



# Mahabharata for Children

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## Mahabharata for children(Part 1)

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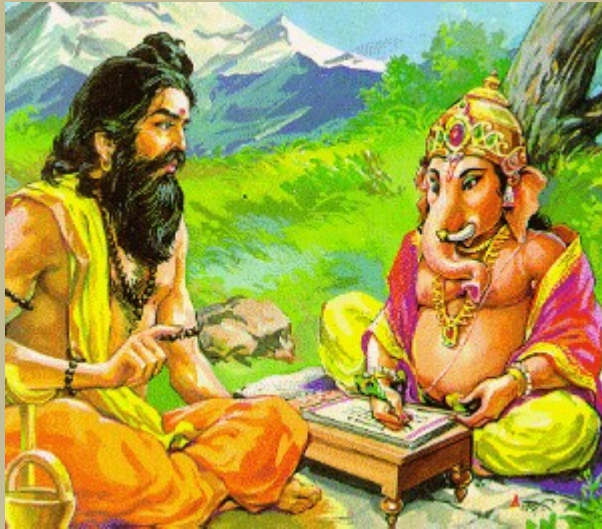
**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

**Picture acknowledgements : Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
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Mahabharata is a literary treasure of India. It is the longest epic poem in the world, originally written in Sanskrit, the ancient language of India. It was composed by Vyasa several thousand years ago.

Mahabharata belongs not only to India but to the world too. It is a parable of the human race and carries a universal message - victory comes to those who stay on the righteous path. It is a real life drama that stands as a perennial spiritual strength to the people of India in all phases of their lives.



The story of Mahabharata starts with King Dushyant, a powerful ruler of ancient India. Dushyanta married Shakuntala, the foster-daughter of sage Kanva. Shakuntala was born to Menaka, a nymph of Indra's court, from sage Vishwamitra, who secretly fell in love with her. Shakuntala gave birth to a worthy son Bharata, who grew up to be fearless and strong. He ruled for many years and was the founder of the Kuru dynasty. Unfortunately, things did not go well after

the death of Bharata and his large empire was reduced to a kingdom of medium size with its capital Hastinapur.

Mahabharata means the story of the descendents of Bharata. The regular saga of the epic of the Mahabharata, however, starts with king Shantanu. Shantanu lived in Hastinapur and was known for his valor and wisdom.

One day he went out hunting to a nearby forest. Reaching the bank of the river Ganges (Ganga), he was startled to see an indescribably charming damsel appearing out of the water and then walking on its surface. Her grace and divine beauty struck Shantanu at the very first sight and he was completely spellbound.

When the king inquired who she was, the maiden curtly asked, "Why are you asking me that?"

King Shantanu admitted "Having been captivated by your loveliness, I, Shantanu, king of Hastinapur, have decided to marry you."

"I can accept your proposal provided that you are ready to abide by my two conditions" argued the maiden.

"What are they?" anxiously asked the king.

"Firstly, you will never ask anything about my personal life, like who I am or where do I come from? Secondly, you will never stop me from doing anything or ask the reason of anything I do."

Shantanu was totally gripped by the maiden's beauty, now known as Ganga, and immediately accepted her conditions. They instantly entered into a love marriage (Gandharva vivah) and returned home.

Things went on quite smoothly for sometime and then queen Ganga gave birth to a lovely boy. As soon as king Shantanu heard of this good news, he was overjoyed and rushed to the palace to congratulate the queen. But he was astonished to see that the queen took the newborn into her arms, went to the river, and drowned him. The king was shocked and felt miserable, yet he could not ask the queen about her action. He was bound by his pledge, not to question or interfere with her actions.

Hardly had Shantanu recovered from the shock of the death of his first son at the hands of the queen when she became expectant again. The king felt happy and thought that the queen would not repeat her dreadful action again. But the queen again took the newborn into her arms, and drowned him in the river.



After seeing the ghastly action of the queen, the king was in immense grief again, but his pledge barred him to say anything.

This continued on until queen Ganga bore the eighth son and marched to the river as before. Shantanu lost his patience and as soon as the queen was about to drown the newborn, Shantanu stopped her. "I have lost seven sons like this and am left with no heir. I can no longer stand to see my flesh and blood decimated before my eyes."

Queen Ganga turned around and said, "Oh King, you have violated your pledge. I will not stay with you any longer. However before leaving you, I will open the secret that led to the death of your seven sons. Once it so happened that the saint Vashishtha got offended with eight gods known as Vasus. He cursed them to be born as human beings on the earth and undergo the mental torture of being a human. Hearing this, seven of the Vasus implored the saint to be excused but the eighth one, who was the most mischievous, kept standing rudely. "

Vashishtha was appeased and modified his curse, "Seven of you will die and come back to heaven as soon as you are born, but the eighth one will have to live on the earth for a long period and face the tribulations as a human."

Ganga continued, "Upon the request from the Vasus, I assume the human form and marry you. My job is now over and I must now go back to my heavenly abode. I am taking your eighth son with me and will bring him back to you after he is amply grown up."

After saying this, Ganga flew away into the sky along with the newborn. King Shantanu felt very disappointed and returned to his palace with a broken heart.

Many years after, when Shantanu was taking a stroll on the bank of the river Ganges (Ganga), Goddess Ganga emerged out of the river with a young boy.

Ganga spoke, " Oh King! Here is your eighth son, Deva Vrata. I have brought him up in order that he may be able to cope with what is to befall on him in his life on this earth."

The king happily brought the prince to the palace and celebrated his advent by declaring him the crown prince of his kingdom. Deva Vrata was brave, just and looked highly promising.

King Shantanu was getting old and announced his retirement. He was lonely and always missed Ganga. It was one day while he was taking a stroll on the bank of the river Ganges; he was attracted towards a charming maiden, Satyavati. She was the daughter of the chief of the fishermen tribe. She took the sages across the river on her boat. She had a divine aroma coming out of her body.



Shantanu did not know the secret that circled around Satyavati during her maiden days. Satyavati once had a bad fishy smell on her body. Sage Parashar, one of the sages who she took across the river, had a special liking for her. He was pleased and blessed her with a sweet aroma along with the boon of a son who was named Vyas. Immediately after birth, Vyas grew up quickly through his divine powers and left for the forest. Vyas, however, promised his mother Satyavati that he will come back whenever he was called for. Vyas, later known as Veda Vyas, had mastery of the Vedas but was extremely ugly looking and had a horrible smell. Veda Vyas



authored the story of the Mahabharata, for the sake of the posterity. It is said that Vyas dictated the entire epic at a stretch while Lord Ganesh acted as the scribe. In addition, Vyas played a central role in his story appearing and disappearing on the scene whenever his mother or her family members sought his help. He had rare magical qualities to resolve their problems.

Shantanu, unaware of the secrets of Satyawati's maiden life, was charmed by her beauty. He went to her father, the chief fisherman, and asked him for the hand of his daughter. The chief fisherman, placed the condition that the son born of Satyawati will be the successor of the Kaurava throne and not Deva Vrata. Shantanu was shocked to hear the condition and returned home disappointed and unhappy. Deva Vrata later discovered the cause of his father's unhappiness and went to Satyawati's father, to advocate his father's position on marrying Satyawati. In return he promised to give up his right to the throne for Satyawati's son.

The chief fisherman thought for a while and showed his further concern by saying, "What about your children? They may not honor your promise?"

Hearing this, Deva Vrata took the terrible vow that he will never marry in his life, for he would remain as a brahmachari. From then on he was known as Bheeshma, the firm. Bheeshma brought Satyawati on his chariot to the palace and presented her to his father. Shantanu felt shocked when he heard of all that happened. He blessed Bheeshma with the power to choose his day of death.

In due course of time, queen Satyawati became the mother of two princes - Chitrangad and Vichitravirya. After Shantanu's death, Chitrangad succeeded the throne but was killed in a war. Vichitravirya, was then a minor, and was enthroned by Bheeshma as the king of Hastinapur. When Vichitravirya came of age, Bheeshma and queen Satyawati got him married to two princesses of Kashi, Amba and Ambika. Unfortunately, Vichitravirya died without a successor.

Bheeshma and Satyawati conferred and decided to call Veda Vyas. Vyas arrived in no time. Satyawati explained to him the grave situation that the Kaurava family was facing without an heir. He requested Vyas to bless Ambika, the elder of the two widows of Vichitravirya, to bless with a son who can succeed the deceased king. Vyas agreed.

When Vyas approached Ambika, she was frightened by his ugly face and shut her eyes while the saint uttered the boon. As a result, the son born to Ambika was blind. He was named Dhritarashtra. The queen was disappointed and asked Vyas to offer the boon to Ambalika, the younger widow. Ambalika could not stand his smell and turned

pale out of fear while the saint was uttering the boon. As a result, the child born of Ambalika was pale and was called Pandu, meaning pale.

Queen Satyawati was puzzled, what can be done now? Requesting the saint for another chance, she sent for the elder widow Ambika once more to receive the boon from the saint. Ambika was so scared of the saint that she could not dare to go before him. Instead, without telling her mother-in-law, Ambika sent her maid to the saint after disguising her with stately garments. The maid remained fearless and greeted the saint, Veda Vyas, with great devotion. Feeling happy, the saint gave her a boon and she bore a perfect child called Vidur.

In course of time Pandu ascended the throne as his elder brother Dhritarashtra was blind and Vidur became the prime minister due to his sagacity and distinguished talent. Dhritarashtra married Gandhari, the princess of Gandhar in Beluchistan, (today's Pakistan). When Gandhari came to know that her husband is blind, she, as a true wife, sharing the emotions of her husband, bandaged her eyes permanently with a cloth.

