

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

*This is the fourteenth part of the serial article, continuation from Sep 2024 newsletter.*

Many of the problems between the Pandavas and the Kauravas were the result of Dhrtarashtra's blindness. The kingdom had to be administered on behalf of Dhrtarashtra, though he was king. Now Dhrtarashtra had to name a crown prince. He had to make one of the princes *yuvarājā*, and there was no one eligible except the eldest, Yudhisthira, a Pandava. Certainly Dhrtarashtra did not want a Pandava ruling the kingdom, but the *rājadharma* was set. Dhrtarashtra wanted to see Duryodhana king, but there was no way because Dhrtarashtra would be wronging Bhishma, Drona, Krpa, and Vidura. Dhrtarashtra did not want to go against them and their sense of the royal family's *dharma*. Yudhisthira was anointed crown prince, and he did very well. He was a popular public figure and effective at conducting affairs. He won the admiration, respect and devotion of all the citizens. With Arjuna's and Bhima's support, Yudhisthira subdued all the lesser kings in the region, and they all paid tribute to the crown in Hastinapura.

Pandu had expanded the kingdom, and now his sons furthered the expansion and solidified the empire. Yudhisthira had grown into rulership over his first year, and Duryodhana was fuming, seething. Duryodhana could not stand to hear the praise showered on Yudhisthira, and he shrank from negative comparisons as to what might have happened if he himself had been named king. Meanwhile Dhrtarashtra was fuming in his own way. Dhrtarashtra's insecurity about his disability and his dependence on Bhishma were sensitive points to the Kauravas. The talk of the town was that Yudhisthira should be king, and Dhrtarashtra and Duryodhana were disgusted and defiant. All in the court could see that despite all the kind speech and posturing, Dhrtarashtra was exposed and vulnerable and not impartial in his treatment of Pandu's sons. Dhrtarashtra was a simmering, molten volcano.

Duryodhana was flowing lava, always flowing. One day Duryodhana went

to his father Dhrtarashtra and said, "I cannot stand this anymore. You have made a mistake. You should not have made Yudhisthira the crown prince. Why did you give him *yuvārājā* status? Now the people say I am not fit to be king, yet I am the son of the king. I should be the king irrespective of birth order. I am your son. You cannot make a Pandava king. Do you think I will serve them? I cannot do that. I will be the king."

Dhrtarashtra advised his son to calm down and look objectively, "Do not think like this. Do not be jealous of these people. This is not correct. Pandu was able to expand the kingdom and his heirs are keeping up this growth. They have proved their benefit for this family and for the crown by reestablishing order in the kingdom. Do not wrong them. You cannot afford to wrong them. Pandu was a good man, very loving to me, and more than that, Yudhisthira is a man of *dharma*. All the Pandavas are following *dharma*; you cannot justify going up against them. Therefore just accept them. They are not going to ill treat you, and you are a prince anyway. You will have your place. Do not think that they are going to disrespect you. They are good people and they will strengthen the crown."

Duryodhana said, "Dad, I think you are afraid that somebody is overhearing our discussion. No one else is listening, tell me your mind. Come on, tell me what you think. I know what you think. There is no way the Pandavas should be our kings. Either I am going to die, or I become the king. You can do one thing, Dad. You call them and send them away. Dharmaputra, Yudhisthira, will always follow *dharma*, as you said, and he will always do as you say. You are the eldest, like a father to him, and he will obey. You tell Dharmaputra what I tell you to say. You must tell the Pandavas to go to Varanavata and to stay there for a year."

Varanavata was a place, an island, which did not belong to anybody. That place, a temple and the people, belonged only to Lord Shankara. Nobody ruled that place. "Let the Pandavas stay there for a year. I will take care of everything," said Duryodhana. Dhrtarashtra knew his crafty son was planning something. He asked what his son had in mind. Duryodhana went on, "In the year they are gone

I will create an atmosphere where the people will accept me and completely forget the Pandavas. Then I will proclaim myself king, and they will not be able to do anything about it."

Duryodhana continued, "I know you are worried about what Bhishma will think. Do you know what the truth about Bhishma is? I know Bhishma is totally disinterested. Bhishma knew I poisoned Bhima and what did he do? He did not say a word to me. Deep down, he has got some unwept sorrow inside, and he does not really care what happens anymore. Neither is Bhishma supporting the Pandavas, nor is he supporting us. You know, I came upon him sitting on the riverbank recently and he was crying. I asked him, 'Grandfather, why are you crying? What is wrong?' He told me he was tired. I asked him why he did not take a rest. He said he had a long way to go and he could not rest. Bhishma is depressed and disinterested; he does not mind at all.

"Drona could be against this plan, but actually he cannot be. Why? Because of his only son, Ashvatthama, his weakness. Ashvatthama is my best friend. He teamed up with me because of his father's jealousy towards Arjuna. Drona cannot and will not go against his son. Therefore Drona will be with me. Krpa cannot go away because where Drona is, Krpa, his brother-in-law, will be. Vidura is the only person who is a question mark. He is a low-born person who only talks about *dharma*. He will go on talking about *dharma*, and you may find you like listening to him. You can spend your time listening to *dharma*, and I will rule the kingdom. Send the Pandavas to Varanavata."

In the meantime Dhrtarashtra's mind worked to find what else they could do to get rid of the Pandavas. He called for Shakuni. Shakuni was Duryodhana's uncle. Shakuni, also known as Kanika, was another small fellow, a past master in scheming. Dhrtarashtra told Shakuni that Duryodhana wanted to rule, and he asked Shakuni what should be done. Shakuni had one word of advice,

*To be continued...*