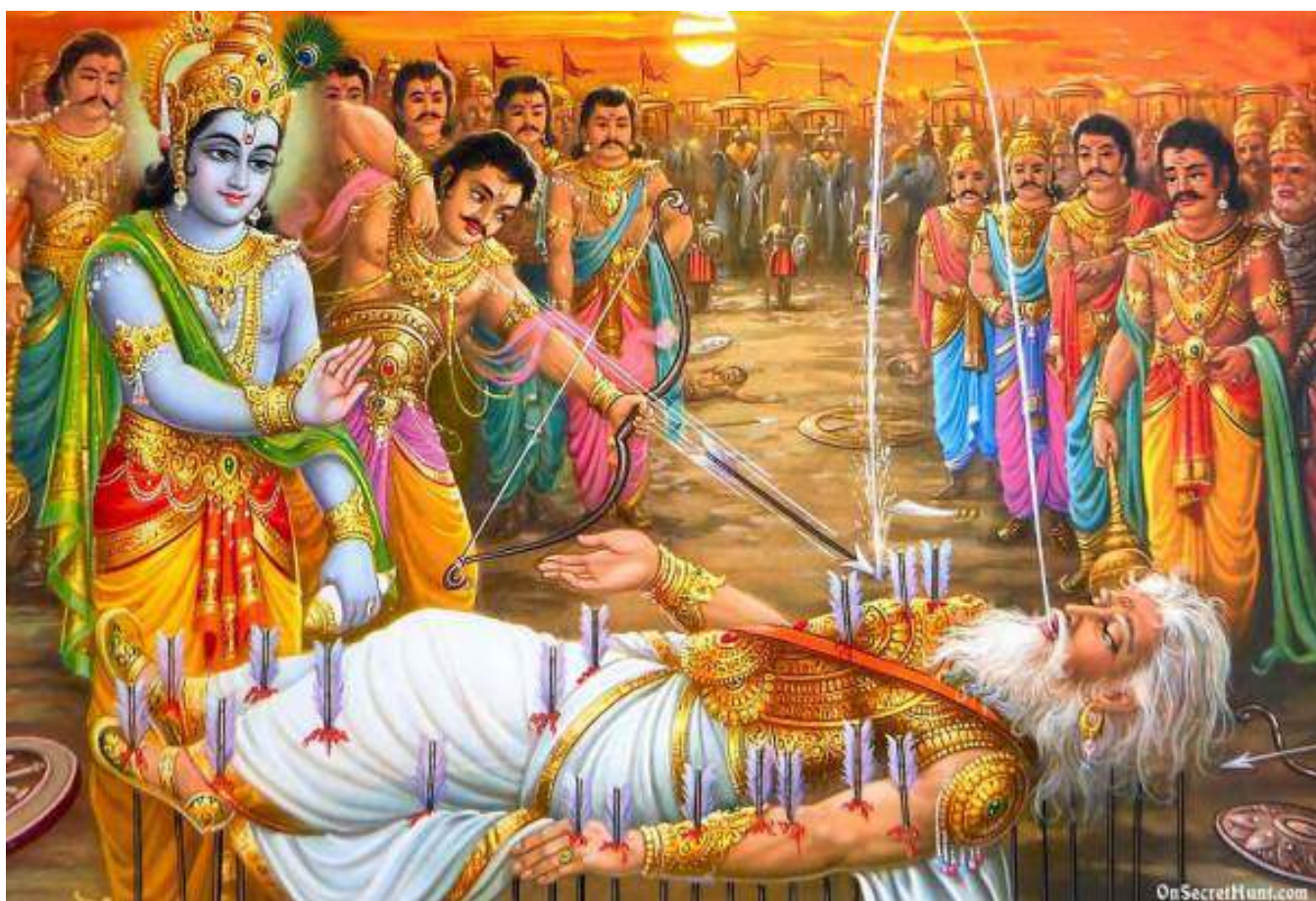


MAHABHARATA – Part 18

(Bhishma Falls; Dronacharya, the Commander-in-Chief)



During the 9th day of Kurukshetra war, Bhishma was invincible, and killed thousands of soldiers. Yudhishtira and the Pandavas realized that they would not win the war as long as Bhishma was alive, and approached him for a way to kill him. Bhishma advised the Pandavas to use Shikhandi as a shield when they fought with him. Bhishma would never shoot arrows at Shikhandi.

Bhishma Falls

On the 10th day of the war, Shikhandi accompanied Arjuna on his chariot. Duryodhana also came to know about Shikhandi's story. He gave instructions to his commanders that Bhishma should be protected, and every measure should be taken to ensure that Arjuna (with Shikhandi in his chariot) should not be allowed to encounter Bhishma. But who can stop what is ordained? During the course of the battle, and despite various efforts from the Kaurava camp, Krishna steered the chariot towards Bhishma.

