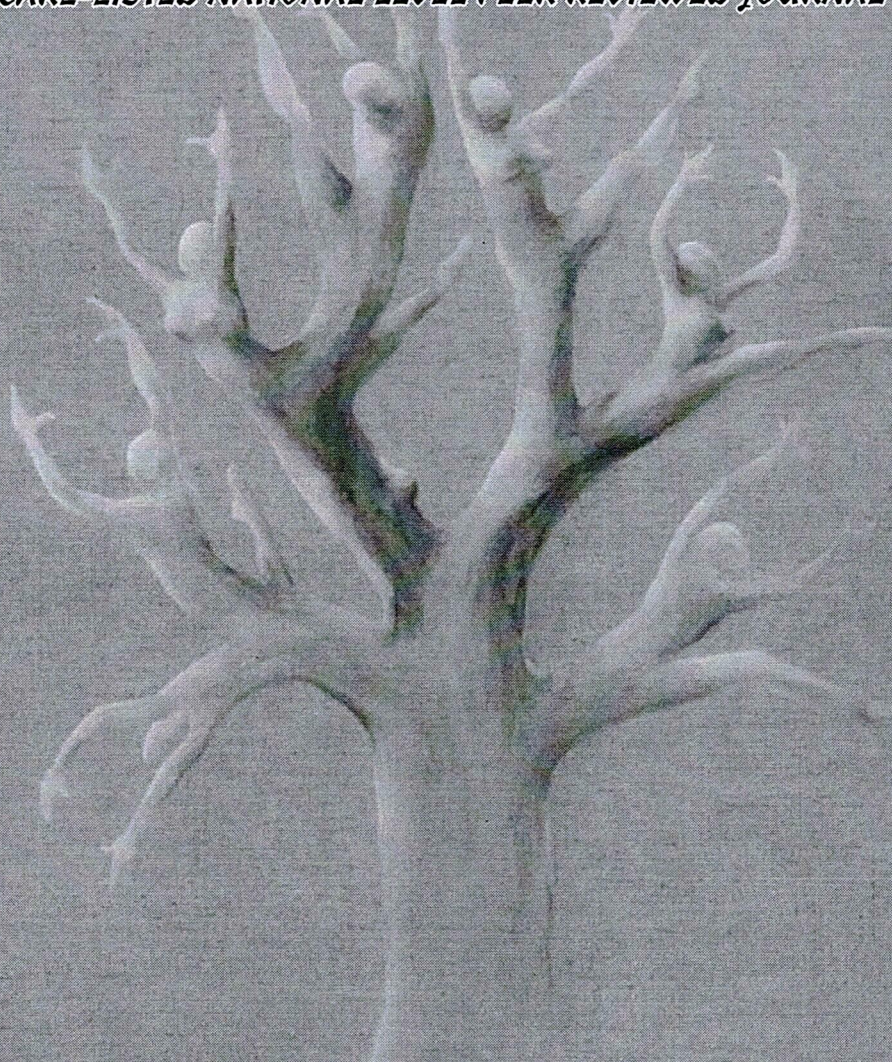


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With a Section on
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The Game of Dice: A Crucial Turning Point in the *Mahabharata*

Shovan Maity

Abstract ■ The *Mahabharata* is divided into 18 Parva (Books). Of the many episodes of this great epic, the game of dice is one of major turning points as it sows the seeds of the Kurukshetra War. Duryodhana is taken aback when he visits the splendid royal palace of the Pandavas and descends into a sulk. Then the cunning Shakuni devises the ploy of inviting Pandavas to a game of dice to defraud them of their wealth. As soon as the game starts, Yudhishtira begins to lose everything he had – his wealth, his beloved brothers, himself and finally Draupadi. Draupadi is extremely humiliated in the Court in presence of the great warriors and her five husbands. Dushasana tries to disrobe her but failed. Draupadi saves the Pandavas from subjugation through the boons granted to her by Dhritarastra. Another round of the game has been played in which the Pandavas lose again and have gone for a thirteen years exile. Now the question is – Why does the game of dice have such a crucial significance in the *Mahabharata*? The possible answers may be that it is the game of dice in which we have seen the *lila* (activity of God) of Krishna; have encountered the great vows of the Pandavas; have met a fearless character like Vikarna; have heard the fiery speeches of rebel Draupadi. We have also come to know the compulsion of Yudhishtira and the crisis of *Dharma* which is to be restored after the destruction of the Kauravas in Kurukshetra War.

Keywords: The Game of Dice, Kurukshetra War, Subjugation, Rebel, Vows, *Dharma*

“an itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical meaning, and thus formative of the mind of the people”.

—Sri Aurobindo about the *Mahabharata*

Speaking about the *Mahabharata*, its universality, its deep human concern, is like expatiating on the brightness of the Sun, the savoury of the Sea or the deep azure of the Sky. We call this awe-inspiring body of writing a poem, an epic, an *itihasa*, a mighty national saga; but we know also that it is rather more than these circumscribing



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