

MAHABHARATA – Part 10

(War between Lord Shiva and Arjuna;
Urvasi's curse on Arjuna)



Shiva and Arjuna at War

The Pandavas lost their kingdom to their Kauravas cousins through the deceitful gambling. They took off all their fancy clothes and donned simple attire. The five brothers and their wife left for the forest. Duryodhana and his brothers gloated, thinking the Pandavas were being disgraced. On Vidura's request, Yudhisthira left his mother Kunti with him as she was old. The Pandavas reached Kamyaka forest and decided to stay there for a while.

The news of their exile reached Sri Krishna. He was Pandavas' cousin. He was also their friend, savior, and guide. Draupadi always treated him as her elder brother. Sri Krishna reached Kamyaka forest to Pandavas and Draupadi. After inquiring about their well being, He advised Pandavas to visit them. He told them that the ordeal they had to face was for their good, as "experience is the only source of knowledge". Good and bad experiences are essential to get correct perspective and fulfillment of life.

Some days after the departure of Krishna, Yudhishtira felt restless and wished to spend time in another forest where there was not so much human habitation. As per Arjuna's suggestion, all of them moved to Dwaita Vanam. One day their grandfather, the Rishi Vyasa came to see them in the forest. The sage told them that war is imminent with their cousins. He said that Duryodhana was busy making preparations and seeking alliances already. He reminded them that Bheeshma, Drona, and Karna were all students of the great Parasurama. They possessed many powerful weapons. Vyasa advised Arjuna to make use of the twelve years exile, and collect divine weapons from the gods, so he would be able to fight with these strong warriors.

After Vyasa's departure, Arjuna decided to propitiate Lord Indra for this purpose. He took permission from Yudhishtira, and travelled to the Indrakila Hill, and subjected himself to severe austerities. Indra appeared before Arjuna, and Arjuna immediately fell at his father's feet. He told Indra about Sage Vyasa's advice and asked for all the weapons in his possession. "I shall give them to you gladly. But, you must first get the blessings of Lord Shiva, and obtain the Pasupata Astra from Him" said Indra. Then he disappeared.

Arjuna then went to the Himalayas. He started severe penance (called tapas) – by only eating dry leaves and fallen fruits. After sometime, he gave even that up and concentrated only on his penance. He would stand on one leg and meditate on Lord Shiva for days at a time. His body became very lean, like a slim tree branch. So severe was his austerity that it caused the sages to approach Lord Shiva and beg Him to grant an audience with Arjuna.

[When someone does tapas, they have to really want something badly. It is like, when you go to your parents and say "I want a bicycle". They may or may not give. But if you say, "From now on, I won't eat dinner until I get a bicycle. And I will work very hard, and only get straight A's in class, and I will not see my friends" – then you show your parents that you really want something very badly. So then what can your parents do? They will give you want, because they see you are willing to make big sacrifices to do that. In the

same way, when you do tapas (austerity) like Arjuna did, it shows God that you are willing to make any sacrifice to get God's grace.]

Lord Shiva assumed the form of a Kirata (the hunter), and descended to earth with Goddess Parvati, his consort, who also dressed like a huntress. At that moment a demon named Muka in the form of a boar charged at Arjuna. Arjuna who took up his Gandiva bow and shot an arrow at the wild boar charging at him. The Kirata too shot his arrow at the animal at the exact same time.

Kshatriyas, the warrior class, are fiery and angry by nature. Arjuna asked the hunter “Why did you shoot the boar? I saw it first! I want your apology, or I will fight you!” Shiva, in the form of the hunter, did not apologize. Pretty soon a big war of words broke out, and finally, Arjuna shot many fiery arrows at Shiva. But the hunter, Shiva, thwarted them all, and shot innumerable arrows back at Arjuna. Then, Shiva got close. Arjuna took his bow and smashed it over Shiva. But this had no effect. He threw away the bow, and smashed his sword over the hunter's head! But this had no effect. Arjuna didn't give up. He grabbed the hunter in a wrestler's hold. They struggled! Finally, Arjuna passed out in exhaustion.

When he woke up again, he realized he was not fighting any ordinary human being. Feebly, he made a small Shiva lingam next to his head. On it he placed a ring of flowers. He prayed to Shiva for strength. When he looked up, there was the hunter standing – with the ring of flowers on his head! Suddenly Arjuna realized! He had been fighting with Lord Shiva!

Arjuna prostrated before them, and begged them to forgive his ignorance. Shiva was very pleased by Arjuna's devotion and courage, and blessed him the Pasupata Astra, and taught him the mantra to discharge and also withdraw it. Then Lord Shankara added, “Now go to your father, Indra, and pay your respects to him as you receive more divine Astras.” The next moment, Lord Shiva and Parvati disappeared.

The meeting with Lord Shiva left Arjuna feeling happy and satisfied. He had now obtained the Pasupata Astra. As Arjuna glanced at his beautiful surroundings, he saw a strange radiant glow circling the Indrakila peak. The sight of all the Devas of heaven including Varuna, Kubera, Yama, and Indra, held Arjuna spell bound. The Devas presented Arjuna their divine astras. Indra said, “I have work for you in my world. Please come when I send my chariot.” The Devas blessed Arjuna and vanished from sight.