When Bhishma was about to fire his arrows, he saw Shikhandi accompanying Arjuna in the chariot, and immediately kept his bow and arrows down. As per the rule he had laid for this war (as was also his principle), Bhishma stated, "Shikhandi was not born as a man. She is a woman. Moreover, I can see Amba (God in the form of the Divine Mother) in her. It is Amba who has come back to try and kill me. I will not raise my arms against a woman." This opportunity was seized by Arjuna and Shikhandi who fired arrows towards Bhishma. One of the arrows hit Bhishma's crown. Bhishma then took a shield and tried to protect himself with that. Arjuna fired an arrow towards his hand and made Bhishma drop the shield. Bhishma fell from the chariot following the rain of arrows. Arjuna was ashamed, sad, and disgusted that he should shoot his grandsire and guru, but kept on the attack. When it looked like a thousand arrows must have pierced Bhishma, he fell down and was lying on them. This was when he spoke the words praising Arjuna's arrows and dismissing Shikhandi's role in his fall.

Both the Pandava and the Kaurava armies ceased fighting and all the warriors came running and crowded round the great hero, who lay on his bed of arrows. They were all trying to pay respects to the great one. Bhishma spoke to all of them, "I am pleased to see you. My head is hurting! Please give me a pillow." At once, many went and brought soft silken pillows. The old warrior rejected them with a smile, and turning towards Arjuna said: "Dear son Partha, give me a cushion befitting a warrior." Arjuna took few arrows from the quiver, and placed them in such a way that the grandsire's head found support on their points.

Bhishma had the boon to die as per his will. So he chose to wait till Uttarayana (when the Sun turns North). It is believed that on that day the doors of Vaikuntha (Vishnu's abode) is open for souls departing their earthly body. The grandsire turned again to Arjuna and said: "I am tormented with thirst. Get me some drinking water." At once, Arjuna raised his

bow, and drawing it to the ear, shot a shaft down into the earth near the grandsire on his right side. Upon the opening made by the arrow, Ganga herself sprang up in the form of a spring to quench her great son's thirst.

Then Bhishma, one last time, advised Duryodhana to make peace with Pandavas. The grandsire's words did not please Duryodhana as usual. The battle was called off for that day with respect to Bhishma, and all the princes retired to their camps.

When Karna heard that Bhishma lay wounded and dying, he hurried to the place and fell at his feet and said: "Eldest of the race, Radha's son, who, through no fault of his, incurred your great displeasure, humbly prostrates himself before you." Grandsire greatly moved with that, tenderly placed his hand on Karna's head and blessed him. "You are not Radha's son, you are Kunti's own first born. I entertained no dislike for you. But I was grieved to see your increasing hatred of the Pandavas. They gave you no cause for it. I admire your valor, and your open handedness. I know also that you belong to the class of Arjuna in prowess. I wish you to befriend the Pandavas, and therein lies the right path for you. You will get all rights and respects from the Pandavas," Bhishma said in loving tone.

Karna listened respectfully and replied: "Grandsire, I know I am Kunti's son, and not charioteer born. But I have eaten Duryodhana's salt and must be truthful to him, to be true to my own lineage. It is impossible for me to go over to the Pandavas now. You must permit me to repay with my life, if it so be the debt I own to Duryodhana, for his love and trust. You must forgive me for it all and give me your blessings." Bhishma was very happy with Karna's loyalty, and gave his blessings to him whole heartedly.

Dronacharya, the Commander-in-Chief

Karna, having received the benediction of the grandsire, mounted his chariot and rode to the battlefield. When the valorous Karna entered the field on his chariot, Duryodhana's joy knew no bounds. After deliberations with Karna, Duryodhana made Dronacharya as the commander-in-chief. Duryodhana, Karna, and Dusshasana had a council and came up with an evil plan to capture Yudhishtira alive. Killing Yudhishtira in battle would only enrage the Pandavas more, and it would only mean the utter defeat of Kaurava army. On the other hand, if Yudhishtira was captured alive, Duryodhana thought, the war would end more speedily and victoriously for the Kauravas. Thereafter, he could surely play on Yudhishtira's goodness and his loyalty to the traditional code of Kshatriya conduct. He was certain Yudhishtira could be drawn into the battle of dice again and sent to the forests again. As per the plan, Duryodhana went and requested Drona to capture Yudhishtira alive, and hand him over to them. When Drona heard Duryodhana's request that Yudhishtira should be captured alive, he felt greatly relieved. Dronacharya assumed that Duryodhana wanted to defeat the Pandavas in battle to satisfy his ego, and then give the

Pandavas their share in the kingdom, and live in peace and amity with them. Drona was exceedingly glad, and assured Duryodhana of Yudhishtira's captive.

Through spies, Yudhishtira came to know that he will be caught by Dronacharya in the battle field and he immediately, informed the same to Arjuna. Having heard this, Arjuna asked him not to worry. He said that, as long as he had his bow Gandiva in his hand, not only Dronacharya, even, lord Shiva Himself could not touch him. He also assured him to fight without any fear. Having been satisfied with the words of Arjuna, Yudhishtira started wandering fearlessly, in the battlefield. Thereafter, a fierce battle started between the two armies. The sharp arrows of Dronacharya were destroying the army of Pandavas while the army of Kauravas was being destroyed with the arrows of Arjuna. On that day, the Kauravas were defeated badly. Yudhishtira was protected. Seeing this, Duryodhana ran to Dronacharya and said, "Oh Gurudev! Though Yudhishtira was going through the battlefield, he was protected. Why didn't you catch him?" With a distressed mind, Dronacharya replied, "Duryodhana! I have already told you that it was not possible for me to catch hold of Yudhishtira, when he was under the protection of Arjuna. If you somehow, see that Arjuna is moved from the battle field, I can easily capture Yudhishtira."

