

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

Akrūra's Mission in Hastināpura

This chapter describes how Akrūra went to Hastināpura, saw Dhṛtarāṣṭra's unfair behavior toward his nephews, the Pāṇḍavas, and then returned to Mathurā.

On the order of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Akrūra went to Hastināpura, where he met the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas and then set about to find out how Dhṛtarāṣṭra was treating the latter. This task would keep Akrūra in Hastināpura for several months.

Vidura and Kuntīdevī described to Akrūra in detail how Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons, envious of the exalted qualities of the Pāṇḍavas, had tried to destroy them by various evil means and were contemplating further atrocities. With tearful eyes, Kuntīdevī asked Akrūra, “Do my parents and other relatives, headed by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, ever think of me and my sons, and will Kṛṣṇa ever come to console us in our distress?” Then Kuntīdevī began to chant Lord Kṛṣṇa's names for her protection, and she also chanted mantras expressing surrender to Him. Akrūra assured Kuntīdevī, “Since your sons were born from demigods like Dharma and Vāyu, there is no reason to expect that any misfortune will befall them; rather, you should be confident that very soon they will receive the greatest possible good fortune.”

Akrūra then delivered to Dhṛtarāṣṭra the message from Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Akrūra told the King, “You have assumed the royal throne after the death of Pāṇḍu. Seeing all equally, which is the religious duty of kings, you should protect all your subjects and personal relations. By such fair behavior you will gain all fame and good fortune. But if you act otherwise, you will attain only infamy in this life and condemnation to a hellish existence in the next. A living being takes his birth all alone, and alone he gives up his life. Alone he enjoys the fruits of his piety and sin. If one fails to understand the true identity of the self and instead maintains his progeny by indulging in evil deeds, then surely he will go to hell. One should therefore learn to understand the unsteadiness of material existence, which is like a sleeper's dream, a magician's illusion or a flight of fancy, and should thus control his mind in order to remain peaceful and equipoised.”

To this Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied, “I cannot hear enough of your beneficial words, O Akrūra, which are like the sweet nectar of immortality. But because the tight knot of affection for my sons has made me biased toward them, your statements cannot become fixed within my mind. No one can transgress the arrangement of the Supreme Lord; His purpose for descending into the Yadu dynasty will inevitably be fulfilled.”

Knowing now the mentality of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Akrūra took permission from his dear relatives and friends and returned to Mathurā, where he related everything to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma.

Texts 1-2:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Akrūra went to Hastināpura, the city distinguished by the glory of the Paurava rulers. There he saw Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma, Vidura and Kuntī, along with Bāhlika and his son Somadatta. He also saw Droṇācārya, Kṛpācārya, Karṇa, Duryodhana, Aśvatthāmā, the Pāṇḍavas and other close friends.

Text 3:

After Akrūra, the son of Gāndinī, had appropriately greeted all his relatives and friends, they asked him for news of their family members, and he in turn asked about their welfare.

Text 4:

He remained in Hastināpura for several months to scrutinize the conduct of the weak-willed King, who had bad sons and who was inclined to give in to the whims of mischievous advisers.

Texts 5-6:

Kuntī and Vidura described to Akrūra in detail the evil intentions of Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s sons, who could not tolerate the great qualities of Kuntī’s sons — such as their powerful influence, military skill, physical strength, bravery and humility — or the intense affection the citizens had for them. Kuntī and Vidura also told Akrūra about how the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra had tried to poison the Pāṇḍavas and carry out other such plots.

Text 7:

Kuntīdevī, taking advantage of her brother Akrūra's visit, approached him confidentially. While remembering her birthplace, she spoke with tears in her eyes.

Text 8:

[Queen Kuntī said:] O gentle one, do my parents, brothers, sisters, nephews, family women and girlhood friends still remember us?

Text 9:

Does my nephew Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality and the compassionate shelter of His devotees, still remember His aunt's sons? And does lotus-eyed Rāma remember them also?