During the time of Pandu, the kingdom of the Kurus expanded far and wide. Pandu was married twice, first to Kunti and then to Madri. After many years of rule, Pandu decided to retire to Himalayas leaving the kingdom in the hands of Dhritarashtra and grandfather Bheeshma. There was no heir to the throne since none of the brothers had any children.

Later one day, when Pandu was hunting in the forest, he shot an arrow to a deer who was in the state of making love. Before dying, the deer cursed Pandu that he will die instantly when he will touch any of his wives. Pandu was shocked. After returning to the hermitage, he explained what happened to his wives. They all agreed to lead the life of an ascetic. They were, however, sad that any chance of having their children to succeed the throne of Kaurava dynasty was gone.

In Hastinapur, Gandhari called Veda Vyasa and requested him the boon to bear one hundred sons and a daughter. Veda Vyas very kindly agreed but informed Gandhari that it will take some time before they arrive. Gandhari was in no rush since she knew that Pandu could not have any children because of the deer's curse. However, things turned out differently.

In the forest, Pandu began to suffer from a deep depression, due to the deer's curse, Kunti painfully noticed it. Kunti was concerned and wanted to reveal a secret that she kept in her heart until then, in order to make Pandu happy.

Kunti said, "When I was a young maid, sage Durbasha came to my father's house. I served the sage devotionally and, as a result, the sage blessed me with a mantra through which I could invoke any god I desire to get a son. The mantra, however, can be used only five times."

Pandu was very happy. He can now have his sons without even touching Kunti. Kunti, however, did not disclose to Pandu that she has already used the mantra once. This happened when, after receiving the mantra, she became impatient to use it without comprehending the consequences. She called the sun god and was blessed with a son wearing earrings from birth. Now she realized that the child is born out of wedlock. For fear of infamy, she put the newborn into a basket and set it afloat the river Ganga. A charioteer who was childless, luckily discovered the basket. He brought up the abandoned child who was later named Karna because he was born with the earrings.

Pandu requested Kunti to call for Dharma, the god of righteousness. Kunti was blessed with Pandu's first son Yudhishtira. The news of the birth of first child reached Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. Gandhari was disturbed that she cannot be the mother of the future king. She immediately called Vyasa and requested him to force the birth of her hundred sons. Through his magical powers Vyasa shortened the waiting period and hundred sons of Dhritarashtra emerged along with a daughter Dushala. Duryodhan was the eldest son while Dushashan was the second. Gandhari was not happy that, in spite of her best efforts, Pandu's first son Yudhishtira would be the true heir to the throne and not her eldest son, Duryodhana.

In order to strengthen the Kuru dynasty, Pandu requested Kunti for getting more children. Kunti called the wind god Pavan and Bheema, the second son was born. Indra blessed Kunti with the third son, Arjuna. Madri was still childless. Pandu requested Kunti to pass on the mantra to Madri so that she can have a child. Madri called the twin god, Ashwins and was blessed with two sons, Nakula and Sahadeva.

Thus Pandu had five sons, Yudhishtira, Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. These five worthy children of Pandu were called Pandavas. They grew up strong and well behaved. They learnt the art of war games from their able father Pandu. The sages taught them the teachings of the Vedas.

It was one spring day while Pandu was strolling on the riverside, he saw Madri passing by. Aroused with passion he touched Madri and died instantly. Kunti and Madri were devastated. The news reached Dhritarashtra and he too was shocked. The body of Pandu was carried to Hastinapur for the crematory rites. Madri decided to ascend to the funeral pyre of Pandu and appealed to Kunti to take care of her two sons, Nakula and Sahadeva, like her own three children. The Pandavas, the sons of

Pandu, returned to Hastinapur and joined their cousins, Kauravas, the sons of Dhritarashtra.

All the cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas grew up together under the direction of their grandfather Bheeshma. Kripacharya, an able teacher of martial art, trained them for war games.

Kripacharya in his childhood days, known as Kripa, came to King Shantanu, Bheeshma's father, along with his sister Kripa, as orphans from a Brahmin family. Shantanu was a kind-hearted person. He raised Kripa and Kripa with best care. Kripa, through his best effort became a master in martial art and was then known as Kripacharya. Kripa was married to Drona, the son of sage Bharadwaj. Sage Bharadwaj was the best archer of his time. He ran a school to teach martial arts to the princes. His father, Bharadwaj, personally trained his son Drona. During his student life, Drona became a close friend of prince Drupada who promised Drona that he would share his kingdom with him when he became king. But when Drupada became king, he forgot all about his childhood promises to Drona.

After the death of Bharadwaj, Drona took over his father's responsibilities and was known as Dronacharya. In those days, an ideal teacher provided free education to all of his students and was satisfied with the honor showered by his students and the community. As a result, he stayed poor in meeting his daily needs unless some royalty provided financial support. Drona was no exception. He had a son named Ashwathama, to whom he loved dearly. One day Dronacharya witnessed that his playmates mocked his son because he was poor. He decided to go to his former schoolmate Drupada for financial help. Drupada, drowned in his royalty, ignored his childhood promises to Drona. He insulted Drona in his open court. Drona took the vow that one day he will get even with Drupada and left the court in rage. He soon left his hermitage and arrived at Kripa's residence along with his wife Kripa and Ashwathama.

Drona was passing by one day, when the princes of Hastinapur were playing ball. He saw the bouncing ball fall into a nearby well. The princes were puzzled as to get the ball out of the well. Then Drona came forward. He listened to the princes and then threw his own ring into the well. Then he boasted that he would get both the ball and the ring with the help of his archery. The princes were amazed to see that he kept his promise. They all requested Drona





to see their grandfather Bheeshma. Bheeshma, the old warrior, heard what happened and was amazed by the ability of Drona. He immediately appointed Drona as the teacher of archery for the princes. Drona was very pleased with his position that considerably improved the economic condition of his family. He began to instruct the princes with great care and love. He was confident that his royal disciples will one day help him to defeat Drupada, and he will be able to fulfill his vow of getting even with him.

Of all the disciples, Drona loved Arjuna the most. He was most skillful and Drona promised Arjuna that he would make him the best archer in the world. One day prince Ekalavya, son of king Nishad, came to Drona and requested Drona to take him as his disciple. King Nishad belonged to a low cast and Drona was committed only to the royal princes of Kuru dynasty. Thus, Drona refused to take Ekalavya as his disciple. Ekalavya was disappointed but did not lose hope. He went into a deep forest, made an idol of Drona and considering him as his guru, practiced archery daily. Through his devotion and constant practice, Ekalavya excelled in the game of archery.

One day the Kuru princes went hunting into the jungle where Ekalavya lived. Their hunting dog strayed from the party and saw Ekalavya. It began to bark while Ekalavya was busy with his practice of archery. Ekalavya shot a volley of arrows at the dog such that it corked its open mouth. The dog ran back to the royal party and the princes were amazed to see its plight. They all came to Ekalavya, along with Drona, in order to identify the person who has surpassed them in the art of archery.

Seeing Drona, Ekalavya fell at the feet of his guru. Drona was highly pleased by his devotion and diligence. He soon recognized that Ekalavya will eventually become the indomitable rival of Arjuna and Drona may not be able to keep his promise. So, Drona asked for his right thumb as teacher's reward (guru dakshina) and Ekalavya obeyed, cutting his right thumb and placing it at the guru's feet. What a glorious example of obedience to teachers!

When the princes had completed their training, grandsire Bheeshma arranged for a competition in order to demonstrate their sportsmanship. Various dignitaries were invited in the grand ceremony. Arjuna surprised everyone by his feats of archery. When the tournament was about to complete, Karna arrived on the scene. No one knew that he was the illegitimate child of Kunti raised by a charioteer. He challenged Arjuna. At this point, Kripacharya objected.

"The competition is meant for royal princes only and is not open to ordinary people." Hearing the objection, Duryodhan, a rival of Arjuna, came forward and offered Karna the state of Anga, making him a prince. Karna was as good as Arjuna and no one could decide the superiority of one over the other.

The day completed and the royal princes, came to Drona to pay respect and pay guru dakshina (teacher's reward). Drona asked them to capture Drupada, the king of Panchal, and bring him to Drona as a prisoner. Kauravas and Pandavas had no problem to run over Panchal and present Drupada to Drona.

Drona reminded Drupada of the insults he inflicted on him and said, "Drupada, as a friend I am returning half of the kingdom to you, but I hope that in the future you will remember the lesson and respect the promises that you make."

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## Mahabharata for Children(Part 2) - THE CONSPIRACY

*Narrated by: ~~Grandpa~~ Edited by: Sabyasachi Guharay*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

Picture acknowledgements : Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
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The Pandavas were superior to the Kauravas in every respect, both in strength and intelligence. They were greatly appreciated for their innate noble qualities. Bheeshma advised Dhritarashtra to declare Yudishthira as the crown prince of Hastinapur since he was the eldest and was endowed with fine qualities of a king.

Duryodhan's jealousy for the Pandavas increased after hearing that Yudishthira would be declared the crown prince. Out of anger, Duryodhan planned to kill the Pandavas so that he can ascend the throne of Hastinapur. One day Duryodhan approached his father, Dhritarashtra, and requested him to send the Pandavas to the annual Pashupati fair in Varnavat, a place far away from Hastinapur. Ignorant of any foul play, Dhritarashtra asked the Pandavas to attend the fair.

Duryodhan, on the other hand, secretly ordered his trusted partner Purochana, to make a special palace, with highly inflammable materials, for the Pandavas. His heinous plan was to burn the Pandavas alive while sleeping. According to the plan, Purochana would guard the palace and would put it on fire on the following dark night.