Urvashi's Curse on Arjuna

Arjuna sat thinking of all that had happened and felt most blessed to have seen the Devas. He had obtained their divine astras too. Just then a chariot landed before him. It was Indra's own chariot, driven by Matali. Matali took Arjuna swiftly to Amaravati, the capital of Lord Indra, and led him to Indra's court.

Arjuna saw his father, Indra, the King of the Devas, sitting on a golden throne, being attended on by beautiful damsels. All the Devas were present at the court. “I am really fortunate to see all the Devas. It is only given to great sages who have achieved great merit. I am also very lucky to be able to ascend to heaven in this mortal body.” Arjuna exclaimed with fresh humility as he prostrated to Indra and all the Devas (gods).

Indra and the Devas were very pleased with Arjuna’s humility. Indra embraced his son warmly and led him by the hand to share his throne. Then Indra asked Arjuna to stay there for five years to do some special work there. Arjuna agreed and was thrilled to see the apsaras Rambha, Urvashi, Menaka, and Tilottama dance while the Gandharvas sang and the Kinneras played heavenly music. Indra, who foresaw a time when Arjuna would need knowledge of music and dancing, instructed Chitrasena, the Gandharva chief, to make Arjuna an expert in these fine arts.

Unknown to Arjuna, Urvashi fell in love with him. She went to his apartment at night and told him her feelings. “You stared at me when we apsaras danced. Please spend some time with me” she said. “Oh! Mata Urvashi! That was because I remember your love for my great ancestor, Pururavas. So you are like a mother to me” Arjuna replied. Urvashi’s eyes flashed with anger as she said, “As you have refused to accept me and my love, I curse you to lead the life of a eunuch.” A eunuch is neither a man nor a woman.

Arjuna was very upset and told his friend, Chitrasena about Urvashi’s curse the next day. Chitrasena went to Indra and told him what had happened between Urvashi and Arjuna. Indra called Arjuna and told him not to worry. He said that he will ask Urvashi to modify her curse to one year in which Arjuna will be a eunuch, and this will be helpful to Arjuna in the thirteenth year of their exile as it will be very difficult to hide Arjuna from Kauravas and their secret agents.

Arjuna lived happily with his father in Amaravati for five years, and mastered in the art of dance and music, which would help him during their thirteenth year of exile.

Questions:

Why did the Pandavas go into exile? Who went? Who stayed? Where?

What did Krishna tell the Pandavas?

Why did Arjuna want divine weapons?

What did he do to get them?

What is tapas? Why do you think God comes to us when we do tapas?

What was the name of the demon that took the form of a boar?

Who did Arjuna fight with about the boar?

Why did they fight?

Why did Shiva come to Arjuna?

What weapon did Arjuna get from Shiva?

How did Arjuna recognize Lord Shiva?

Was Shiva angry with Arjuna for fighting him?

What weapons did Arjuna get from the other gods?
How long did he stay in Indra's heaven?
What is Arjuna's relation to Indra?
Who is Indra?
Who cursed him?
What was the curse?
How was it modified?
What was the condition of the Pandavas agreement with the Kauravas that might make the curse useful? Why?

Lingashtakam

Brahma Murari surarchita Lingam; Nirmala bhasita sobhita Lingam
Janmaja dukha vinasaka Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (1)

Devamuni pravararchita Lingam; Kamadahana karunakara Lingam
Ravana darpa vinasaka Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (2)

Sarva sugandhi sulepita Lingam; Buddhi vivardhana karana Lingam
Siddha surasura vandita Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (3)

Kanaka maha mani bhushita Lingam; Paniphati veshtitha shobhita Lingam
Dakshasu yajna vinashana Lingam; Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (4)

Kumkuma chandana lepita Lingam
Pankaja hara sushobhita Lingam
Sanchita papa vinashana Lingam
Tat pranamami Sadasiva Lingam (5)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_z4oRinK3E

Meaning:

*I bow to that Eternal Shiva Lingam –
Which is Anointed with Kumkuma (Saffron) and Chandana (Sandal Paste)
Which is Beautifully Decorated with Garlands of Lotuses
And which Destroys the Accumulated Sins (of several lives)
I Salute that Eternal Shiva Lingam.*

Sri Venkateswara Stotram

kamalAkucha choochuka kunkumatO — niyatAruNitAtula neelatanO
kamalAyata IOchana IOkapatE — vijayeebhava vEnkaTa SailapatE (1)

sachaturmukha shaNmukha panchamukha — pramukhAkhila daivata mouLimaNE
SaraNAgata vatsala sAranidhE — paripAlayamAm vRushaSailapatE (2)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7VhEfEud88>

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

I U S M C

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A R O B

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E C N D A

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C G N A L E

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K P A E

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A N N P C E E

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L E D O A R

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T E T A I R

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R M A O T L

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S V I N A H

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Coloring exercise: Lord Shiva

