

MAHABHARATA – Part 28

(Krishna Returns to Vaikuntha; Yudhishtira Attains Heaven)



Commented [CS1]:



Abhimanyu's Son Was Born

After the funeral rites of Bhishma were completed as per religious rules, Yudhishtira and the party returned to Hastinapura. Yudhishtira was steeped in sorrow and was constantly blaming himself for the destruction and grief caused by the war. Krishna as well as Vyasa consoled him, pointing out to the fact that it was the evil Duryodhana who caused the holocaust. Forever desiring the welfare of the Pandava king, Vyasa advised Yudhishtira to perform the Aswamedha (Horse) sacrifice along with the Rajasuya, Sarvamedha and Naramedha sacrifices.

By the meantime, Uttara had given birth to a lifeless son. The wailing princess reminded Krishna of his promise that the child would live. Krishna withdrew the Brahma weapon of Ashwatthama that had scorched the fetus, and the child came to life. Thus was born the great king Parikshit (one born after testing times), the son of Abhimanyu, and the perpetuation of the Kuru dynasty was assured.

The successful completion of the Horse Sacrifice established Yudhishtira as the supreme ruler of the country. With the ascension of Yudhishtira to the throne, an era of benevolent rule from Hastinapura commenced. Prosperity prevailed everywhere and justice ruled. The Pandava kingdom extended far and wide.

The Pandavas were highly respectful of their uncle Dhritarashtra, and his queen, Gandhari. They appointed Vidura and Kripa to high offices. Bhima alone was still harboring a measure of hatred for Dhritarashtra and could never forgive the old king for encouraging Duryodhana.

Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti Leaves to the Forest

Fifteen years passed in tranquility since Yudhishtira became king. One day Dhritarashtra and Gandhari overheard Bhima boasting of his prowess and how he had killed all the hundred Kaurava brothers. While Gandhari was generous enough to brush aside Bhima's remarks, Dhritarashtra became very sad. He was reminded of his own role in bringing about the war. He decided to retire to the forest and take to penance. Yudhishtira pleaded against Dhritarashtra proceeding to the forest. But Vyasa who was present at Hastinapura persuaded Yudhishtira to let his uncle have his way.

Dhritarashtra, accompanied by Gandhari, Kunti, Vidura, Sanjaya and a host of Brahmins, first reached the banks of Bhagirathi. He then proceeded to the hermitage of Satayapu, the former king of the Kekeyas. Commanded by Vyasa whose abode was nearby, Satayapu instructed Dhritarashtra on how to conduct himself as an ascetic.

The Pandava brothers, despite having become the lords of the earth, were deeply depressed at the thought of their mother, uncles and aunt living in the forest, bereft of all comforts. They were soon possessed with the desire to visit them. A happy family reunion took place in the hermitage.

Two years passed after the Pandavas returned to Hastinapura from the memorable visit to Satayupa's hermitage. Narada visited Yudhishtira, and conveyed that Dhritashtra, Gandhari, and Kunti were passed away in a huge forest fire. The news of the death of his mother, uncle and aunt, caused great grief to Yudhishtira. Along with the other members of his family, he proceeded to the River Ganga where obsequies were performed for the departed ones.

Krishna ends Incarnation

Thirty-six years had passed since Gandhari cursed the Yadava race to total annihilation, blaming Krishna for the Kurukshetra war. The chain of events leading to disaster and destruction of the race started from a prank, indulged in by the Yadava youth.

The sages Viswamitra, Kanva and Narada arrived on a visit to Dwaraka. Their senses fogged by Fate, some of the Yadava youth approached the distinguished rishis to play a prank on them. One of the youth, Samba, was dressed like a pregnant woman. They asked the sages, "You noble ones, this is the wife of Babhru who is desirous of having a son. Could you tell if she would be blessed with one?"

The rishis immediately understood the mischief being played upon them. They cursed the youth, "This scion of the Vasudeva family, Samba, would bring forth an iron rod which would cause the destruction of the Yadavas. All of them, excepting Balarama and Krishna, would perish due to this curse."

The very next day Samba brought forth an iron rod. When the king of the Vrishnis, Ugrasena, came to know about this, he became alarmed. He ordered the iron rod to be ground to powder and thrown into the sea. One day, in an intoxicated state, an internal fighting happened among Yadavas, and they started hitting each other with reeds from the sea. The reeds were all tipped with the iron from the rod. Drunken, they all killed each other. Knowing that the Yadavas' hour of destruction had arrived, and remembering Gandhari's curse, Krishna did not interfere in the fight. All the men except Krishna, his charioteer Daruka, and Balarama were killed.

Balarama, grieved at the slaughter of the Yadavas, walked into the forest. When Krishna caught up with him, he saw his brother's soul leaving its body. A ten-headed serpent issued from Balarama's mouth and drifted into the seas. Adishesha, the serpent under Vishnu's feet, had completed his mission on earth and was returning to the region of gods. Krishna decided that his own hour to give up his body had come.

Krishna laid himself down in the forest and entered into meditation. On an earlier occasion, Durvasa had given him the boon that his body would be invulnerable, excepting for his feet. A hunter, Jara by name, mistook him for a deer and shot at him. The arrow pierced Krishna's foot at the sole and went through his body. Alarmed at his mistake, the

hunter sought Krishna's pardon. Krishna comforted him and sent him away. The supreme deity returned to his abode in Heaven, to the welcome of all gods and demigods.

The city of Dwaraka disappeared under the rising waves of the ocean after seven days of Lord Krishna's departure.