However, Vidur, uncle of the Pandavas, and their well wisher, came to know of Duryodhan's heinous plan and alerted Yudishthira. Yudishthira did not want to make a big deal out of this matter, since the Pandavas were not yet ready to fight back. So he decided to handle this in a clandestine manner. In order to allow the Pandavas to gain time, Vidur sent a miner to Varnavat to secretly dig an escape tunnel from the palace. The tunnel would lead into a nearby dense forest, an area easy enough for the Pandavas to hide.



On the night when the heinous deed was about to be performed, Bheema bolted Purochana's room from outside and set the house on fire. Then the Pandavas escaped through the tunnel into the forest. At the site of the massive conflagration, the people of Varnavat came rushing to extinguish the fire. However, the highly flammable palace burnt to ashes quickly. Everyone thought that the Pandavas were burnt in the fire. Soon, the news reached

Hastinapur. Dhritarashtra and Bheeshma were shocked to hear the news. Duryodhan was elated to hear it, but outwardly acted to be sad .

After many miles of walk through the forest, the Pandava brothers and mother Kunti laid down under a banyan tree, hungry and thirsty. Bheema went to get the water but



when he came back, he saw everyone in deep sleep. Bheema stayed awake to guard them.

The forest was a hunting reserve of a fearful demon called Hidimb. He lived with his sister Hidimba on a huge tree, near the place where the Pandavas were resting. As soon as Hidimb smelled the presence of humans, he asked his sister Hidimba to kill them for their dinner. Hidimba reached the place and saw Bheema guarding the Pandavas. After seeing the muscular body of Bheema, she instantaneously fell in love with him. So she transformed herself into a beautiful maiden and approached Bheema. Bheema also fell in love with Hidimba at the first sight. On Hidimba's inquiry, Bheema explained the reason for his family to hide in the forest. Hidimba sympathized and promised to help them. In the meantime, Hidimb got impatient and came down from the tree in search of his sister. When he saw his sister making love to his intended prey, he became furious. He attacked Bheema instantly. Bheema pulled him away to a distance so that his family could rest. A terrible fight ensued. Finally Hidimb was killed by Bheema.

When the family of Pandavas got up, Kunti noticed a beautiful maiden standing near Bheema. She inquired and Hidimba explained what had just happened. She further requested Kunti to permit her son Bheema to marry her. Hidimba promised to return Bheema to the Pandavas after the birth of a child. Kunti and her four sons were impressed by Hidimba and agreed to accept her as Bheema's wife.

Following a short ceremony, Hidimba and Bheema left for the land of beauty. In course of time, a child was born who was named Ghatotkacha. Ghatotkacha grew up in no time and, like his father, became a great warrior. Bheema returned to his family with his son and wife. As promised, Hidimba left with her son after a short visit and Ghatotkacha promised to return to the Pandavas whenever called.

After some time of hiding in the forest, the Pandavas began to plan to leave the forest when Veda Vyas arrived. He consoled the Pandavas and assured them that justice will finally avail. He advised them to have patience and to endure their current hardship. On the advice of Veda Vyas, Kunti and her five sons went to a nearby town, called Ekachakra. They stayed with a Brahmin family, disguised as Brahmins. The Pandavas lived on begging alms and chanting prayers.

One day, while Kunti was resting at noon, she heard wailings inside the Brahmin's house where they were staying. Considering it to be a part of their duty to stand beside their host at the time of adversity, Kunti went to inquire of their misery.

The Brahmin told the horror story that this village was cursed by a demon called Bakasur. When he came into the town of Ekachakra from nowhere, he was killing

people at random and destroying the village. Finally the leader of the town made a deal with Bakasur asking him to stay in the nearby forest. Every day the town will send to him a cartload of food drawn by two buffaloes, driven by a person drawn by lot. Bakasur will eat the food, the buffaloes and the driver. Kunti immediately guessed that it must be the turn of the host-family that day to send a driver. To the surprise of all, Kunti offered her help.

"I have five children and I will send Bheema to meet the demon. He is strong enough to kill the demon and free the town from his clutch forever. The only request that I will make is to keep it a secret and not to reveal our identity."

Bheema met Bakasur and ignoring him began to eat his food in front of him. Bakasur got furious and attacked Bheema. A fearful fight soon ensued and Bakasur was killed. Bheema secretly dragged his body at night to the entrance of the town and left it there for the people to witness.



Next morning, the citizens were surprised to see the dead body of Bakasur. They rejoiced to their heart's content. When they asked the Brahmin, the host of the Pandavas, he only said, "It is all God's will. Let us thank Him for removing the menace for good."



Later on, while at Ekachakra, the Pandavas heard from a traveler that Drupad, the king of Panchal, was holding a swyambara for getting his beautiful daughter Draupadi married to the best of the princes. In those days, swyambara was a royal ceremony where the suitors competed in certain events and the winner got the hand of the princess. The Pandavas knew Drupad whom they humbled before their guru Dronacharya. Drupad did not have any child. He performed a Yagna (fire worship) so

devotedly that a boy and a girl sprung out of the fire. The boy was named Dhritasthadyumna and the girl, Draupadi. Draupadi was well known for her stunning

beauty and many princes aspired to win her hand. Pandava brothers also decided to attend the swyambara ceremony, disguised as Brahmins.

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## **Pandavas marry Draupadi and return to Hastinapur**

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From Ekachakra, the Pandavas, disguised as Brahmins, arrived at Panchal to attend the swyambara ceremony of Draupadi. They already had heard of the heavenly beauty of Draupadi, the daughter of king Drupad.

At the swyambara assembly, the Pandavas sat next to other Brahmins, away from the royal dignitaries. No one in the assembly recognized the Pandavas. Krishna, the king of Dwarka, was present as an honored guest.

At the appropriate time, king Drupad greeted and honored all the participants and announced that his daughter Draupadi was going to enter the venue. Amidst the sounds of bugles, drums and melodious music, princess Draupadi, accompanied by her brother Dhrishtadyumna, entered the swyambara hall. As soon she entered, all eyes turned to her. She looked like a heavenly nymph.

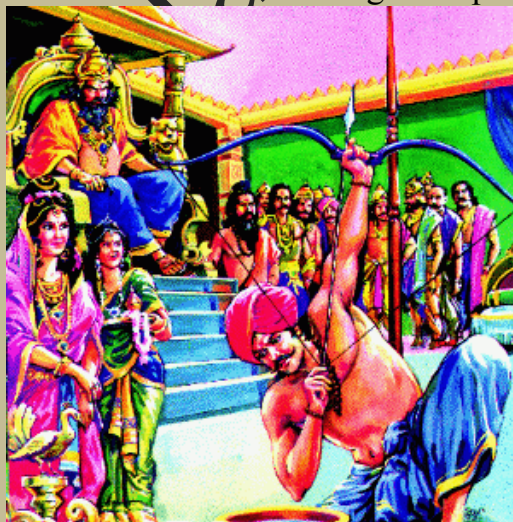
Within a short while, Dhrishtadyumna addressing the gathering said, "Honorable princes, you can see a fish hanging from a revolving wheel fixed on the top of a pole. The reflection of the fish is seen in a wide pan full of oil, placed at the bottom of the pole. The competitor, who hits the eye of the fish while looking at the image, shall win the hands of my sister Draupadi."

A bow with arrows had been placed on the stage for the feat.

The event began and a number of princes came forward and tried their luck one after another. But none of them were successful. One by one, they returned to their seats with a fallen face.

When Karna's turn came Draupadi spoke out. She refused to marry Karna for lack of royal lineage. Karna was the son of a charioteer. Karna left the hall in resentment.

Drupad and Dhrishtadyumna were getting worried since all of the princes present at the function had failed. Finally, Arjuna, in the disguise of a Brahmin got up and advanced towards the stage. People were amazed to see a Brahmin challenging the



valiant princes. Being a Brahmin in disguise, who belong to a superior cast than the Kshatriyas (the warrior princes), Arjuna could not be stopped.

"He must have gone crazy!" remarked one of the Brahmins. Staying calm and composed, Arjuna picked up the bow and arrow. He looked down at the reflection of the fish in the oil pan and drew the cord of the bow and shot the arrow. In a

flash, the arrow darted with a twang and pierced the eye of the fish. People could not believe that a Brahmin could master the skill of archery better than any prince could.

The princes felt insulted and came forward to kill Arjuna. Immediately the rest of the Pandavas grouped together to defend Arjuna. Soon enough, all the people realized the strength and skill of the five brothers, the Pandavas. Finally, Krishna stepped in and asked the frustrated princes to take their failure gracefully and the fighting stopped.

Duryodhana guessed that the winner must be Arjuna, and the four other Brahmins must be the Pandava brothers. He was amazed as to how they could escape the fire at Varnavat.

The Pandavas returned home with Draupadi as Arjuna's wife. Kunti was waiting for them thinking that her five sons will return home soon with their daily collection of alms.

Yudhishtira spoke after reaching home, "Look mother what have we brought for you today!"

Kunti was inside and did not see what Yudhishtira was talking about. So she casually said without looking to them, "Divide it equally among yourselves." But soon she noticed Draupadi and felt highly embarrassed at what she had said. She repented, "My sons, I was under an impression that you had brought something special by way of alms from some charitable wealthy person. That is why I directed you to share it equally."

Once spoken, Kunti's words could not be taken back and her dedicated five sons took Draupadi as their common wife. Draupadi accepted. She soon knew that the five brothers were the Pandavas. She then thanked her stars for becoming a bride of the royal family of Hastinapur.

