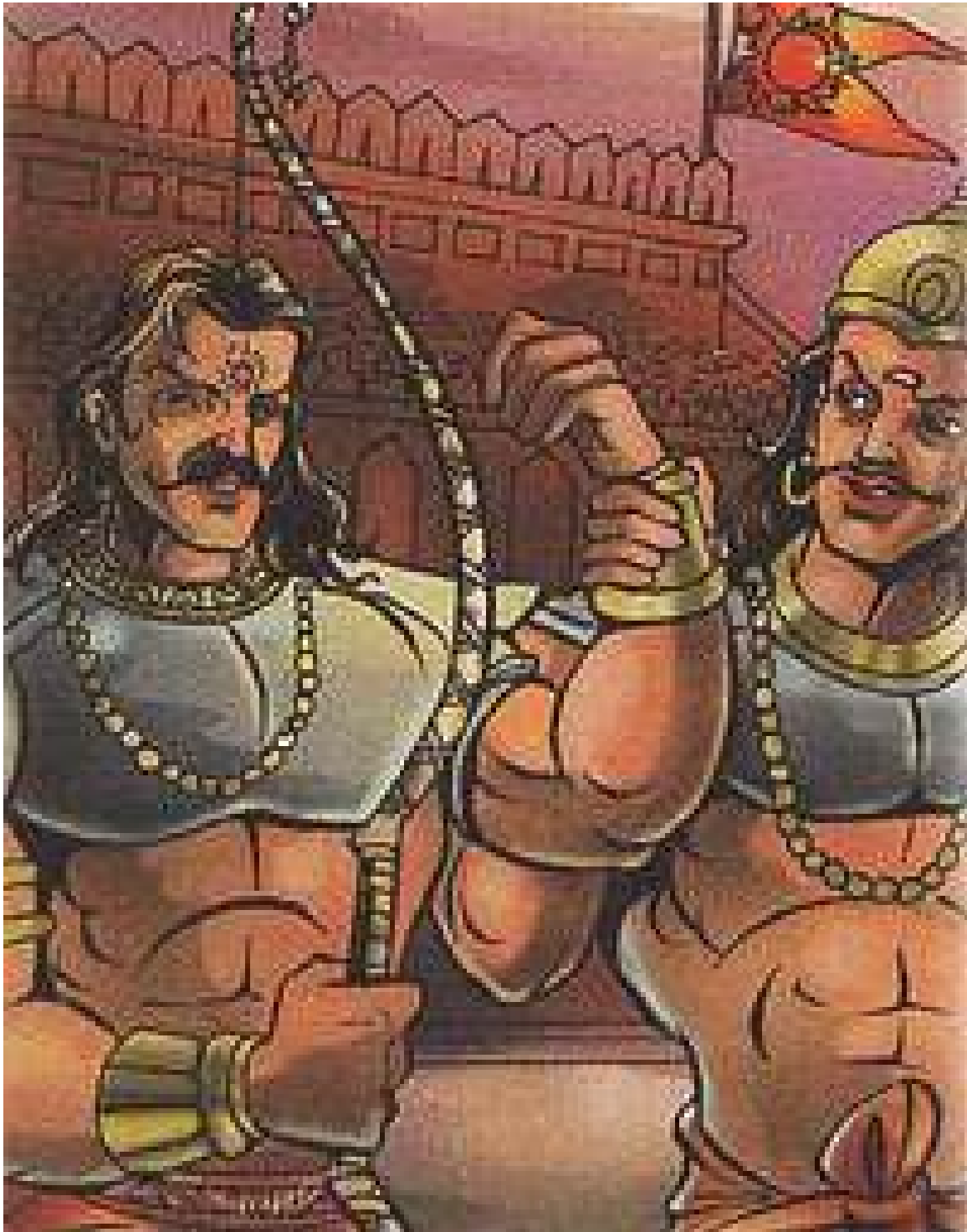


**MAHABHARATA – Part 4**



## **Bhima's Childhood Heroics**

As we learned from our previous lessons, the Kuru princes, the Pandavas and the Kauravas grew up together at Hastinapur, the city of the elephants. As the princes grew up, Kripacharya was their initial Guru, who taught them the art of war and statesmanship, and later Dronacharya became their Guru for advanced study of archery and practice of other arms. Yudhishtira was the best among all at statesmanship. But, as young children, it was physical power that impressed them the most.

There was a certain animosity between the Kauravas and Pandavas all the time. Bhima excelled them all in physical prowess. He used to bully the Kauravas by dragging them by the hair and beating them. When the Kauravas climbed up on a tree he would stand on the ground and kick at the tree and shake them down like ripe fruits. Bhima was a great swimmer too, and he used to dive into a pool and hold two of the Kaurava princes under water till they almost drowned. The bodies of the Kaurava princes would be ever sore with bruises as a result of Bhima's practical jokes! As a result, the Kauravas nursed a deep hatred for Bhima from their very childhood.