After listening to this, Susharma, king of Trigarta has decided strongly that he along with his five brothers would at any cost take Arjuna, far from the battle field on 12th day. No sooner than the battle started on 12th day, Susharma and his brothers started provoking Arjuna for the war. Arjuna took their challenge and finished all of them in a great battle. All the Kaurava's efforts went in vein, and Dronacharya couldn't capture Yudhishtira on that day either. Duryodhana became even more panicked as his uncle Shakuni's brothers were killed.

The failure to capture Yudhishtira made Duryodhana sleepless that night. He went to his teacher Drona and said, "You consider us as your enemies. Otherwise, at least today, you would have captured Yudhishtira." After listening to the harsh words of Duryodhana, Dronacharya with a distressed mind said, "Today at any cost, I will either capture Yudhishtira or kill any one of their great warriors. But on one condition that Arjuna should be taken far away from the battle and should be made engaged elsewhere. I will form the Chakravyuha formation to capture Yudhishtira. No one knows in Pandava army except Arjuna to break the Chakravyuha, and it is certain Yudhishtira will be captured."

Questions:

Was Bhishma an invincible warrior? What does invincible mean?

How was Bhishma defeated?

Whose arrows did he praise for bringing him down?

Did Bhishma love Arjuna?

How was it that Bhishma was able to choose the time of his death?

How long did he live? What was he waiting for?

Was Bhishma respected by all the warriors? How did they show their respect?
What miracle did Arjuna create when Bhishma lay on his “bed of arrows?”
Who visited Bhishma to ask his blessings? Why?
Why didn’t Karna join the Pandavas? Could he have done that if he wanted to?
What was Gandiva?
Who became Commander-in-Chief of the Kauravas after Bhishma?
What new strategy to Duryodhana have after Bhishma died? Did it work?

Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam

Kousalya supraja Rama poorva sandhya pravarthathe; Uttishta Narasardula karthavyamdhaivamanhikam(1)
Uthishtothishta Govinda Uthishta Garuda dwaja; Uthishta Kamalakantha trilokyam mangalam kuru (2)
Matahassamastha jagatham MaduKaitabareh; Vaksho viharini manohara divya murthe
Sriswamini sritha jana priya dana seele; Sree Venkatesa dayite tava suprabhatham (3)
Tava Suprabhatamaravindalochane; Bhavatu prasanna mukha chandramandale
Vidhi Sankarendra vanithabhirarchite; Vrisha saila natha Dayite Dayanidhe! (4)
Atryadi sapta rishayah samupasya sandhyam; Akasa sindhu kamalani manoharani
Aadaya Padayugam archayitum prapannah; Seshadri sekhara vibho tava suprabhatham (5)
Panchananabja Bhava Shanmukha Vasavadyah; Trivikramadi charitam Vibhudas stuvanti
Bhashapathih Patathi vasara suddhimaarat; Seshadri sekhara vibho thava Suprabhatham (6)
Eeshatprapulla saraseeruha narikela; Poogadrumadi sumanohara palikanam
Aavati mandam Anilassaha divyagandhaih; Seshadri Sekhara Vibho tava suprabhatham (7)
Unmeelya netrayugam uttama Panjarasthah; Pathrava sishta kadaleephala payasani
Bhukta saleelamatah Keli sukah patanthi; Seshadri sekhara Vibho tava Suprabhatham (8)
Tantree prakarsha madurasswanaya Vipanchya; Gayatyanantha charitham tava Naradopi
Bhasha samagram asakrit kara chara ramyam; Seshadri Sekhara Vibho tava Suprabhatham (9)

**Bringavali cha makharanda rasaani viddah
Jangara geetha ninadhais saha sevanaya
Niryatyupanta sarasee kamalodharebhyah
Seshadri sekahra Vibho tava Suprabhatam**

O Lord who dwells on the sacred mountain Seshagiri! The swarm of bees from the lotus flowers of the nearby tank has come out after tasting the honey and carrying makharanda(sweet honey filled) pollen, waiting for your Divine glimpse on this early morning

**Yosha ganena varadadni vimatyamane
Goshalayeshu dadi manthana teevra goshah
Roshat kalim vidadate kakhubhascha kumbah
Seshadri sekhara Vibho tava suprabhatham**

O Universal Lord! The milk maids are churning their curd pots and are singing; the two sounds are synchronizing with each other giving origin to a new morning raga. May this morning be glorious to you!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucSm8aB_Mz0

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

E U C S A

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Y A T I M

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Z I S E E

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I P N K A C

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V T E A C P I

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U E C T P A R

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C R E A

--	--	--	--

T R H S T I

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F A T H S

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E V Q I U R

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Coloring Exercise