After the swayambara, Dhritadyumna, Draupadi's brother, stealthily followed the five Brahmin brothers and found out their identities. Happily he returned home and informed his father Drupada that they are none but the Pandavas. The royal family immediately decided to throw a party in celebration. During the celebration, the identities of the Pandavas were revealed and King Drupad became their close allies.

News reached Hastinapur. Bheeshma advised Dhritarashtra to give half of the kingdom to the Pandavas. Duryodhana did not like this idea but kept quiet and waited for the next opportunity to wipe off the Pandavas.

Dhritarashtra sent Vidur, the Prime Minister, to king Drupada for the return of the Pandavas to Hastinapur. Pandavas agreed and they proudly returned to Hastinapur along with Kunti and Draupadi. Upon their arrival, a grand welcome was accorded to the princes whom people believed to have died in the fair. They were delighted to see them and joined the celebration.

The Pandavas touched the feet of all the elders, Bheeshma, Dhritarashtra, Vidur, Dronacharya and others, and were happy to be back. Dhritarashtra, in consultation with other members of the cabinet, offered Khandavprastha to the Pandavas to settle. Yudhishtira, modest and accommodating as he was, accepted the offer and proceeded to Khandavprastha, their own kingdom.



In due course of time, the Pandavas made Indraprastha as the capital of Khandavprastha. Indraprastha took the shape of a beautiful township with an impressive palace. People were happy and loved their king, Yudhishtira.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, Narada advised the Pandavas to draw up a code of conduct whereby each brother was to enjoy Draupadi's company in complete privacy. If this was interrupted, the violator was to go into exile for a period of twelve years.

Everything was going smooth until one day, a Brahmin came wailing bitterly to Arjuna. Thieves had stolen his cows. Arjuna consoled and promised to go after the thieves. But he suddenly realized that his weapons were left in Draupadi's bedchamber and Yudhishtira was enjoying her company at that time. Arjuna was in a dilemma. But he chose to violate the code and go for the exile instead of falling short in his promises to the Brahmin. He knocked the door, begged excuse, picked up his bow and arrow, and went after the thieves.

Arjuna returned after restoring the cows to the Brahmin. Then he came straight to his elder brother Yudhishtira and apologized for breaking the code.

Arjuna said, "I am guilty of violating our mutually agreed arrangement and now I seek your permission to go into exile for twelve years."

Yudhisthira tried to persuade Arjuna to change his mind by arguing that he entered the private room in order to protect his subject and not for any personal reason. But Arjuna insisted to obey the rules laid down by sage Narada without making any exception and soon left for the forest.

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## **Mahabharata for children(Part 4) - Arjuna's exile for twelve years**

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Sabyasachi Guharay*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

Picture acknowledgements : Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India

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From Indraprastha, Arjuna first went to the Himalayas and passed his time in the company of sages, attending their discourses and performing the religious rituals.

One day Ulupi, daughter of the Naga king, who was the ruler of the serpent world under water, saw Arjuna engaged in his religious pursuits. Arjuna's handsome personality always attracted the damsels. Ulupi was no exception. She immediately fell in love and decided to abduct Arjuna and marry him. So, when Arjuna went for a bath in the river, she grabbed him and took him to her father's under water palace. Arjuna was puzzled by the abduction and asked Ulupi about her intentions.

Ulupi explained, "I am the princess of the Naga kingdom. I am sorry for the inconvenience caused to you. I have brought you here to make you my husband. You have no way to escape."

Arjuna had no choice. He accepted the proposal offered by Ulupi and stayed with her for a while. Then one day Arjuna appealed to Ulupi the reason for his inability to continue staying with her when he was expected to travel during his period of exile. Ulupi agreed and returned Arjuna to the surface. Before bidding him farewell, she gave Arjuna a boon of protection from the bite of any water creature.

Arjuna then went on a long journey towards the east and finally reached Manipur. Chitravahana was then the king of Manipur. He accorded him a warm welcome and Arjuna decided to stay with him for a while. Chitravahana had a beautiful daughter, Chitrangada.

Arjuna was fascinated by Chitrangada's beauty and decided to marry her. So he approached Chitravahana asking for Chitrangada's hand in marriage. Chitravahana was happy, but he put a condition for the marriage.

"Chitrangada is my only child and I do not have an heir to continue my dynasty. So, I have decided to adopt her son. If you plan to marry Chitrangada, you must give me her son who will be the crown prince of my kingdom."

Arjuna accepted the condition and married Chitrangada. Finally, a son was born after three years whom Chitravahana adopted. Then Arjuna continued his journey, as expected, leaving Chitrangada in Manipur. After leaving Manipur, Arjuna moved southward reaching the seashore (close to the present pilgrimage center of Puri). There he was once again in the company of sages and saints.



One day, the sages complained to Arjuna that the nearby waters were infested with ferocious crocodiles. They had to go a long way to other back waters in order to take a bath. Arjuna promised to do away with the crocodiles. Mindful of Ulupi's boon, Arjuna jumped into the waters to kill the crocodiles. Soon a huge crocodile caught his leg and Arjuna promptly dragged the crocodile out of the water. To his utter surprise, the crocodile was instantaneously transformed into a heavenly nymph.

Arjuna asked, "Who are you?"

The nymph answered, "Long ago, my four friends and I were playing in water and offended a sage. The sage cursed us to become crocodiles and stay in water forever. We apologized and begged for mercy. The sage took pity on us and toned the curse down by saying that we would be rescued many years later when a virtuous warrior would pull us out of the water. We would then be transformed into our true self. So, please be kind to rescue my other four friends also."

Arjuna agreed and one by one pulled out the remaining four crocodiles. Like the previous one, they also got back into their real form of heavenly maidens. They all thanked Arjuna heartily for liberating them; they then departed to their heavenly abode.

After a while, Arjuna headed towards Prabhas, located on the west coast of India, to spend time in meditation. There he decided to move to Dwaraka to stay with Krishna, his best friend. Krishna's elder brother Balarama, the king, gave a warm welcome to Arjuna and Arjuna stayed in Dwaraka for few days.

One day Arjuna caught sight of Subhadra, Krishna's sister, and fell in love with her. Balarama, however, already chose Duryodhana as Subhadra's future husband. When Krishna foresaw the situation, he indirectly suggested Arjuna to elope with Subhadra, saying, "A Kshatriya like you never begs to win his lady-love. He wins her hand by force."

Arjuna got the clue. He borrowed Krishna's chariot and forcibly took Subhadra away when she was returning from the temple. Balarama flew into a rage and called for Krishna before waging war against Arjuna. He had guessed that the abduction must have been committed with the connivance of Krishna.

Balarama burst out at Krishna. "It is disgraceful to tolerate the misdoing of Arjuna, your best friend. I could never imagine that a royal guest like him will return our favor by this mean act. What do you have to say before we go after Arjuna?"

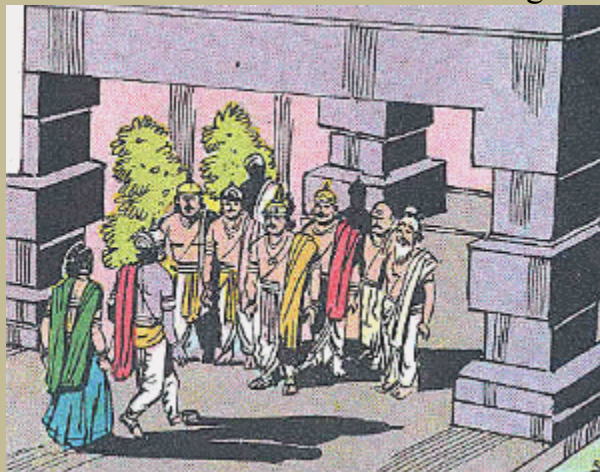
Krishna heard the allegations carefully and spoke in a pacifying mood.

"Brother Balarama, isn't it a pride for us to be related to the Pandavas? They will be our strong allies. Arjuna is invincible, and if we are defeated, it will be more disgraceful. I will suggest that we honorably call Arjuna back and arrange for a royal marriage between Subhadra and Arjuna."

Balarama comprehended the gravity of the situation and realized the odds of winning a fight against Arjuna. Thus, he soon arranged for their royal marriage and Arjuna moved to Pushkar, near modern Ajmer. Here he spent the rest of his period of exile.



After the completion of the exile period, Arjuna returned to Indraprastha with Subhadra. As Arjuna went to see Yudhishtira to pay his respect, Subhadra went to see Kunti and touched her feet with great reverence. Draupadi was quite upset in the beginning but Subhadra's humility won her heart in no time.



"Sister, kindly accept me as your maid-in-attendance" said Subhadra in a humble voice.

Balarama and Krishna came to Indraprastha to join the celebration of Arjuna's return and strengthening their ties with the Pandavas as their in-laws. After few days Balarama returned to Dwaraka

and Krishna chose to stay behind.

In due course of time, Subhadra gave birth to a lovely son who was named Abhimanyu. Draupadi gave birth to five sons - one from each of her husband. Gradually the princes of the Pandavas grew up to their manhood as strong as their parents and uncles and everyone was proud of them.



## **Mahabharata for children(Part 6) - Indraprastha Lost**

*Narrated by: Grandpa Edited by: Monisha Chakravarthy*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

**Picture acknowledgements : Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India**

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On the way to Hastinapur, Shakuni revealed his evil plan to Duryodhana. He said, "Yudhishtira is fond of the game of dice, and none can beat me in this game because I use charmed dice. Your job is to persuade your father, Dhritarashtra, to invite Yudhishtira to play dice with me in the presence of all the dignitaries in the court. Leave the rest to me."

When Duryodhana reached Hastinapur, he went straight to Dhritarashtra and narrated the prosperous condition of the Pandavas. Dhritarashtra was a nice man and was pleased to hear that his brother's sons, the Pandavas, were doing well.

Finding an appropriate moment, Duryodhana asked "Father, let us have a special celebration to exemplify our friendliness with the Pandavas by inviting them to Hastinapur. We will also invite other dignitaries to this occasion where the top attraction and excitement will be the dice game between Yudhishtira and our maternal uncle Shakuni."

Dhritarashtra did not comprehend the evil plan of Duryodhana and Shakuni. He was blind and had been indulgent towards his eldest son, Duryodhana. So, he permitted Duryodhana to have his way.

The invitation of the dice game went to Yudhishtira and he accepted. The Pandavas arrived on the previous day along with Draupadi leaving behind their mother Kunti and their children with Subhadra. The Pandavas rested for the night in the guesthouse and reached the gambling hall on the following day, the day of the royal dice game. Other royal dignitaries also arrived and Dhritarashtra and his courtiers welcomed them.

Before the starting of the game Shakuni wished Yudhishtira good luck and said, "Your majesty! Let us decide about the stakes."

Yudhishtira remarked, "Uncle, let us keep the game fair."

Shakuni was a professional gambler and he knew the weakness of his challenger. He retorted, "Yudhishtira, let the dice decide our luck. Play fearlessly if you have the courage and accept whatever comes out of it. If you are afraid, you can refuse and quit now. There is no quitting after this."

Yudhishtira's pride was hurt. He did not want to withdraw in front of the dignitaries who came there to witness the game. He proudly said, "You may call for the stake and I will agree to that."

Duryodhana was waiting for the opportunity, he spoke at once, "I shall put the stakes and uncle Shakuni shall throw the dice for me. Is it acceptable to you?"

Yudhishtira agreed.

Yudhishtira was no match for Shakuni. Using his charmed dice Shakuni won every game. Eventually, Yudhishtira lost everything, his riches, his kingdom, his brothers and finally even himself. Last of all, he staked his wife Draupadi and lost her too.

Duryodhana asked his brother Dushashana to bring Draupadi to the court. When Dushashana reached the guesthouse, Draupadi was unaware of the calamity that had befallen on her family. She was amazed to hear that Yudhishtira gambled away every thing that the Pandavas owned. Draupadi refused to go to the court. Dushashana, in the pretext of carrying out the orders of his elder brother dragged her into the court by her hair.

Karna got this chance to humiliate the Pandavas in public and got even with the insults that the Pandavas showered on him in the past. He asked Duryodhana to order to remove off the royal garments that the Pandavas and their wife Draupadi were wearing. Dushashana could not find a better way to insult Draupadi in public.



Draupadi looked around but there was no one who could rescue her. She finally called for Krishna to save her honor. As Dushashana pulled her saree to disgrace her, Krishna invisibly supplied the sarees one after another and Draupadi could not be undressed.

When Dushashana got tired of pulling the saree, Duryodhana ordered Draupadi, "You are now my maid, sit on my thigh."

Bheema could not tolerate the insults any longer and shouted, "I am taking this vow that one day I will drink blood from Dushashana's heart and break the thigh of Duryodhana for insulting a chaste woman in public."

Draupadi charged the elders with anger, "It is a shame for the race of Kshatriyas, the descendants of Bharata, to allow a chaste woman of their own family to be disgraced before their very eyes. I condemn the elders, the so called warriors, sitting here and watching me disgraced."

Dhritarashtra was shaken up. He asked his sons to stop and he apologized to Draupadi for fear of the curse that may befall on the Kauravas.

Then he asked Duryodhana to accept an alternative to release the Pandavas from the slavery. Duryodhana agreed to banish them for thirteen years before they return to Hastinapur along with the condition that they should be incognito during the thirteenth year. If their identity is disclosed on the thirteenth year, they would have to go for an exile of another thirteen years.

Upon Draupadi's request Dhritarashtra returned all the weapons to the Pandavas and bade good bye, wishing them well. The Pandavas returned to Indraprastha for the last time to make arrangements for their mother to stay with their uncle, Vidur and Subhadra, Arjuna's wife, with her brother, Krishna, along with the children.

The Pandavas faced hard times as they started their exile. It was difficult for the Pandava brothers to get enough food to satisfy their hunger. Yudhishtira prayed for the sun god, Surya, with his utmost sincerity. The Sun god came and presented Yudhishtira with a miraculous copper plate.

"Give this plate to Draupadi. It will go on giving you whatever dishes you want every day till Draupadi finishes her meal."

After returning home from his daily worship, Yudhishtira gave the copper bowl to Draupadi and told her everything that sun god had said. Draupadi was very pleased to hear of the boon and took the bowl to her kitchen with great reverence. The Pandavas soon invited all sages and saints to share food with them.

One day Vyasa arrived to pay his sympathy for the Pandavas. He predicted, "After thirteen years, following your period of exile, there will be a fearful war with the Kauravas when you return to Hastinapur. Finally you will come out victorious. The war will leave only a few survivors of the descendants of Bharata. It will be wise if you start preparing yourself for the oncoming battle. Hence start to acquire as many divine weapons as you can during your exile."

## **Mahabharata for Children(Part 7) - Arjuna's Quest for Weapons**

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Ashoke Khanwalkar*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

**Picture acknowledgements: Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India**

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Following Vyas's advice Arjuna started for Mount Kailash. Reaching Indrakeel, a site inhabited by sages on Mount Kailash, he chose a spot to meditate. He soon went into deep meditation to invoke Shiva. After a long time, Shiva was pleased and decided to fulfill his wishes. Lord Shiva knew what Arjuna will ask but he did not want to give away his divine weapon, Pashupat, without testing Arjuna's readiness to receive it. So Lord Shiva disguised himself as a hunter and started for Indrakeel. Parvati also accompanied him as his wife. The disciples of Shiva (the ganas) were curious and came along in the disguise of women hunters.

When they reached the spot where Arjuna was meditating, they saw a wild boar attacking Arjuna. Arjuna was alerted and aimed at the boar with his bow and arrow. Lord Shiva simultaneously aimed at the wild boar. Soon the arrows, from Lord Shiva and Arjuna, struck the boar and it instantly died.

Arjuna was disturbed by seeing that his prey was shot at by another person. He challenged the hunter without knowing his identity. This resulted in a big fight between the hunter and Arjuna. Finally Arjuna was exhausted. He requested the hunter to give him time to pray to Lord Shiva to regain strength. The hunter smiled and allowed him the time.

Arjuna made an image of Lord Shiva and prayed to him to revive his strength. When he put the garland on the image, to his surprise, he saw the garland on the neck of the hunter. He realized that the hunter was none else but Lord Shiva. He fell at Lord Shiva's feet and offered his sincere reverence.



Having been highly pleased at Arjuna's devotion, Lord Shiva asked him to demand whatever he wanted as a boon. Arjuna requested for the Pashupat weapon from Shiva to be used during the war against the Kauravas. Lord Shiva handed over the Pashupat weapon to Arjuna with the blessing to acquire the capacity to use it at will. Then he disappeared with Parvati and his ganas.

When Shiva disappeared, all the other gods and goddesses appeared to congratulate Arjuna and offered their divine weapons in order to fight for the right cause against the Kauravas. Arjuna expressed his sincere gratitude to all of them for helping him.

Lord Indra invited Arjuna to visit Indralok, his abode. Soon a chariot arrived and Arjuna left for Indralok.

Arjuna arrived at Indra's palace at Amravati in no time and was amazed by its matchless beauty. He was received with due honor as he was the son of Indra. While at Indra's court, Arjuna learned music and dance from Chitransen, chief of Gandharvas,

When Arjuna met Urbashi, he addressed her as "Mother." Urbashi was a heavenly nymph and Indra's court dancer. She was exquisitely beautiful and young forever. Urbashi tried to make love with Arjuna but Arjuna insisted that he stays as her son. Urbashi was hurt and cursed Arjuna to become a eunuch among charming ladies during his last year of exile. Urbashi was charmed by Arjuna's self-control and blessed him by saying, "My curse will prove to be a boon during the last year of your exile in order to conceal your identity."

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## **Mahabharata for children(Part 8) - Duryodhana humbled**

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Ashoke Khanwalkar*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

**Picture acknowledgements: Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India**

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At the conclusion of his stay in Amravati Arjuna prepared to return to his brothers. Indra gave him the weapon of Bajra, and taught him how to use it. Arjuna came back to his family on Indra's chariot and all Pandava brothers were happy to see him back.

Through a messenger Duryodhana learnt that the Pandavas were staying in the Dwitavana forest as ascetics. They decided to go there for a hunting game along with Shakuni and Karna. The idea was to start a quarrel with the Pandavas and then kill them.

Indra heard about this and sent the chief of the Gandharvas, Chitrassen. in order to give



a lesson to Duryodhana so that he stayed humble in the future and stopped bothering the Pandavas. The Gandharvas were good not only in music but also in war games.

Chitrassen came to Dwitavana along with his army and confronted Duryodhana. In the following skirmish, Duryodhana and his party were taken captive. Duryodhana was brought before Yudhishtira. Yudhishtira asked Chitrassen to free his cousin brother but

Chitrassen insisted that Duryodhana must apologize for his heinous plan. Duryodhana had no choice. He apologized and the Kauravas returned to Hastinapur.

Dhritarashtra and Bhishma heard about the encounter with the Pandavas, and they too asked Duryodhana to make peace with the Pandavas and share the kingdom with them. Duryodhana refused.