Pandavas Journey to the Next World

On hearing the destruction of the Yadavas, king Yudhishtira then and there resolved to abdicate the throne and retire from the world itself. In this resolve, he was followed by his four brothers and Draupadi. Parikshit, Abhimanyu's son, was installed the Kuru king and Yuyutsu, Dhritarashtra's son, was appointed regent. The five Pandava brothers and Draupadi started on their journey, with a dog following them.

The party of seven made the Meru hill in the Himalayas their destination. They walked in silence, steeped in Yogic exercise. After traversing some distance, Draupadi fell down. Yudhishtira and his brothers did not stop. They left the lifeless Draupadi behind and walked on their course.

Bhima asked Yudhishtira, "O fearless one. For what sin has Draupadi fallen on the ground?" Yudhishtira replied, "This is the result of her partiality for Arjuna."

Some distance further, Sahadeva fell. Yudhishtira explained that Sahadeva's sin was his pride, that he was the wisest of all.

Next to fall was Nakula. To Bhima's query this time, Yudhishtira's answer was that Nakula was always conscious of his good looks.

When Arjuna fell next, Yudhishtira told Bhima. "Arjuna declared that he would single-handedly kill all his foes in one day. He could not fulfill his boast."

It was finally Bhima's turn to fall. Before he parted with his life, Bhima asked his brother what sin had he committed? Yudhishtira replied, "In the matter of eating, you were selfish. You never cared if others needed food. You also boasted about your own strength." So saying, the eldest of the Pandavas continued to walk, leaving his brothers and Panchali behind. He was now followed only by the dog.

The only human alive from among the Pandavas, Yudhishtira, walked some more distance. Suddenly, amidst much sound and radiance, Indra descended in his chariot and landed in front of Yudhishtira.

The Dog that Followed Yudhishtira

The celestial bade the Pandava king to ascend the chariot in order to proceed to Heaven. Yudhishtira refused, saying that he would not go to Heaven unless accompanied by his

brothers and Draupadi. Indra explained that they had all gone to Heaven, casting off their bodies. Yudhishtira alone was privileged to reach Heaven without parting with his earthly form.

There then arose an argument about the dog that had faithfully followed the Pandava king till the end. Yudhishtira insisted that the dog should also climb into the chariot. It finally turned out that the dog was none other than the god Dharma. The god of justice, who had come to test Yudhishtira, expressed his pleasure at his son's behaviour.

Yudhishtira Attains Heaven

On arriving at Heaven, Yudhishtira was greeted by the sight of Duryodhana sitting in splendor, surrounded by several deities. A shocked Yudhishtira asked Narada who was with him, "By what right is this wicked Duryodhana enjoying the felicities of Heaven? Where are my brothers and Panchali? Where are all those kings and friends of mine who fought for Truth? I do not want to stay here for a moment. Take me to those noble souls."

Narada told Yudhishtira, "O king! You have reached Heaven where there is no room for such animosities. Besides, Duryodhana has attained this region by virtue of his being noble in the battlefield. However, if you insist, I shall have you taken to those heroes whom you are yearning to meet."

A messenger led Yudhishtira to Hell. It was a dark and thorny path, damp, with bad odour. Corpses were seen strewn all around. There was the sound of moaning, of people in agony. Suddenly, Yudhishtira heard some familiar voices, those of his brothers, of Panchali, of Karna and of the truthful heroes who fought for justice in the Great War. They were all pleading to Yudhishtira to save them from their suffering.

Yudhishtira was indignant. He told his messenger, "Return to Heaven and inform the gods that I want to stay here and share the pain my dear ones are experiencing. The messenger did as he was told. Immediately, Indra, accompanied by several other gods, appeared before Yudhishtira. Indra told the king, "This is in the order of things. Those who are to be consigned to Hell are first sent to Heaven for a short duration, to enjoy the fruits of the few good deeds they have performed on earth. Those who are assured of their place in Heaven are given a glimpse of Hell, to expiate the few sins they have committed. Your visit to Hell is due to your deception of Drona in the battlefield. "With all sins being washed off, you and your friends would now become permanent residents of Heaven."

Yudhishtira was then taken to River Ganga that flows through the three worlds, Heaven, Earth and the netherworld. He took a bath in the river and his body was purified. He then

reached Heaven where he found already arrived, those noble souls who fought to establish truth on earth.

QUESTIONS:

- After Yudhisthira became King, why was he sad? What did Vyasa advise him to do? Why?
- Who was Parikshit?
- Were all the Pandavas always respectful of the old King, Dhrshtarahstra?
- What happened to Dhrshtarahstra?
- Who were the yadavas?
- What curse did Gandhari put on Krishna?
- What was the curse of the rishis? How did the yadvas all die?
- How did Balarama pass away? Who was Balarama really?
- How did Krishna leave his body? Who was He really?
- What did Yudhisthira do when he heard of Krishna's death?
- How did Yudhisthira's four brothers and Draupadi pass away?
- Why did Yudhisthira have to go to hell?

Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam

Bhaswanu deti vikachani saroruhani
Sampoorayanti vihagih kakubho vihangah
Sri Vaishnavas satatam artitha mangalaste
Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (26)

Brahmadayas sura varas sa Mahrshayaste
Santas Sananthana mukhas tava yogi varyah
Dhamantike tava hi mangala vastu hastah
Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (27)

Lakshmi Nivasa niravadya gunaika sindho
Samsara sagara samuttaranaika seto
Vedanta vedya nijavaibhava bhakta bhogyah
Sri Venkatachalapate tava suprabhatam (28)

Ittham Vrishachalapate Iha Suprabhatam
Ye manavah pratidinam pathitam pravritah
Tesham prabhata samaye smiritirangabhajam
Prajnam parartha sulabham paramam prasute (29)

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

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring Exercise:

