

Advanced Course in Performance Traditions of the Mahabharata in Tamil Nadu- 2

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Lecture 14

THE BIRTH OF DHARMARAJA [50 MINUTES]

“The world is like the impression left by the telling of a story”
Valmiki, Yoga Vasishtha

In Kazhiyur where we recorded the entire festival, the Bhagavata Purana describing Krishna's birth and childhood feats was narrated for an entire day. In some festivals, the birth of Krishna and Karna could be narrated the same day. While the overall structure of the festival would be the same across all festival villages, the programme in each village will show slight differences, specific to that particular village

In Kazhiyur Village a major Koothu called 'Rajasuya Yagam' was not performed maybe because the original designers of the program wanted to keep plays regarding violence, to the minimum as possible.

Traditionally, a light hearted comedy called 'Sundari Kalyanam' or the marriage of 'Sundari and Abhimanyu' had been performed in this village in place of the other Koothu. Program list of each village seemed to be sacrosanct and no one had the authority to change even one item of the program which had been performed in the particular village for over a hundred years

Both the storytellers and the Koothu artists have to constantly improvise in each village and narrate the particular story omitted in the village in some other session, dealing with some other narrative so that the audience could listen to the entire Epic.

In Kazhiyur village after the elaborate Bhagavata Purana narration the stage was set for the birth of the main protagonists of the Great War, the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Kunti Bhoja, the father of the young girl who had given birth to Karna (Karnan), before she was married, the bright bosomed maiden sent out Swayamvara invitations for his daughter, Kunti, to entitled kings with delight.

All Kings attended the Swayamvaram, with each King thinking that they would receive the garland of acceptance from the young girl. The child who gave birth to Karna, Kunti, is now a beautiful young woman. Her father Kunti Bhoja has arranged a Swayamvara ceremony where Kunti can choose her husband. In this ceremony Kings from all countries are present and King Pandu was also there.

Eventhough there are numerous stars in the sky, the lotus would only bloom at the sight of the Moon. The lotus would not bloom seeing the stars but would only bloom for the moon. Similarly at the first sight of King Pandu the heart of Kunti bloomed and she immediately garlanded him. Kunti chooses Pandu as her husband and in the same hall, Salya, the King of Madra offers the hand of his sister Madri to Pandu

Most narratives in this tradition begin with the king going on a hunt, and this journey had the potential of changing his life forever. In this narrative too, the newly wed King Pandu, took his two wives on his next expedition to the forest to hunt. The respected and brave King Pandu, thought of a hunt in the forests, and reached the foothills of the golden hued Himalayas that stood tall touching the skies along with the daughters of the mighty Madra and the renowned Bhoja. Pandu chased away harmless animals and hunted ferocious beasts. Pandu showed off his skills in archery to his wives.

In that forest there lived an ascetic called Kindhama who was married to a woman called Kindhami. Rishi Kindhama would only break his Tapas once after many years. His wife would devotedly serve him. Once Kindhama arose from his dhyana, and noticed his wife's devoted service. Pleased with his wife, he told her that he would only break his Tapas once every few years and wanted to give her whatever she desired for her patience.

When Kindhama asked his wife as to what she wanted, she just looked at him silently. What that look of his wife meant was that he spent years on end in Tapas. Kindhama understood from his wife's look that she desired him. Kindhama decided to fulfill his wife's desire immediately but because sexual intercourse was forbidden for humans in day time Kindhama asked his wife to assume the form of a female deer while he would become a stag. Both Kindhama and his wife taking the form of deers, were frolicking playfully in the forest.

At that moment King Pandu was hunting in the same forest, nearby. As he was trying impressing his wives with his archery skills, King Pandu noticed the two deers. Pandu told his wives that there were two deers playing in the distance and boasting that he was now

going to aim at the male deer, he fired an arrow at the stag. That arrow pierced the heart of Rishi Kindhama who had taken the form of a deer.

Rishi cried “Shiva...Shiva!..” Pandu rushed to where the voice was coming from and saw the Rishi with an arrow in his heart. Pandu said “O Sage! I shot the arrow thinking that I was shooting a deer” Unfortunately my arrow has harmed you, Great Sage!

Then Pandu fell at the Rishi’s feet, atoning for his mistake and begging for mercy.

King Pandu, to impress his newly wed wives shows off his skills as an archer. In his enthusiasm to impress Kunti and Madri, he forgets the basic rules of hunting where it is specifically forbidden to hunt animals when they are in the act of making love. Pandu sees a deer couple mating and shoots at them.

Rishi Kindama, who Pandu shot mistaking him for a deer cursed Pandu for his crime. The Rishi cursed “O Pandu, just as you shot me in the act of making love to my wife and killed me you will also die when you make love to your wife. This is my curse on you!”