As for the Pandavas, they continued their exile in Dwitavana. At one point, Yama, the god of death, appeared to test Yudhishtira for his steadfast faith in truth. Yudhishtira surpassed his evaluation. Yama was pleased and asked Yudhishtira to request a boon. Yudhishtira requested that Yama protect them through the thirteenth year of exile, because they need to stay undetected according to the condition of the exile. Yamaraj blessed Yudhishtira and asked him to go to king Virata and stay there during the thirteenth year. The Pandavas started to make preparations to move to the kingdom of Virata.

## **Mahabharata for children(Part 9) - Pandava's thirteenth year of exile incognito**

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Monisha Chakravarthy*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

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India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India

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The Pandavas were worried about the successful ending of their thirteenth year of exile, the period which they had to pass unrecognized. Duryodhana has mandated that if the Pandavas were recognized during the thirteenth year of their exile, they would have to remain in exile for another thirteen years.

According to Veda Vyas' advice the Pandavas went to the kingdom of Virata in disguise. In the meantime Duryodhana sent his spies to discover Pandavas' hideout.

Hiding their weapons, the Pandavas entered the kingdom of Virata. They were not recognized by king Virata and he welcomed them. The Pandava brothers and princess Draupadi requested King Virata to give them some jobs. Virata willingly agreed.

Yudhisthira, disguised as a Brahmin, became one of king's trusted advisors. Bheema became the chief cook. Arjuna who had learnt the art of dance and music from Chitransen at Indraloke, was cursed by Urbashi, a beautiful dancer of heaven, to remain a eunuch for a year. So Arjuna found it convenient to become a dance and music teacher for princess Uttara. Nakula became the royal groom and Sahadeva, the royal cowherd. As for Draupadi, she became Queen Sudeshana's maid.



Things were going well until the queen's evil brother, Keechak, the commander of Virata's armies, became interested in Draupadi. Keechak asked for Draupadi's hand in marriage. Draupadi, being happily married to the Pandava brothers, refused. Keechak, thinking her to be only a maid, felt insulted to have been turned down. He decided to force himself into Draupadi's chamber one night. As soon as Draupadi heard of this plan, she begged Bheema to rescue her. Bheema, disguised as Draupadi, lay on the bed. When Keechak stealthily entered Draupadi's room, Bheema sprung out of the bed and killed him.

The next day Keechak's corpse was discovered in Draupadi's room, with no clue as to who was the assailant. To save Bheema from the Queen's wrath, Draupadi told her that Keechak had entered her room, without her permission. When she had screamed, someone had come in and killed Keechak and she had no idea of his identity. The

queen apologized for her brother's misdeeds, but never learnt the truth about Bheema's action.

In the meantime, Duryodhana had sent his men to every corner of the earth to discover the Pandavas' hideout. He knew that if he could locate the Pandavas, who were men of honor, they would never go back on their words and would start their exile all over. He was happy to hear of Keechak's death, as he had been a great threat to his kingdom. But he knew no ordinary man could kill the mighty Keechak and so he suspected that Bheema could be the assailant. He decided to invade the kingdom of Virata. In no time Duryodhana's army attacked Virata while Duryodhana planned to personally attack Virata's palace from the rear.

As the war approached, Yudhishtira offered the services of himself and his family to Virata. This was an expression of his gratitude towards Virata for providing them shelter. All his brothers, except Arjuna, joined the army and in no time captured Susharma.

Duryodhana, unaware of Susharma's captivity, attacked Virata's palace from the rear. The young prince Uttara was the only man left in the palace as all the others had already left for the war.

When the women teased Uttara for hiding in the palace, he came up with the plea that he did not have a charioteer and hence could not go war.

When Arjuna heard of this, he promptly offered his services. He first took the chariot to the tree where he had hid his weapons almost a year ago. Uttara was puzzled but kept quiet, as he was afraid to face the Kaurava army. Arjuna guessed the situation and asked Uttara to take his place as a charioteer while he does the fighting. Uttara agreed.



When Arjuna blew his conch the Kaurava army immediately recognized Arjuna. Duryodhana was happy to locate the Pandavas. But to his utter disappointment Duryodhana soon learned that the thirteenth year had just been completed. Arjuna single handedly defeated the army and Duryodhana fled from the battlefield.

During the victory celebration Yudhishtira explained to Virata the details of their thirteenth year of exile under his protection. All the Pandavas expressed their gratitude to Virata. Virata was overwhelmingly happy and agreed to give his daughter Uttara in marriage to Arjuna's son Abimanyu.

Subhadra and Abhimanyu were called and they came with Krishna and Balarama. The marriage celebration went on for several days uniting the Pandavas with their friends and relatives.

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## **Mahabharata for Children(Part 10) - War Declared**

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Monisha Chakravarthy*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

**Picture acknowledgements: Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
India Book House Pvt. Ltd., Publishers of Amar Chitra Katha, Mumbai, India**

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When Abhimanyu and Uttara's wedding was over, Krishna requested Virata and Drupada to approach Dhritarashtra with the request to return the kingdom of the Pandavas. The Pandavas had, after all, gone through the penalties imposed on them by Duryodhana. Everyone agreed and Sanjaya, the royal priest of king Drupad, was sent as a messenger to visit Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra called Bheeshma, Vidur, and the other elders, to a meeting with Duryodhana, and his supporters.

Duryodhana flatly refused to give even a pinch of land to the Pandavas. His close friends, like Karna were overwhelmingly supported him. They declared that they would be willing to go to war against the Pandavas in order to keep the kingdom. Grandfather Bheeshma was sorry to witness such hatred between the cousins, his grandchildren. He could sense the oncoming peril for the Kauravas. Dhritarashtra could not help. He was blind and his eldest son Duryodhana ruled the kingdom. Duryodhana was adamant to be the sole ruler of the Kaurava Empire and did not want to share the kingdom with the Pandavas.

Sanjay witnessed the arguments in the court of Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra finally gave in and regretfully informed Sanjay that his son Duryodhan was unwilling to share the kingdom with the Pandavas.

Yudhishtira was a righteous person. He wished to avoid a war, especially against his own relatives. He was willing to give up some of the kingdom that originally belonged to him. He requested Krishna to convey his feelings to the Kauravas as the last resort. Krishna knew that war was inevitable yet he went to Duryodhana to persuade.

Reaching Hastinapur, Krishna stayed with Vidur. Kunti, mother of the Pandavas, then staying with Vidur, expressed her concern that the war may kill the Pandavas, Krishna consoled her.



“Mother Kunti, your sons are invincible. Whatever may be the strength of the Kauravas, the Pandavas will finally come out victorious. I am here to make every attempt to avoid the blood shed which will destroy the entire Kaurava dynasty.”

Next day Krishna was given a rousing welcome in the court of Dhritarashtra. All the elders were on Krishna's side and requested Duryodhana to reconsider his decision and share the kingdom with the



Pandavas in a peaceful manner. Duryodhana was unwilling to listen to logic. He sternly replied, “ Krishna! You are unduly partial to the Pandavas. Be it known once and for all that the only way for the Pandavas to win back their kingdom is through war.”

Then in disgust Duryodhana left the court with Karna. People present in the court were gravely concerned about the consequences.

Krishna returned from Hastinapur disappointed and delivered the message of war to Yudhishtira and Kunti’s blessing for the Pandavas. All hopes for a peaceful settlement were over and the Pandavas had no other resort than to declare war against the Kauravas.

Krishna asked Yudhishtira to remain on the path of justice, yet not to forego his rights, even if this may result in a war with the Kauravas.

When Kunti saw that war was imminent, one day she approached Karna when he finished worshipping the sun god after his bath. Karna was the son of the sun god, Surya, born of Kunti, out of wed lock. This happened when Kunti tried out the mantra given by Durbasha before she was married to Pandu. As Kunti was unmarried, she had no choice but to discard Karna in the river. A charioteer picked him up and raised him to adulthood. This was a well kept secret. Karna was truly one of the Pandavas. Kunti finally told Karna the true story of his life.

Kunti requested Karna not to kill any of his brothers. Karna promised to spare all, except Arjuna. Before Kunti's departure, Karna broke down in his mother's arm and sobbed with grief, “Mother, I have to fight Arjuna until death. This is my promise to get even with him for insulting me in public at the time when I challenged him to compete in archery. You will still have five sons, whosoever survives.”



Kunti blessed Karna and left with fear and grief.

## Mahabharata for Children(Part 11) - War Begins

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Bibha Mukherjee*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

Picture acknowledgements : Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
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The Kauravas and the Pandavas began to prepare for the battle. Drishtadyumna was chosen as the chief of the Pandava army. No one could match the valor of Bheeshma who was rightfully chosen to be the commander of the Kaurava army. But for Bheeshma, there was no difference between the Kauravas and Pandavas. It was not the righteous war and yet he was bound by duty to serve the king of Hastinapur.

As Duryodhana approached grandfather Bheeshma to take over the command, Bheeshma laid down two conditions, “Firstly, I will not personally hurt the Pandavas but will kill only their soldiers. Secondly, I would not like Karna to come to the battlefield as long as I am the commander.” Karna and Bheeshma held each other in contempt.

Krishna was also in a similar dilemma. Which side should he join when both the Kauravas and Pandavas were equally dear to him? So when Duryodhana and Arjuna both approached Krishna to join their side, Krishna gave them the choice. He would offer his army to the one and himself to the other side. Arjuna was younger and Krishna gave him the first chance to choose. Arjuna chose Krishna while the army went to Duryodhana. Duryodhana was happy to have Krishna’s huge army of brave Yadavas on his side.

When Krishna asked Arjuna, why he chose him over his army, Arjuna explained. “Your counsel is more valuable to me than an entire army.” Krishna was pleased, as he loved Arjuna so dearly.

Kurukshetra was chosen as the battleground. Both armies marched towards Kurukshetra. Undoubtedly the Kaurava army was a lot larger than the Pandavas.

On the chosen day, the Kaurava and Pandava armies stood face to face. Karna stayed away from the battlefield as mandated by Bheeshma. Yudhishtira, the representative of the Pandava army, came forward and paid respect to his elders, Bheeshma, Drona, Ashwathama and the other great warriors. The codes for the war were finalized and warriors from both the camps took their pledges to abide by the code.

Krishna became Arjuna’s charioteer and counselor. Krishna brought Arjuna’s chariot to the front line for an overview. Seeing all his beloved relatives, including his grandfather, and his teacher Drona on the other side, Arjuna was overwhelmed with grief. He could not justify killing them in order to win the war. He dropped his weapons and refused to fight.

Krishna came forward and taught him how the righteous path was not always an easy one. One had to be willing to fight for what one believed to be right even if it meant sacrificing one's own life. This sermon later came to be known as Bhagvata Geeta.



Krishna said, “Arjuna, may it be known to you that man’s duty lies in performing the duty while the results should be left to God. To oppress others is a sin but to tolerate oppression is a far bigger sin. All those, whom you claim to be your relatives are none but individual souls, unrelated to you, on way to their ultimate destination of uniting with the supreme Lord, the Brahman. Pick up your weapon and fight that is what is ordained to you. Do not think of the consequences.”

With Krishna’s motivation, Arjuna picked up his weapon

and got ready to fight. Amidst the sound of the conch, the neighing of war-horses, the trumpeting of war elephants, and the war cries raised by the soldiers, Arjuna stepped forward to in the name of Justice.

Bheeshma moved with tremendous force killing the Pandava soldiers by the thousands. In spite of all their efforts, the day ended with heavy losses for the Pandavas. This was eye opening for the Pandavas. At night Yudhishtira called a meeting of the army commander Dhrishtadyumna along with his brothers. They planned a new strategy and on the following day Bheeshma could not make as much progress. Duryodhana expected Bheeshma to win the war within a few days. Instead the Kaurava army was losing ground, as Bheeshma was totally engaged with Arjuna. It went on like this for several days and, finally, Duryodhana lost his patience. He taunted Bheeshma as being too old to fight a war. Bheeshma admitted that the Pandavas were blessed with divine powers and that, under the circumstances, he was doing his best. He promised to conclude the war in the next few days or to leave the battlefield. On the tenth day of battle there seemed no end in sight.

The Pandavas were worried. At the rate that they were losing soldiers, they would not be able to hold out too long against Bheeshma. Bheeshma was blessed with the power to choose his time of death. So, he was practically invincible. When the Pandavas were about to give up, Krishna came up with a plan. Krishna knew that Bheeshma would not fight the eunuch, Srikhandi. To Bheeshma, a noble warrior like him would



consider it a disgrace to fight with a eunuch. At one point he had even proudly promised to drop his arms if such a situation ever arose. Krishna knew Bheeshma's weakness and wanted to take advantage of this. So he asked Arjuna to keep Shrikhandi, a eunuch, in front of the chariot while fighting with Bheeshma. This would stop Bheeshma, and Arjuna could take this opportunity to immobilize him with a volley of arrows.

The plan worked and Bheeshma fell down on a bed of arrows. That was the tenth day of war. The fighting stopped so that all could pay respects to a hero of all times.

As he fell to the ground, Bheeshma requested Arjuna to raise his head. Arjuna shot an arrow to give him the headrest. When Bheeshma asked for water to drink. Arjuna shot an arrow into the ground and water gushed out to quench Bheeshma's thirst. Even Karna came to pay



respect to the hero of heroes, grandfather Bheeshma, and sought his blessing. Bheeshma declared his time of death to be when the sun returns towards north or the advent of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. This falls in the middle of January.

After visiting Bheeshma, Duryodhana returned to his camp and was anxious to appoint the next commander-in-chief. Karna suggested the name of Drona and all agreed. Drona had a soft corner for the Pandavas. He knew that the war was due to the ill advice that Duryodhana got from his maternal uncle Shakuni and friend Karna. But he was committed to serve the crown. After taking the command, Drona changed

Bheeshma's tactic and made a special war formation with the intention of capturing Yudhishtira. Drona underestimated the strength and cleverness of Krishna. He failed to capture Yudhishtira. During the scuffle, however, he killed Drupada, the father of Dhrithadyumna, the commander in chief. Dhrithadyumna vowed to kill Drona.

The following day, Drona began to kill the Pandavas with a vengeance and yet victory was not in sight. Upon his return at the end of the day, Duryodhana charged Drona as failing in his duties to capture Yudhishtira. Drona was infuriated and promised to kill

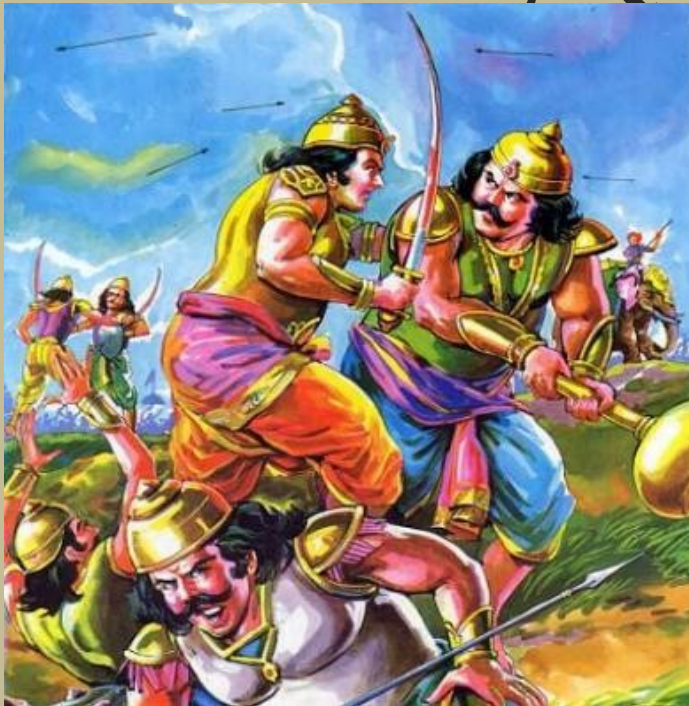


one of the great Pandava warriors on the following day or else he would give up his life.

With the day break, he called for a special meeting asking his best commanders to keep Arjuna busy as he was the only one who knew how to break through his special circular array, called Chakra Beuha. Jaidratha was given the task of organizing the movement of the Beuha. Drona was confident of his victory as no one knew how to break through the Chakra Beuha, except Arjuna. Hence Drona asked all his commanders to prevent Arjuna from coming near the Beuha. It seemed the perfect plan.

The Kaurva army began to march across the Pandava army with the advance of the circular array. It was like a giant wall advancing and crushing the Pandava soldiers. Yudhishtira finally asked his brothers and Abhimanyu for advice. Abhimanyu said, “I only know how to enter the Byuha but I do not know how to get out.” Yudhishtira asked his brothers, Bheema, Nakul and Sahadeva to follow Abhimanyu and fight their way out.

When Abhimanyu started to break through the Chakra Byuha, Jaidratha ordered to quickly close the Byuha entrapping Abhimanyu solitarily inside. His uncles could not get into the Beuha. Abhimanyu single-handed fought all the warriors. Duryodhana, Karna, Drona, Aswathama mercilessly killed the brave son of Arjuna. Abhimanyu’s death sent a current of joy in the Kaurava camp.



When Yudhishtira got the news, he felt responsible for the death of Abhimanyu.. Arjuna had not heard as yet of his valiant son’s death until the end of the day. He immediately broke down and fell senseless on the ground. It was an unjust fight. The code of the war called for a fair fight between two soldiers and not a ganging up against a single soldier. Arjuna vowed to kill Jaidratha, the person who had plotted the Chakra Beuha. He swore he would either kill Jaidrata the next day before the sunset, or else, he would kill himself.

When Jaidratha heard of Arjuna’s vow, he wanted to run away from the battlefield. Drona assured him that he would make such a Byuha next day, keeping him in the

center of the Byuha that Arjuna would not be able to get to him. All the warriors of the Kauravas were also alerted that the following day might prove to be the decisive battle. If Arjuna could not kill Jayadratha, he would kill himself and thus the Kauravas would be able to get rid of one of the most powerful warriors of the Pandavas.

The fighting resumed the next day. Arjuna penetrated into the Byuha but was unable to reach Jaidratha until close to sunset. Krishna was alarmed.

“Arjuna it seems that you will not be able to get to Jayadratha before sunset.” Krishna said, “Let us work jointly and when I will give you the cue, you will get your last chance to kill Jayadratha.”

Soon Krishna created an illusion by which the sun set on the west and the Kaurava army began to rejoice, relaxed in their effort to resist Arjuna any longer. Krishna asked Arjuna not to lose his only opportunity to kill Jayadratha. Arjuna lost no time and Jayadratha was beheaded. Soon Krishna removed his illusion and the Kaurava army was surprised to see that the sun was still up. They realized that Krishna had tricked them and the Pandava army rejoiced.

Duryodhana was furious and blamed Drona for not being able to keep his promise and, therefore, he should now step down. Drona promised to end the war the next day by killing Arjuna. Krishna was alerted. He conferred with the Pandavas and revealed a secret that would allow Arjuna to win against Drona.

“Drona once promised to himself that he would stop fighting if his only son Aswathama was killed in the battle field. As Aswathama was practically invincible, Krishna would have to trick him into believing this. Yudhishtira would have to tell a lie that Ashwathama was dead. As Yudhishtira never told a lie, Drona would believe him. Drona would stop fighting and Drishadyumna would get the chance to behead Drona.”

