

Mahabaratha Tatparya Nirnaya
- Introduction by Prof.K.T.Pandurangi

Chapter XV

Drona teaches Astravidya

Bhima, Arjuna, and Sahadeva stayed with Sri Krishna for some time and then returned to Hastinapura. Visoka, Sri Krishna's son through Trivakra, also came with them. He became Bhima's charioteer. The Pandavas received education in the spiritual lore from Sri Vedavyasa.

Drona used to live a life without gathering any resources from anybody and with minimum wants. Therefore, his wife was not able to give milk to her son Ashwatthama. She used to give him water mixed with flour instead. Once, Ashwatthama drank milk at the Kaurava camp. He then started crying for milk at home also. Therefore, Drona went to Parashurama to get a cow. Parashurama thought that Drona should be used to kill the supporters of the Pandavas. The supporters of Pandavas were deities. They had taken human form to assist God's plan to destroy the demons born on the Kauravas' side. In turn someone who was quiet strong was required to fight these from kauravas side.

Parshurama though of utilizing Drona and his son Ashwathama for this purpose. Therefore he told Drona that he had no cows but could teach him the scriptures and the weapons. Drona studied under him for twelve years and then went to Drupada. Drupada had studied with Drona under Drona's father Bharadvaja. He had promised Drona half of his kingdom. However, Drupada insulted him by asking how a poor Brahamana could be a friend of a king. Drona was upset and decided to teach him a lesson. He went to Hastinapura with the intention of taking the Pandavas and Kauravas as his disciples. When he went there, they were playing outside the city. In the course of their play, their ball and a ring fell into the well. They were not able to lift them out. Bhima offered to jump into the well and bring it. In the meanwhile, Drona told them that they were Kshatriyas and that they should have been able to retrieve them by using their weapons. The boys asked Drona himself to do so. Drona brought the ball and the ring out of the well and asked the Pandavas and Kauravas to arrange for his livelihood, to which Dharmaraja agreed. They asked Drona who he was, and Drona told them to ask their grandfather Bhishma. Bhishma came to the spot and asked Drona to teach the boys astravidya.

Drona told the boys that whoever first agreed to satisfy his needs would become the best among the bow wielders. Arjuna promised first. Bhima did not come forward to make the promise since he did not want to fight against elders like Bhishma. Moreover, he would not seek any favors from anyone other than God. Arjuna and all the others learned astravidya from Drona.

Karna goes to Parashurama

Karna and Ekalavya also approached Drona for astravidya. However, Drona did not agree to teach them.

Karna then went to Parashurama. He told Parashurama that he was a brahamana and learned from him for four years.

Once when Parashurama was sleeping on Karna's lap, an insect called Alarka pierced through his thigh. Karna started bleeding. He did not want to disturb his guru, so he endured the pain. When Parashurama got up he said no brahamana could withstand that much injury and that Karna should reveal his true self. Karna told him that he was a suta. Parashurama cursed him that he could use his weapon when he was not in combat, but in combat, he would forget all that he had learned.

Ekalavya's devotion to Drona

Ekalavya had great devotion towards Drona. He had prepared a mud image of Drona and used to worship him. He was very skilled in wielding the bow. Once, he showered arrows into the mouth of a dog without hurting it and stopped its barking. When Drona was informed of this, he asked Ekalavya to cut his thumb and give it as gurudakshina. As a result of this, he would not be able to wield the bow on par with Arjuna.