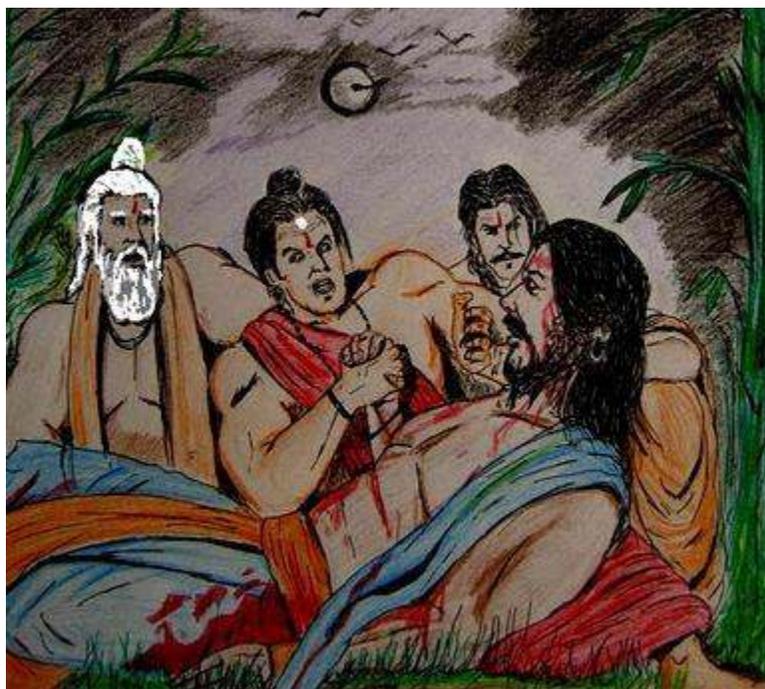


MAHABHARATA – Part 25

(Aswatthama's Evil Plot)



At the conclusion of the last lesson, Bhima broke Duryodhana's thighs, and the Pandavas left him dying by the lakeshore. After that, the five Pandavas and Krishna drove back to the main Pandava camp. Such great warriors as Sikhandin, Dhrishtadyumna, Satyaki, the five sons of Draupadi, and a large army remained. But in all of Duryodhana's army, which had once had hundreds of thousands of men, only three warriors were left, These were Drona's son Aswatthama, his maternal uncle Kripa, and Kritavarma, King of the Bhojas.

Returning to camp, Krishna asked Arjuna to dismount from the chariot first. This was unusual, because normally the charioteer dismounts first. But Arjuna did as instructed and got out. Immediately, the ape that had been on the chariot's flag (a gift from Hanuman, to terrorize Arjuna's enemies) departed. Then Krishna stepped out of the chariot. As soon as He stepped out, the whole chariot caught fire and in a few moments was reduced to a pile of ashes. "What happened?" asked Arjuna. Krishna explained that so many celestial weapons had been thrown at Arjuna by great warriors like Bhishma, Drona, and Karna. Krishna had promised Kunti to keep her son safe, so he had shielded the chariot from all these weapons. Now that the war was over, Krishna was withdrawing his protection and the powerful missiles were working.

News in the camp quickly spread that Duryodhana was defeated and that victory was complete. Cries of exultation ran throughout the camp. Drums sounded and conches were blown. King Yudhisthira remembered the words that his grandfather, Veda Vyasa had told him some time before:

"Where Krishna is, righteousness is, and where righteousness is, there is victory."

Krishna took the five Pandava brothers and Satyaki to Hastinapura, where King Dhritarashtra and Queen Gandhari were grieving for the loss of their 100 sons. Krishna went by special request of Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira, having triumphed in the 18 day battle, was still very worried about the outcome of the war. Why? He knew Gandhari possessed immense power. When she married Dhritarashtra, she knew he was blind. She herself, to be more compatible with her husband, put a scarf around her eyes so she also not be able to see. She had always been completely true to him. Through such austerity, and always speaking the truth, she had gained immense power. She could easily curse the Pandavas and thus destroy them. That is why Yudhisthira sent Krishna to try and pacify her.

Krishna met with the King and Queen. He reminded the grieving couple that not long ago, He had come to Hastinapura seeking peace between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. "To avoid war, the Pandavas were willing to settle for only five villages! Even this you refused them. The destruction of your sons is your fault, not the Pandavas" he told them. Through such reasoning the anger of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari toward the Pandavas was cooled down.

While this conversation was going on, the three surviving members of the Kaurava army found Duryodhana. The prince, once so proud, said to have the strength of ten thousand elephants, now lay dying in the mud by the lake, his thighs broken, his body bleeding. "Do not cry for me" he told his friends. I have lived and will die nobly. I will go the warrior's heaven". He narrated to them how Bhima had beat him in battle by fraud and deception. This made Aswattaman, Drona's son, very angry. "They killed my father by deceit, Arjuna slew Karna with his wheel stuck in the mud, and now Bhima has defeated our King, all against the rule of dharma." The more he thought about it, the angrier he got. "I swear this very day I will slay everyone in the Pandava army!" he told the dying Duryodhana. Duryodhana was pleased at these words. He asked Kripa to bring a pot of water. He poured the water over Aswatthama's head, anointing him as generalissimo of the Kaurava Army.

Aswatthama, Kritavarma, and Kripa were now fugitives. They had to sneak around and hide in the forest to avoid detection. Night fell. They went to the forest, and immediately, filled with exhaustion, Kritavarma and Kripa fell asleep. But Aswatthama could not sleep. His heart burned with anger, with rage. "Am I a fool?" he thought. "I have sworn to kill the enemy, but how can I" he wondered. While he was thus absorbed in angry thoughts, he noticed that crows had settled for their nightly sleep in the branches above him. Then a strange thing happened. An owl, which did not sleep but was awake at night, started killing the crows. It would approach each sleeping crow silently, and then attack and kill it.

"That's it!" thought Aswatthama. "I will attack and kill those in the Pandava camp while they are sleeping! Being sound asleep, with no fears, and no armor, they will be easy to kill." Immediately, he woke up his companions and told them his plans.

Kripa and Kritavarma were distressed to hear of his idea. Kripa said "Listen, O great one, to what I have to say. There are two forces which govern men's life. These are destiny and exertion. Nothing is higher than these two. For a crop to grow, a man must sow the seeds himself, but also, the rains must come, which man does not control. Do not be so angry at our situation. We have exerted ourselves to the utmost, but fate has turned against us."

He continued: "In order to take the right path, the young ones should listen to the older more experienced persons. Duryodhana received plenty of good advice from elders like Vidura, Bhishma and Drona. They wanted him to avoid war at all costs. But because he was always wicked, greedy, and jealous, he would not listen to them. This is why he is dying and all our friends are dead. Do not blame the Pandavas, who also did not want war. Because we are so tired and defeated, we cannot think clearly. Let us retire to Hastinapura, and ask King Dhrishtarashtra, Queen Gandhari, and the wise counselor Vidura what we should do."

This was good advice, but Aswatthama would not hear of it. He said “The Pandava army, thinking it has won the war, will put away their armor and sleep soundly tonight. I will enter their camp and kill all of them. Kripa tried to reason further with him: “It is against all rules of conduct to slay a sleeping man, or to slay someone who has surrendered to you.” He reminded Aswatthama that they were all great warriors, and could face the army in open battle the next day, and still win the war. But Aswatthama’s mind was made up. Being the new Generallissimo of the Kauravas, Kripa and Kritavarma followed him to the entrance of the Pandava camp.

QUESTIONS:

What happened to Arjuna’s chariot after he brought it back to camp? Why?

What did Veda Vyasa tell Arjuna about Krishna?

Why was Yudhishthira worried about Queen Gandhari?

Bhima broke Duryodhana’s body. Did he break his pride?

What made Aswatthama think of killing the Pandava Army in their sleep?

According to Kripa, what two forces exert themselves on man’s life? Explain these forces.

What did Kripa suggest was the best course to take before embarking on a new course of action?

Did Kripa approve of killing warriors in their sleep?

Will an angry person like Aswatthama listen to reason? Why or why not?

Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam

Suryendu Bhauma Budha Vakpati Kavyasowri

Swarbhanu Ketu divishat parishat pradhanah

Tvaddasa dasa charamow atidasa dsah

Sri Venkatachala pate tava suprabhatam (18)

Tvat pada dooli parita spuritottamangah

Svargapavarga nirapeksha nijantarangah

Kalpagamakalaniah aakulatam labhante

Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (19)

Tvad gopuragra sikharani nirikshamanah

Svargapavarga padaveem paramam srayantah

Martya manushya bhuvane matim aasraaynte

Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (20)

Sri Bhoomi Nayaka dayadi gunamrutapte

Devadideva jagadeka saranya Moorte

Sriman Anantha Garudadhibhir architangre

Sri Venkatachala pate tava suprabhatam (21)

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

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

D F U A R

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N S U O D

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A F R C S

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F P Y C A I

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C C H N O

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E H I S D L

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M C P A

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N H C B A R

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W C O R

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T O M U N

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Coloring Exercise: Lord Ganesha