

MAHABHARATA – Part 3

(Drona, the Guru and His Teachings)



As you remember from the last lesson, the Pandavas went back to Hastinapura with their mother Kunti after the sudden demise of their father, Pandu. The Pandavas and their cousins, the Kauravas started growing up together under the able guidance and direction of their grandsire Bhishma. Also, they started their initial education from Kripacharya, who was a teacher and close associate to Hastinapura.

One day, the Kaurava and Pandava princes were playing with a soft ball. In the course of the game the ball rolled towards a well. As Yudhishthira leapt forward to grab the ball, his hand ring slipped from his finger and followed the ball into the well. The princes crowded around the well, and they could see the ring clearly, shining at the bottom, far below them. No one had a clue as to how to retrieve the ring and ball from deep inside the well.

A Brahmin, named Drona, was watching all this from a distance for quite some time. Drona was Kripacharya's brother-in-law, who was staying with him and looking for some suitable employment. He noticed the disappointment on the faces of the princes. He walked to them with a smile, and offered help to retrieve the ball. Drona plucked a blade of grass, and sent it flying into the well. The blade of grass sped forward with all the force of an arrow and lodged itself in the ball. Then Drona sent many more blades of grass one after one, and they clung together to form a chain. Drona had only to pull the chain to take the ball out. All the princes were amazed to see how the ball was retrieved with the use of few grass blades. The Princes then requested Drona to take out the ring as well from the well. Drona borrowed one of their bows, and sent an arrow straight into the ring. The arrow curved back in its flight and brought the ring with it. The princes were speechless, and bowed to Drona respectfully.

In the mean time, some of the princes ran to Bhishma, and narrated to him everything that had happened. After listening to them carefully, Bhishma immediately realized that Brahmin could be none other than Drona, one of the masters of archery. As Bhishma had been on the lookout for a suitable teacher to instruct the princes in the use of arms, his choice automatically fell on Drona. He personally went to see Drona, and invited him to the palace with great honor to take the roll of the Raja Guru. Drona was very happy with the offer, and accepted immediately.

Now all the princes were getting trained in the use of different arms: mace, sword, bow, and arrow. Out of all Pandavas and Kauravas, Arjuna had immense liking for the sport of bow and arrow. He practiced this art with great concentration and perseverance.

Soon he became number one in this art among all the princes. Acharya Drona was very much pleased with Arjuna, and showed preferential love and favor towards him. This caused a natural jealousy among the other princes, in particular his cousins Duryodhana and his brother Dushasana. Duryodhana did not like the Pandavas from the day one they arrived at Hastinapura, and developed hatred towards them. Drona's love for Arjuna caused more hatred towards Pandavas, and the Kauravas openly started criticizing their Guru Drona for the favor shown towards Arjuna. Drona heard that and decided to conduct a test to demonstrate the best archer among all of them.

A wooden bird was put on a branch of distant tree. It was partially hidden by the stem and leaves. A prominent eye was painted on the wooden bird. Drona called all his disciples and said, "My children, a bird is sitting on that far away tree. You have to hit the arrow exactly in its eye. This is your test." Everyone nodded with anxiety. Dronacharya invited first Yudhisthira, the eldest among all the princes. Yudhisthira stretched his bow string, and was about to release the arrow when Drona asked him a question, "What do you see?" Yudhisthira surprised at that question, and said "Sir, I am seeing you, people around me, the tree, and the bird."

Dronacharya smiled sadly and shook his head. "Put your weapon down son!" Yudhishtara obediently put his weapon down and walked back to his place looking a little disappointed. Duryodhana smirked at him when he heard his teacher. 'Duryodhana! Come forward!'

Elated at being given an opportunity to get the better of the Pandavas, Duryodhana went forward with his bow and arrow. He focused on the bird easily and was about to pull back the arrow when Dronacharya called out. "What do you see son?"

"I see the wooden bird, the branches, the tree, moving leaves, and the other birds sitting on the tree" Duryodhana said still aiming at the bird. Dronacharya shook his head, and asked him to put his weapon down. Frowning, Duryodhana went back to his place.

This same pattern continued with every boy that followed, until finally Drona called Arjuna. Arjuna came forward with full confidence. He was standing lightly and totally relaxed.

“Tell me what you can see, Arjuna,” repeated Drona. “I can see only the eye of the bird,” replied Arjuna without breaking eye contact with his target.

“Can you not see the trees and the sky? Or perhaps the branch the bird is sitting on?” Guru Drona asked. “No sir, all I can see is the eye and nothing else,” Arjuna said, holding his bow steady and maintaining his unwavering gaze.

Drona was pleased with his response. He cast a glance at all the princes, who were held in silence but slowly began nodding as the lesson began to become clear to them. Drona was happy that his favorite student was able to pass his test, and gave an order to shoot. With a loud twang, the arrow sprang from the bow straight into the bird’s eye. A perfect shot. The bird fell with a small thud as all the boys looked on in amazement at Arjuna.

Drona turned to other princes patting Arjuna with pride, and said “See the power of concentration. That is how you learn anything... with the target alone in mind! While trying to do something, never waver from what your end goal, and do not lose sight of it.”

Questions:

How did the princes meet Drona?

Drona was a Brahmin. Are Brahmins usually skilled in arms?

Are Kshatriyas?

What did Drona do that impressed the princes?

Why did the Kaurava princes dislike the Pandavas, do you think?

Is jealousy good?

What test did Drona devise for the princes?

What did all the princes except Arjuna do that disappointed Drona?

Should Duryodhana have smirked when Yudhishthira failed?

What did Arjuna do right?

What lesson does this mean for all of us?

Stotras for this week:
MahaLakshmi Ashtakam

Sarvajne Sarvavarade SarvadáshtaBhayankari
Sarvadásuhare Devi Mahalakshmi Namostute (3)

*Who is All-Knowing, Who is the Giver of All Boons, Who is the Terror to All the Wicked,
The Devi who Removes All Sorrows; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

SidhiBudhiPrade Devi BhuktiMukti Pradayini
Mantramurte Sada Devi Mhalakshmi Nmostute (4)

*The Devi who Gives Success and Intelligence and Gives Wordly Enjoyment and Liberation,
The Devi who Always abides as the Embodiment of Mantra; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

AdyantaRahite Devi AdiShakti Maheshwari
Yogaje yogaSambhute MahaLakshmi Namostute (5)

*The Devi who is Without Beginning and End, Who is the Primal Energy, and the Great Goddess,
Who is Born of Yoga, Who is United with Yoga; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

SthulaSukshme MahaRaudre MahaShakti Mahodari
MahaPapaHare Devi MahaLakshmi Namostute (6)

*Who is both Gross and Subtle and Most Terrible, Who is With Great Power and Prosperity,
The Devi who Removes All Sins; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5Pq1RoMJP4>

BATH PRAYER (While taking bath):

The rivers of India are charged with life, and if you take a dip in them, you get inner and outer purity! You can say the following prayer while you are taking your morning shower or bath. It will charge you up!

**Gange cha Yamune chaiva Godavari Saraswati,
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri jalesmin sannidhim kuru**

http://www.hindukids.org/pray/shlokas/morning_prayer_shlokas.html

Meaning:

*In this water, I invoke the presence of holy waters from the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari,
Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri*

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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C M E A

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K U P C L

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E H S I N

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M S A E T

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S R S A G

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O D S R W

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Coloring exercise: Archery Test for Kaurava and Pandava Princes