Text 10:

Now that I am suffering in the midst of my enemies like a doe in the midst of wolves, will Kṛṣṇa come to console me and my fatherless sons with His words?

Text 11:

Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa! O great yogi! O Supreme Soul and protector of the universe! O Govinda! Please protect me, who have surrendered to You. I and my sons are being overwhelmed by trouble.

Text 12:

For persons fearful of death and rebirth, I see no shelter other than Your liberating lotus feet, for You are the Supreme Lord.

Text 13:

I offer my obeisances unto You, Kṛṣṇa, the supreme pure, the Absolute Truth and the Supersoul, the Lord of pure devotional service and the source of all knowledge. I have come to You for shelter.

Text 14:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Thus meditating on her family members and also on Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe, your great-grandmother Kuntīdevī began to cry out in grief, O King.

Text 15:

Both Akrūra, who shared Queen Kuntī's distress and happiness, and the illustrious Vidura consoled the Queen by reminding her of the extraordinary way her sons had taken birth.

Text 16:

The ardent affection King Dhṛtarāṣṭra felt for his sons had made him act unjustly toward the Pāṇḍavas. Just before leaving, Akrūra approached the King, who was seated among his friends and supporters, and related to him the message that his relatives — Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma — had sent out of friendship.

Text 17:

Akrūra said: O my dear son of Vicitravīrya, O enhancer of the Kurus' glory, your brother Pāṇḍu having passed away, you have now assumed the royal throne.

Text 18:

By religiously protecting the earth, delighting your subjects with your noble character, and treating all your relatives equally, you will surely achieve success and glory.

Text 19:

If you act otherwise, however, people will condemn you in this world, and in the next life you will enter the darkness of hell. Remain equally disposed, therefore, toward Pāṇḍu's sons and your own.

Text 20:

In this world no one has any permanent relationship with anyone else, O King. We cannot stay forever even with our own body, what to speak of our wife, children and the rest.

Text 21:

Every creature is born alone and dies alone, and alone one experiences the just rewards of his good and evil deeds.

Text 22:

In the guise of dear dependents, strangers steal the sinfully acquired wealth of a foolish man, just as the offspring of a fish drink up the water that sustains the fish.

Text 23:

A fool indulges in sin to maintain his life, wealth and children and other relatives, for he thinks, “These things are mine.” In the end, however, these very things all abandon him, leaving him frustrated.

Text 24:

Abandoned by his so-called dependents, ignorant of the actual goal of life, indifferent to his real duty, and having failed to fulfill his purposes, the foolish soul enters the blindness of hell, taking his sinful reactions with him.

Text 25:

Therefore, O King, looking upon this world as a dream, a magician’s illusion or a flight of fancy, please control your mind with intelligence and become equipoised and peaceful, my lord.

Text 26:

Dhṛtarāṣṭra said: O master of charity, I can never be satiated while hearing your auspicious words. Indeed, I am like a mortal who has obtained the nectar of the gods.

Text 27:

Even so, gentle Akrūra, because my unsteady heart is prejudiced by affection for my sons, these pleasing words of yours cannot remain fixed there, just as lightning cannot remain fixed in a cloud.

Text 28:

Who can defy the injunctions of the Supreme Lord, who has now descended in the Yadu dynasty to diminish the earth’s burden?

Text 29:

I offer my obeisances to Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who creates this universe by the inconceivable activity of His material energy and then distributes the various modes of nature by entering within the creation. From Him, the meaning of whose pastimes is unfathomable, come both the entangling cycle of birth and death and the process of deliverance from it.

Text 30:

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: Having thus apprised himself of the King's attitude, Akrūra, the descendant of Yadu, took permission from his well-wishing relatives and friends and returned to the capital of the Yādavas.

Text 31:

Akrūra reported to Lord Balarāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa how Dhṛtarāṣṭra was behaving toward the Pāṇḍavas. Thus, O descendant of the Kurus, he fulfilled the purpose for which he had been sent.