Duryodhana was very worried whether he would be the future King of Hastinapura or not. His father Dhritarashtra was the first born but was blind and hence, Pandu had ruled the Kingdom. Now, amongst the all Kuru princess, Yudhishtira was the oldest, and always considered as the heir apparent by everyone. Duryodhana thought that was unfair since the crown belonged to his father in the first place and hence should be passed on to him. Duryodhana wanted to get rid of the Pandavas to prevent Yudhishtira from becoming King. But, given Bhima's physical powers, Duryodhana thought Yudhishtira will easily be the King since no one could match Bhima. These were his childhood thoughts.

Then Duryodhana and his brother came up with an evil plan to kill Bhima. Duryodhana felt the Pandavas would become weak without Bhima. Without Bhima, he could become King! What Duryodhana did was this. He put some spikes in the river bed and invited the Pandavas for a picnic by the banks of the river Ganga. Poisonous snakes lived in that area of the river. Duryodhana wanted to first poison Bhima's food, then, when he was unconsciousness, throw him in the river onto the spikes, which would pierce his body. Then the poisonous snakes in the river would bite him, assuring his death! What a terrible, evil plan! Duryodhana thought it was "foolproof".

As per the plan, delicious food was made for Bhima, and he became unconscious after eating that poisoned food. Meanwhile, the Kauravas distracted the other Pandavas by taking them for swim in a different part of the river Ganga. Duryodhana and his brothers tied Bhima with ropes, but they couldn't lift him as he was too heavy. So, they rolled him into the river instead of throwing him into the river. Fortunately, Bhima's body didn't fall on the spikes. As per the plan, the poisonous water-snakes bit his body. But the poison from the snakes was counteracted by the poison in his food! So the poison didn't work. The river washed him to a river bank a couple of miles away.

Duryodhana returned to Hastinapur with great joy as he was very certain that Bhima was dead. When Yudhishtira enquired about Bhima, Duryodhana told him that Bhima had already gone home. Yudhishtira believed Duryodhana, and as soon as he returned home, he asked his mother about Bhima. Yudhishtira was worried when Bhima did not return home even after sunset. He suspected some foul play against his brother, and went again with his other brothers to the forest and searched everywhere. But Bhima could not be found. They went back home in great sorrow, because they loved Bhima very much.

Some time later Bhima regained his consciousness, feeling like awakening from a long sleep. He then trudged back home and reached home by mid night. Kunti and the other Pandavas welcomed him in great joy. Bhima told Kunti and his brothers about what Duryodhana had done. Kunti sent for Vidura and told him in secret: "Duryodhana is wicked and cruel. He seeks to kill Bhima since he wants to rule the kingdom. I am worried." Vidura told Mother Kunti and the Pandavas: "Keep this episode to you. Exposing Duryodhana will increase his anger and hatred. Dhritarashtra is truly blind in his love for Duryodhana and will never believe this story. Your sons are blessed with long life. You need have no fear on that account." The Pandavas agreed with Vidura's suggestion, and decided to be silent.

Duryodhana was extremely surprised to see Bhima the next day. He could not imagine how Bhima escaped his well planned trap. By the poison that had entered his system, Bhima became stronger than before! Duryodhana's jealousy and hatred increased more than ever.

### **Kuru Princes Graduation Day**

The Kuru princes grew into young adults. When they graduated from the school of Dronacharya, a day was fixed for a test and exhibition of their proficiency in the use of

arms in the presence of the Royal family, and the enthusiastic citizens of Hastinapura. The princes demonstrated their expertise in using weapons like bow and arrow, sword, spear, and mace. There was fierce mace fight between Bhima and Duryodhana. Bhima was much more powerful than Duryodhana, but Duryodhana had greater skill, so he could match Bhima. Arjuna displayed superhuman skills with his bow and arrows. He could do things like shoot into the air and make it rain, he could create fire with his arrows, he could even construct a whole house out of his arrows! The vast assemblage was lost in wonder and admiration with his skills. Pleased, Drona declared that no one could match Arjuna. Duryodhana was fuming with jealousy and envy at all the admiration Arjuna was getting.

Just then there came a loud compelling sound like that of thunder from the main entrance of the arena. A young man wearing shiny armor, and earrings that shone bright like the sun, drove into the arena in a shiny gold chariot and came face to face with Arjuna. His whole body expressed a challenge to Arjuna. He was none other than Karna, the eldest son of Kunti and the Sun God. Look at the irony of the fate - they did not know each other and yet they were brothers! Kunti recognized Karna, but was silent, which eventually put those brothers as rivals to each other.

Karna gave a careless bow and salutations to Kripacharya, Dronacharya, and the royalty. With a voice like rumbling thunder, he addressed Arjuna, "Arjuna, I can show greater skills at archery than you have." With careless ease, Karna repeated everything that Arjuna had performed earlier. After that he challenged Arjuna to one on one combat. Duryodhana was overjoyed at the appearance of this rival. He desperately wanted someone who could defeat the Pandavas so he could become King.

Duryodhana embraced Karna with all the love of a long lost brother: "Who ever you are, fortune has sent you to me. We hundred brothers are at your command." While love flooded Duryodhana's heart, blazing wrath filled Arjuna, as he felt insulted. Arjuna hastily bowed to his teachers and then embraced his brothers, as he prepared himself to the challenge. Karna took leave of the Kauravas, and stood in front of Arjuna for combat.

Kripacharya was well versed in the rules of the single combat. He didn't want to see the fight take place. He came over as the referee, and asked Karna's identity. He said "Arjuna is a prince and cannot engage in single combat with ordinary people". After hearing that, Karna bowed down his head in shame. Karna was the son of Kunti and the

Sun God, but he didn't know this, because Kunti abandoned him when she was a young girl. He was raised by a charioteer and his wife. This was considered a lower class of person, definitely not royalty! So he was being disqualified because of his class, not because of his ability.

That would have ended things, but Duryodhana came to his rescue, and declared Karna the king of Anga, a small province ruled by Hastinapura. Now he was royalty and could fight Arjuna, which Duryodhana desperately wanted. Then it looked like a real battle between Arjuna and Karna would take place! Fortunately, sunset came, and the elders of the court, such as Kripacharya and Bhishma, said no battle should take place. The two warriors, Karna and Arjuna, left, and they would be rivals for a long time.

### **Questions:**

What does "Hastinapura" mean?

Who were gurus to the princes?

Did Bhima play tricks on his cousins?

Should he have done this? Did it have consequences for him?

Why was Duryodhana jealous of Bhima?

What did he do to Bhima?

Was he successful in his scheme?

Are you ever jealous of others?

Does jealousy make one happy?

What did Bhima and Duryodhana fight with during the royal exhibition?

Bhima was stronger than Duryodhana, why was he equally matched at mace with Duryodhana?

Who was the most skilled of Dronacharya's archery students?

How did he impress the audience?

Who came and gave an even better archery performance?

Who's son was he?

Do you think Arjuna would have felt differently if he knew his rival was his brother?

Why or why not?

Do you see how Kunti's deception about her first son's birth is causing problems later on?

Would she have been better off to tell her parents what had happened when she had her first child?

Is it better to be honest with your parents rather than trying to deceive them?

When someone insults you, should you get angry?

Do you think Duryodhana would ever be happy, even if he was King?

**Stotras for this week:**  
**MahaLakshmi Ashtakam**

**AdyantaRahite Devi AdiShakti Maheshwari**  
**Yogajne 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.*

**PadmasanaSthite Devi ParabrahmaSwarupini**  
**Paramesi Jaganmatarmahalakshmi Namostute (7)**

*The Devi Who is Seated on a Lotus, Who is of the Nature of Supreme Brahman, Who is the Supreme Lord and the Mother of the Universe; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

**SwetambaraDhare Devi NanalamkaraBhushite**  
**Jagatsthite Jaganmatarmahalakshmi Namostute (8)**

*The Devi who is Dressed in White Garments, Who is Adorned with Various Ornaments, Who Abides in this Universe and is the Mother of the Universe; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.*

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

**Morning Sloka for Lighting Lamp:** Light is considered as a symbol of auspiciousness, prosperity and abundance in the Hindu religion. Light brings brightness with it and removes the darkness. Light makes it possible to see things clearly. The following Sloka can be recited while lighting the lamp. This prayer is also known "deepa slokam".

**Shubham karothe kalyanam**  
**Aarogyam, dhana sampadah**  
**Shathru budhi vinashaya**  
**Deepa jyothir Namostute**

[http://www.hindukids.org/pray/shlokas/morning\\_prayer\\_shlokas.html](http://www.hindukids.org/pray/shlokas/morning_prayer_shlokas.html)

*Meaning: I salute the holy flame of the lamp, that brings auspiciousness, prosperity, Good health, abundance of wealth, and the destruction of the intellect's enemy.*

## Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

A V R L I  

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I E L V  

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E P K I S  

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R R O A M  

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C M E A  

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T B C A M O  

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L I L S K  

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X C E L E  

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E F R I E C  

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G R E N A  

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Coloring exercise: Deepavali (Diwali)

