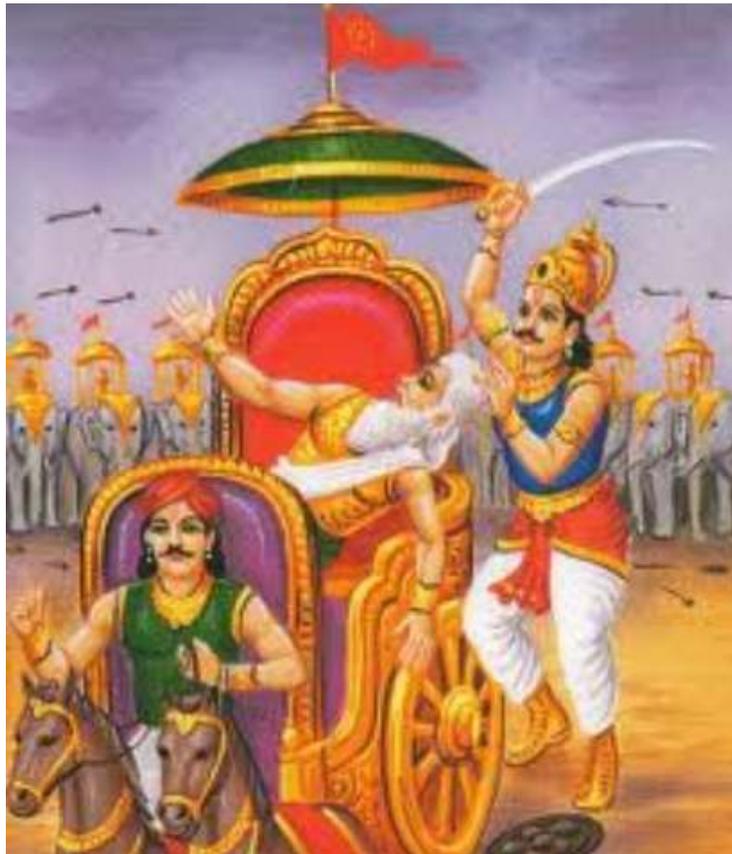
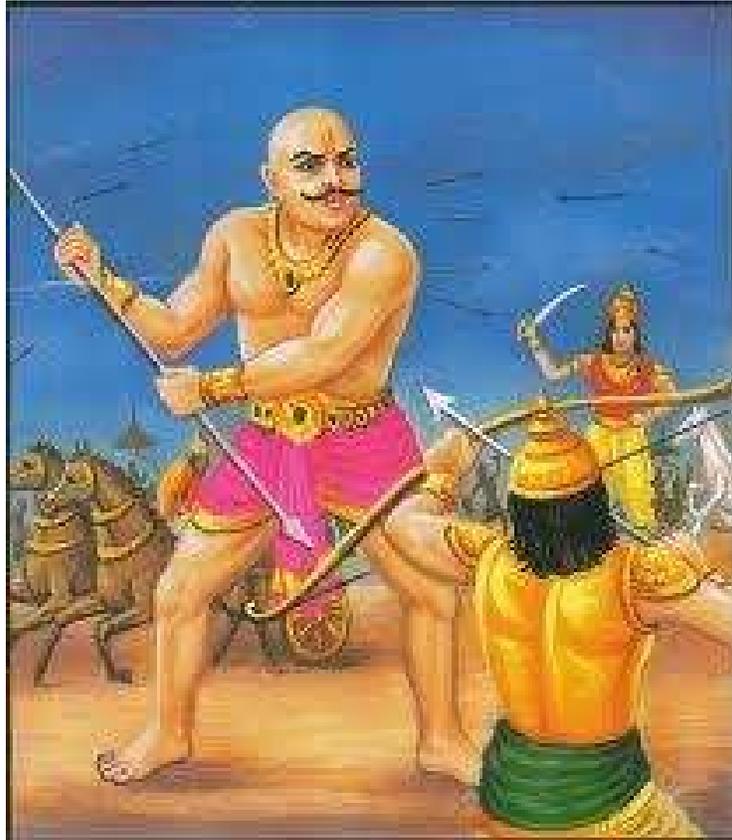


MAHABHARATA – Part 22

(Guru Dronacharya Defeated)



In the last lesson, Arjuna redeemed his oath by killing Jayadratha just before sunset to avenge his beloved son Abhimanyu's death. Duryodhana was very upset with his brother-in-law Jayadratha's death. He ordered his army to continue the war, even after sunset, when there is normally a ceasefire. As the passions rose from day to day, one by one the rules and restraints of warfare broke down. Thousands of torches were burning, both sides using signals specially devised for night time war.

At that juncture, Sri Krishna asked Bhima to call his half-demon son Ghatotkacha to fight with the Kauravas. Ghatotkacha was immensely powerful and brought his demon friends to join in the fight. His troops of asuras were strongest at night, and found darkness an additional advantage. They violently attacked Duryodhana's army. Duryodhana's heart sank within him when he saw thousands and thousands of his army destroyed by Ghatotkacha and his demon army moving in the air and attacking in weird and unexpected ways. Because he was half-demon, Ghatokacha could fly through the air, and this was a great advantage.

Duryodhana pleaded with Karna to use his Shakti weapon against Ghatokacha. This was the weapon that Indra had given to Karna when Karna gave Indra his golden armor. The Shakti weapon never failed to kill anyone it was thrown at. But it could be used only once, and Karna had carefully saved it for use against his main rival Arjuna. Karna excused himself, saying that he had reserved Indra's weapon for Arjuna. Duryodhana felt the whole Kaurava army would be finished in the hands of Ghatotkacha by sunrise if he was not killed. He ordered Karna to finish Ghatotkacha with the Shakti weapon. Karna was himself angry and bewildered, having just been wounded by one of the asura's arrows. Karna, impelled by a sudden urge, hurled the missile at the young giant. Thus was Arjuna saved, but at great cost. Bhima's beloved son, Ghatotkacha, who from the mid-air was showering his deadly arrows on the Kaurava army, dropped dead, plunging the Pandavas in grief.

Thus both Ghatotkacha, and Abhimanyu earlier gave up their lives on the Kurukshetra battlefield, and contributed greatly to the Pandavas victory. All the Pandavas were very upset at the death of Ghatokacha, who had served them faithfully. However, Krishna was happy that the Shakti weapon had not been used against Arjuna. Also, he was happy that Ghatokacha had not started a new race of half-human, half demon people that might cause problems for the human race in the future.

Duryodhana wanted to seize the advantage gained by Ghatotkacha's death, and asked the Kuru chiefs to continue the battle late into the night. When Drona disagreed, Duryodhana made harsh comments to Drona. He said that Drona was biased always towards the Pandavas, and had no intention to win the war for him. Nothing gave Dronacharya greater

pain than fighting for this arrogant prince. Drona turned away, and gave the order to continue the fight late into the night.

On the fifteenth day, Drona killed many Pandava warriors. The notable ones among them were Virat and Drupad. King Virat was Abhimanyu's father-in-law, and Drupad was father of Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas. As the two old kings dropped lifeless from their chariots, Drona returned to slaughtering their armies. At this juncture Arjuna came to the army's rescue. Drona invoked every weapon he knew, but as soon as they issued from his bow Arjuna destroyed them. Drona smiled and applauded his prowess. Neither could gain an advantage over the other. While Arjuna and his guru Drona fought, Dhrishtadyumna, Draupadi's brother, advanced steadily towards Drona, intent on killing him. Now leaving Arjuna alone, Drona concentrated on the soldiers instead. He knew that he could not win against Arjuna. But the constant ridicule and charge of favoring the Pandavas by Duryodhana was very much in his mind. The insult was really too much to bear after fifteen days of hard battle. Thinking about the incidents made him more and more furious. With severe anger and determination in his mind, he decided to decimate the army quickly. He started using celestial weapons on ordinary soldiers. Such use was forbidden not only by the rules of the war as set by Bhishma but also by the gods, who gifted those celestial weapons. But at this point Drona did not care for rules and fair fight.

He spread fear and destruction in the Pandava army by his relentless attacks. He continued to destroy the Pandava army as if appointed by the god of Death. Lord Krishna knew there was no one that could defeat Drona fighting according to the strict rules of war. He told Arjuna, "We cannot cope with Drona unless Dharma is discarded. We have no other way open. There is but one thing that will make him desist from fighting. If he hears that his son Ashwatthama is dead, Drona will lose all interest in life and throw down his weapons. Someone must therefore tell Drona that Ashwatthama has been slain." Arjuna was surprised and asked, "Keshava, Ashwatthama is born to live forever. How can we kill him? He is the son of our Guru and a Brahmin." Krishna smiled and said, "We don't have to kill Ashwatthama, the person. There is an elephant named Ashwatthama. Bhima could kill the elephant and then we shall declare that Ashwatthama is dead."

Arjuna was not really happy with that suggestion. But, Bhima lifted his iron mace and brought it down on the head of a huge elephant called Ashwatthama, and it fell dead. After killing the elephant Ashwatthama, Bhima went near the division commanded by Drona and roared so that all might hear. "I have killed Ashwatthama!" Drona heard these words as he was in the act of discharging a Brahmastra. He couldn't believe that Bhima killed Ashwatthama. Guru Drona decided to hear the truth from Yudhishtira as he believed the elder Pandava would never utter any lie and so he asked his charioteer to go towards Yudhishtira. Krishna saw Drona coming towards Yudhishtira and said "Save Pandava army from Drona. If he fights for even a half day more, your army will be finished. Under the

circumstances, falsehood is better than truth. Speaking falsehood in order to preserve life is not a sin. The great sin is telling the truth that results in great harm.” Reluctantly, Yudhishtira agreed to Krishna’s suggestion.

As the Kuru preceptor approached him, he shouted the false news, “Yes, it is true that Ashwatthama has been killed.” But as he was saying it, he felt again the disgrace of it and added in a low and tremulous tone, “Ashwatthma, the elephant” – words which were however drowned in the din and were not heard by Drona.

Drona knew that Yudhishtira had never told a lie in his life. Therefore, he believed Yudhishtira. Yudhishtira was ashamed of his untruth, but followed what Krishna told him for the greater good. When Drona heard that his beloved son had been slain, all his attachment to life snapped. Desire vanished as if it had never been there. He threw his weapons away and sat down in his chariot, and assumed a meditative posture. With his eyes half-closed and arms outstretched, he fixed his mind on Lord Vishnu. He entered into a trance, and intoned the sacred syllable Aum.

Long waiting for this opportunity, Dhrishtadyumna took his razor-edged sword, jumped down from his chariot, and ran towards the Kuru preceptor. All the warriors witnessing this called for him to stop, but he was not deterred. Amid cries he jumped onto Drona's chariot with the sword held high. Grabbing hold of Drona's knotted hair, he dragged him, and with a great sweep of his saber, severed his head. All the warriors witnessed a great light released from Dronacharya’s torso that shot up to heaven as Drona died.

Arjuna had been shouting at Dhrishtadyumna to capture Drona and bring him alive to Yudhishtira. He was mortified by Dhrishtadyumna's viciousness. His heart melted with sorrow at the cruel killing of his beloved teacher. Bhima, however, cheered and ran over to joyfully embrace Dhrishtadyumna. With Drona’s death, the slaughter of the Pandava army stopped. Yudhishtira was afflicted by different emotions. Overjoyed that the hostilities would soon end, he was nevertheless full of misgivings that Drona's death had been brought about by his deceit. Like Arjuna, he was also saddened to see Dhrishtadyumna mercilessly butcher his preceptor. Because he had never lied, Yudhishtira’s chariot wheels had never touched the ground before – he was like a god in this respect. But now, because of his lie, they ran on the ground and in the mud like everyone else’s.

Questions:

- On the fourteenth day of battle, what happened to the observances of rules of battle? What does this tell you about war?
- Whose son was Ghotakocha? Do you remember from a previous lesson who his mother was?

- Indra was Arjuna's father. Do you remember from a previous lesson why he gave Karna the Shakti weapon?
- Who was Karna saving his Shakti weapon for? Why? Who did he use it on?
- What is an asura? When are they most powerful? Is that a good reason to be more careful during that time?
- Why was Krishna happy with the death of Ghatokacha?
- What did Duryodhana do that made Drona furious? Which hurt more, words or arrows?
- Do you remember from a previous lesson how Draupad conducted a yagna for the death of Dronacharya? Who came out of the yagna fire at that yagna?
- Who was Ashwatthama?
- What is a "white lie"? Did Yudhishtira tell a white lie? Why? Did he regret it? How is this different from the lies that Duryodhana told?
- Who slew Drona? How did the Pandavas feel about that?
- What happened to Yudhishtira's chariot wheels afterwards? Why?
- During war, does the sense dharma, right and wrong break down?

Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam (contd.)

***Sevaparah Siva Suresa krisanudharma
Rakshombunatha Pavamana Dhanadhi nathah
Baddanjali pravilasan nija sirsha desah
Sri Venkatachalapathe tava suprabhatam (16)***

O Lord! Desirous of serving you, Siva and Indra with their heads bowed and Kubera the lord of Wealth and the protectors of the eight directions (Dikpalakas) with their hands folded in front of you in reverence are waiting your call to discharge their daily duties.

***Dhateeshu te Vihagaraja mrigadhiraja
Nagadhiraja gajaraja haydhirajah
Swasvadhikara mahimadhikam arthayante
Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (17)***

O Venkatesa! Seeking your benevolent look of approval, the Lord of Aves- Garuda and other leaders of your retinue are jostling for your first look to enhance their supervisory authority. Good morning to you.

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

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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H R T C O

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Coloring Exercise: Goddess Saraswati Devi

