

**Mahābhārata**  
**As Taught by Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

*This is the ninth part of the serial article, continuation from April 2024 newsletter.*

A Brahmana was standing there watching what was happening. When he asked why they had stopped playing, the boys told him the ball had fallen into the well and sunk. He asked, "Why don't you get it out?"

The boys asked, "How can we get it out?"

"Don't you have bow and arrows?" asked the Brahmana. These are all princes, you know. "Can't you use your bows?"

"How do you get a ball out of deep water with an arrow?" they wondered.

"I will show you," he said. This Brahmana had a ring studded with precious stones, and he removed this ring and dropped it into the well. The sun was directly overhead, and the water was clear. You could see the ring falling down and shining below. You could see the ball down there as well. The Brahmana said, "Now look what I am going to do." He raised his bow and shot an arrow which slipped through the ring, glanced off and stuck into the ball. Then he shot another arrow which split the feathered back end of the first arrow and lodged there. He shot about twenty more arrows that did the same thing, lodging themselves into one another and making one long stick of the shafts. Pulling up on the last arrow, he retrieved the ball.

The Pandavas stood in amazement with their mouths and eyes wide open, "Whaa, who are you, tell us." Thus walked in the great *ācārya* Drona, son of Bharadvaja.

Drona had studied at his father's, Bharadvaja's, *gurukulam*. Also studying there at that time was the boy who would become king of the Panchaladesha, Drupada. Drupada and Drona were classmates and close friends. When the *gurukula* was over, Crown Prince Drupada went home and became the king of Panchala, but before going he told Drona that he wanted him to join him some-

day. Drona then married Shantanu's adopted daughter Krpi, sister of Krpa. Next, Drona decided he wanted to learn archery. Drona was a *brāhmaṇa*, and military skills were not the *dharma* of Brahmanas. Drona had studied *veda* and *vedāṅga*, the *dharma* of Brahmanas, with his father. But that was not enough for him; he wanted to be an archer. He had this urge that was all within reason, all *karma*. Archery became an obsession for him, and he sought a teacher in Bhargava, Parashurama, who was the best available.

"What do you want?" asked Parashurama, "I don't have anything here for you. I have given up everything to live a simple life."

Drona said, "I do not want anything except what you have here, here in your hands. I want to learn archery."

"Hey, Brahmana fellow, if you want to learn archery I will teach you."

Under Bhargava's tutelage Drona mastered the bow and arrow. To Drona it was more compelling than just his commitment to *veda* and the Brahmana life. He wanted to be someone. There was a pressure to prove himself to be somebody. His obsession meant he had to be the number one archer. He became highly skilled in all the martial arts. Because Drona was such a good student, Bhargava thought he should teach this fellow everything. Bhargava loved teaching this Brahmana. He had trouble teaching *kṣatriyas*, but Bhargava taught Drona his entire art.

Drona, busy learning archery, had not been bringing in any income to support his wife Krpi. They lived a very spare life, a life of penury. They had a son, Ashvatthama, the worst fellow in the world, a mean fighter and a good fighter too. He got everything from his father, and at the same time he was another type of Duryodhana. As a child Ashvatthama asked his mother, "Mom, what is this stuff everybody calls milk? How does it taste? Does it taste good?" Krpi was very much upset that they were so poor. She told Drona how much it upset her, and Drona woke up.

*To be continued...*