On the following day, Drona attacked Arjuna, his former student. Arjuna successfully defied his attack and fought with equal strength. When the time came to act on Krishna's plan Yudhishtira was hesitant to lie to Drona. Bheema acted promptly. He killed an elephant with the same name Ashwathama and Yudhishtira informed Drona that Aswathama is dead without clarifying that it was not his son but an elephant. As soon as Drona dropped his arms, Drishadyumna beheaded him and Drona was dead. On the other side of the battlefield Bheema killed Dushashana to fulfill his vow for insulting Draupadi.

Ashwathama hearing of his father's death at the end of the day was furious and promised to kill Drishadyumna the next day to avenge his father's death.

Karna was chosen as the next commander in chief of the Kaurava army and he took over the command with great zeal. His superior fighting skills completely baffled the Pandava army and this ended with great losses for the Pandavas. Bheema called his son Ghatotkacha to fight for the Pandavas. Ghatotkacha attacked the Kauravas at night creating an illusionary air. Duryodhana asked his army to put on the light and continue to fight through the night. The code of war, as agreed upon, was broken. The weapons from Gatotkacha were coming from the sky but no one could locate Gototkacha. The army fled in panic and Karna could not get them back to fight. Finally, Duryodhana used up his most powerful weapon, Brahmastra, which he was holding to kill Arjuna.

When Bheema heard of his son's valiant death, he broke down. Krishna said in consolation, "Bheema, you should be proud of your son's valiant death. Single handedly, he pushed back the Kaurava army. He has also sacrificed his life to save Arjuna otherwise Brahmashta would have surely have killed him."

The army mourned the death of Gatotkacha and prepared themselves to fight again on the following day. It was the day when Karna was in command of the Kaurava army. He decided to have his final battle with Arjuna that day. Arjuna was also ready for him. The armies of the Kaurava and Pandava were skeptical of the outcome as both were equally powerful. When Karna proceeded towards Arjuna on the battlefield, Yudhishtira came in between and Karna cut his weapons in pieces. He spared Yudhishtira's life as he had promised to Kunti. Karna soon stood face to face with Arjuna. Suddenly Karna's charioteer was killed and one of the chariot's wheels broke down. Karna requested Arjuna to stop fighting while his wheel was fixed. Karna was unarmed and it was unethical for Arjuna to attack Karna in that situation. But Krishna spoke otherwise, "Karna, this war itself is unethical. It will be foolish of Arjuna not to take this opportunity to kill you."

Krishna encouraged Arjuna to kill Karna instantly. Thus Karna was killed mercilessly in the hands of his brother Arjuna. The Kaurava army began to flee away from the battlefield.

Duryodhana was shocked to hear of Karna's death. He felt helpless. He could not find anyone to replace Karna or get his army organized. His vanity did not prompt him to accept defeat . So he chose to run





away from the battlefield along with his maternal uncle Shakuni. Sahadeva located Shakuni and killed him but Duryodhana escaped. It was the sixteenth day of war. The battlefield was nothing but heaps of corpses.

On the eighteenth day of the Mahabharata war, Duryodhana was missing and the Kaurava army chose to surrender. Duryodhana was finally located inside a tank from where he was pulled out. Bheema challenged Duryodhana to a mace fight.

Duryodhana was noted for his mace fights. Everyone witnessed the great fight between Bheema and Duryodhana, which went on for many hours until Krishna convinced Bheema to hit Duryodhana on his thigh in order to win. Hitting an enemy below the navel was not allowed in a fair mace fight. But Bheema took Krishna's advice thus he kept his vow of breaking Duryodhana's thigh to punish him for insulting Draupadi by asking her to sit on his lap after that ill-fated dice game.

The Pandavas then left Duryodhana in the battlefield and started to return to their camp. Before their departure, the Pandavas thanked Krishna for bringing victory to them through his valuable advice.

Although the war was over on the eighteenth day, three warriors of the Kauravas were still missing at large – Aswathama, Kripacharya and Kritaverma. Kripacharya and Kritaverma accepted their defeat and went to the forest to spend their time in prayers. Ashwathama, however, desired revenge. He planned to wipe out the Pandava family. The Pandavas were on their way home after the war. Ashwathama stealthily entered the camp at night, killed the guard and then killed all of Draupadi's sons, one by one, in cold blood. Then he came to Duryodhana before the daybreak where he was lying in pain. He described the heinous crime that he had just committed. Duryodhana breathed his last breath and Aswathama fled into the forest.

When the Pandavas returned to camp, they witnessed the crime incurred by Aswathama. Draupadi was lost in grief and bewailed loudly. Consoling her to be pacified, the five Pandavas set out in search of Ashwathama. He was soon located but Draupadi asked the Pandavas to release him as he was the son of their guru Drona.

Thus at the end of the war, there was no one left to claim the throne of Hastinapur after the Pandavas, except the unborn baby of Uttara, the son of Abhimanyu.

## Mahabharata for children(Part 12) - After The War

*Narrated by: Grandpa, Edited by: Bibha Mukherjee*

**Courtesy: Association of Grandparents of Indian Immigrants (AGII)**

Picture acknowledgements: Dreamland Publications, Delhi, India ,  
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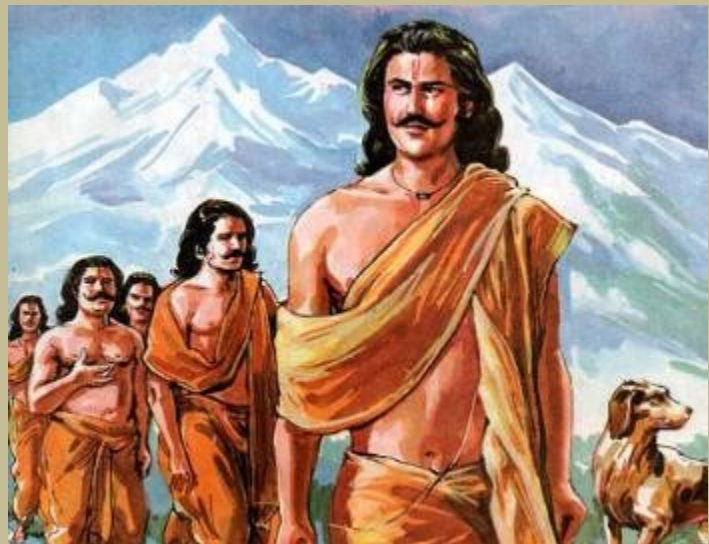
Pandavas then started for Hastinapur to meet Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra was fully aware of the happenings of the war through Sanjay, the priest of Drupada. Sanjay was blessed with the power of watching the war from a distance and narrated it to blind Dhritarashtra as it happened. Gandhari and Dhritarashtra were mad at Bhishma for killing their sons, Duryodhana and Dushashana.

Krishna accompanied the Pandavas to meet Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. Vidur joined them to help console his brother, Dhritarashtra.

Krishna spoke, “King Dhritarashtra, the war was inevitable. The war has hurt everyone. The Pandavas were left with no heir. The heat of the war forced both the parties, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, to perform many inhuman acts. Now is the time to open your heart and accept Yudhishtira as your son and bless the Pandavas.” Krishna’s words touched Dhritarashtra and he broke down on Vidur. Yudhishtira touched the feet of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, they blessed the Pandavas. Yudhishtira was accepted as the king of Hastinapur.

Gandhari, however, was unable to excuse Krishna whom she blamed to be the root of exterminating her children. She cursed Krishna, “Let your family face the same as the Kauravas and be wiped out from the face of the earth.” Krishna knew that this was going to come sooner or later.

The party then arrived to the place where Bheeshma was still resting,



waiting for his departure from the earth. Bheeshma blessed the Pandavas and his soul left for the heaven. Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti and Vidur left for the forest to pass their time in meditation and prayers. Sanjay went along with them to take care of their needs. Unfortunately they all died in a forest fire and Sanjay came back to give this heart breaking news to the Pandavas.

Yudhishtira declared to perform the Aswamedha Yajna to establish the supremacy of the Pandavas over other rulers of the area. The people were pleased to see justice coming back and peace prevailed. As time rolled on, Uttara, wife of Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna and Subhadra, gave birth to Parikshit. He was the only heir left of Pandavas and was not killed by Ashwathama as he was in his mother's womb.

In few years Gandhari's curse on Krishna began to work. The Yadav clan began to fight among themselves. Krishna and Balaram also died leaving none to succeed the throne.



When Pandavas heard the news of destruction of the Yadavas and Krishna's demise, they decided to crown the young prince Parikshit and retire to Himalayas. They threw their weapons into the river and started for their endless journey to the top of the Himalayas along with Draupadi. To their surprise, a dog accompanied them.

As they climbed up the mountain, four Pandavas brothers and Draupadi fell dead. The only ones survived were Yudhishtira and the dog who was following at the heels of the party.

When they reached the top of the Himalaya mountain, Indra came on his chariot to get pious and truthful Yudhishtira to heaven. Yudhishtira paid his respect to Lord Indra and asked his companion dog to get into the chariot. Indra was shocked, "A dog to heaven?" When Yudhishtira refused to go to heaven without the dog, the God of Death, Dharmaraj Yama emerged out of the dog and blessed Yudhishtira. Yama was testing the steadfastness of Yudhishtira.

After reaching heaven Yudhishthira joined his family but was surprised to see his cousin brothers settled in the heaven. When asked as what happened to the sins they committed on earth, Narada replied, “In heaven all are equal, the sinner or the pious ones. The happenings on the earth are nothing but the illusion created by our creator.”

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Thus end the great story of Mahabharata -The epic.

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