Kindhami grieving her husband’s death, fell dead herself in shock over her husband’s body. King Pandu performed the cremation rites for the ascetic couple and the poet says that when the King cremated the couple, he also cremated his own desires.

King Pandu, on his body which once wore silk clothes, now wore clothes made from the barks of trees. On his chest which used to be adorned by gold ornaments now was adorned with sacred beads.

And on the head which wore a crown he now had matted locks

Pandu practices severe austerities in the forest and is recognized as a Great Rishi himself. King Pandu gives up his kingdom and leads the life of an ascetic in the forest with his two wives.

Nallapillai’s rendering of the Epic in Tamil gives an interesting reason for Pandu desiring to have children. One day all the ascetics in the forest were travelling to heaven to attend a festival there. Pandu also joined them to attend this event. The rest of the Rishis stop Pandu mid way saying “Pandu, we are all ascetics from childhood, but you were a married house holder before you embraced asceticism.”

They say that any person who is married has to father children. They say that a childless house holder has no place in heaven and they stop his journey mid way.

A dispirited Pandu returns to his ashram saddened by his fate. Pandu laments “I thought that I had conquered all desires and I thought I would get release from the sorrowful cycle of birth, death and rebirth! But it seems that a person without children has no place in heaven!” He laments to Kunti saying that, they did not have any children. He says that there is a curse on him that he will die in the act of making love. So what can he do?

Kunti who sees her husband looking despondent learns the reason for his sadness. She tells her husband about the mantra she had learned from Sage Durvasa where she could invoke five deities and have their incarnations as her children. Pandu asks Kunti to invoke Yama, the God of Dharma for he wants his eldest son to be the epitome of Dharma and be the righteous ruler of the kingdom

Kunti invokes Yama and in a few minutes, a child is born to her. The entire world celebrates the birth of this child and in the festival village sweets are distributed among the audience, celebrating the birth of Dharmaraja.

When Yudhishthira (Yudhishtira) was born all the great people on earth, Rishis starting with their leader Vashishta onwards, the Devas, all expressed happiness with great affection. All rejoiced as if they had received a great treasure. All signs that were considered auspicious, good omens appeared on his birth.

It seems everybody in all three worlds were happy at the birth of this child. Everyone blessed the child saying that he was born to rule the entire world as an Emperor because the time that the child was born was extremely auspicious.

This child was initially not named Dharma, as Dharma was really his father's name – Yamadharma and it was this name which was later transferred to him. The name which King Pandu called this child was Yudhishthira (one who stands firm in battle)

Pandu and Kunti raise the child in the austere ashram and on the same day in Hastinapura, Gandhari who has been pregnant for over two years is impatient. Veda Vyasa had already told her that she would have to be pregnant for a long time and a lot of children will be born to

her. Narada, the divine mischief maker, now meets Gandhari and informs her of the birth of Pandu's eldest son Yudhishthira.

One day Narada went to meet Gandhari. He says "I was in the forest yesterday and I met your brother-in-law Pandu there." Gandhari says that it is sad that Pandu was cursed and had to lead a ascetics life in the forest. She tells Narada that she is saddened by this.

Gandhari, who initially expresses genuine concern for her brother-in-law leading a life of an ascetic in the forest, is immediately engulfed by jealousy when she learns that Kunti had given a child ahead of her. Narada says that Gandhari need not feel sad as Pandu was not an ascetic but was leading the life of a householder in the forest. Gandhari is surprised and Narada says that Kunti has just delivered a male child and Narada says he came to meet her after seeing the child.

Gandhari asks Narada as to how a son was born to Kunti when Pandu had been cursed that he would die if he made love to his wife. Narada says that it is not like what Gandhari thinks. He says that Kunti conceived and delivered the child in one muhurtha or twenty four minutes, through a divine mantra.

After saying this Narada leaves, and Gandhari's envy flares up. She thinks as she was the wife of the eldest son and had got married first and had also conceived earlier than Kunti I should naturally have my son as the eldest in the family and to rule the Kingdom. She has been pregnant for over two years and she impatiently beats her stomach causing her uterus to pop out of her womb.

The moment she heard that Kunti by the intensity of her tapas had delivered a child and full of sorrow, Gandhari became jealous. Unmindful of the outcome of her act, whether it will harm or do well, she hit her stomach with a piece of rock dissolving the foetuses of her overdue pregnancy. She did not abort due to beating her womb with a stone, rather her own envy of Kunti made her abort.

Blinded by her own jealousy of Kunti, Gandhari did not stop to think that she was also pregnant and soon children will be born to her. She lamented that Kunti who had come later was a mother earlier than her and beat herself on her womb and her uterus popped out of her body.

Vyasa, the author of the Epic, makes his next decisive intervention at this juncture. He sees Gandhari lying in a pool of blood with her uterus lying next to her. Vyasa gets a hundred pots from a nearby potter and places parts of these foetus in each pot and seals them

Gandhari's chamber looks like a pool of blood and Veda Vyasa appears at this point and asks an attendant to get hundred pots from the nearby potter. He covered the insides of the pot with cow's ghee and put hundred portions of Gandhari's foetus in each of these pots and sealed them. When Gandhari awoke from her swoon, Vyasa realised that she also wanted a girl child. Gandhari awoke from her swoon. Vyasa said the children which were to be born to her, would now be born from the hundred pots. He asks her not to disturb the pots and says that a hundred sons would be born to her. Gandhari asks in disappointment whether she will have only sons and Vyasa realising Gandhari's desire for a daughter collected the residue and placed it in a silver vessel and said that a girl child would also be born to her.

He asks Gandhari not to break the pots in her impatience. He asks Gandhari to keep caressing the pots each day. Gandhari dutifully follows Vyasa's instructions and waits anxiously for the time when the pots will break and her sons and daughter would be born.

When Yudhistira is one year old, Pandu tells Kunti, that just like a single tree would not make an orchard, having a single son was not enough. He tells Kunti that with Yudhistira they had given birth to a great ruler. A great ruler also needed a powerful general to stand by him. He says one child was not enough as one tree will not make an orchard He says as Kunti has the mantra she should invoke it again.

Kunti asked him as to which deity she has to invoke this time?

Now that a son, fit to rule has been born, another son was needed for the eldest to retain power. Pandu asked her to invoke the mightiest God for another son. The only deity, who could move anywhere at will was the God of wind, Vayu and he was mighty for this reason,. When asked by Pandu to invoke the God of Wind, Kunti has a bath and wearing new clothes invokes Vayu. The God of Wind blesses her and in a few minutes Kunti goes into labour, in the forest.

After the great Vayu, with a stag for his vehicle left, having had his harmonious union with Kunti, the austere lady delivered Veeman (Bhima) at the most auspicious time of the day, when the blazing red sun was at his peak. In the auspicious Abhijit muhurtha, a son possessed with a fierce temper, mighty like Anjana Devi's son Hanuman, was born to her

Thus Bhima was born one year after Yudhisthira. In Ramayana, a son was born to Anjana Devi and Vayu called Anjaneya and a son equal to Hanuman was born to Kunti. They named this son Bhima as Bhima meant “a fearsome person”. The evening before Bhima was born in the forest one of the hundred and one pots in Gandhri’s chamber breaks and Duryodhana, referred to as Suyodhana by the poet emerges from the pot.

The poet does not say Duryodhana was born he says rather Duryodhana has descended. Here the play is between the two words, ascent and descent. Only adharma which Duryodhana represents descends on the world, while the appearance of Dharma is always referred to, as of rising or an ascent. So Adharma descends while Dharma arises

Today at mid day when the sun is at its peak, Bhima was born and yesterday at the time, when evening meets the night at the time predicted, Suyodhana was born. Suyodhana emerged at sunset out of the preserved foetus into a beautiful baby as predicted by Vyasa, a day before the birth of Vayu’s son (Bhima) which was an auspicious day.

At the cusp of evening and night a pot broke suddenly and the crying of a child was heard. The poet did not say he was born, rather he said he “descended” Only Adharma descends on the world, while Dharma always has to arise.

At the time that Duryodhana was born, all the wolves in the forest started howling and this was the first intimation of Duryodhana’s birth to the people of Hastinapura. Dhritarashtra is disturbed when he sees all the omens surrounding his eldest son’s birth.

A voice from the sky also proclaims that the child that was born would be responsible for the final destruction of all the royal dynasties. The auspicious drum beats, vibrations like that of the ocean’s noise was silenced by the howling of foxes in many places in the city.

Even before the distinguished citizens of the city could shed tears of joy; rain bearing clouds from the skies showered drops of blood rather than rain. With Duryodhana’s birth earthquakes happened, blood rained from the skies. Skulls and bones fell from the skies, and all the garlands worn by Kings had the stench of death. A voice from the sky proclaimed that the dynasty of kings would be destroyed by the son born in Hastinapura.

All the people report about the bad omens to their King. Dhritarashtra, as was his custom, consulted his younger brother Vidura as to what he should do. Vidura suggests that killing Duryodhana was the correct course of action. Dhritarashtra laments to his brother Vidura about the bad omens. Vidura agrees that the birth was at an inauspicious time. When Dhritarashtra continues his lament by speaking about the voice from the sky, Vidura says that whatever the oracular voice proclaimed was bound to happen.

Dhritarashtra does not want the destruction of the royal dynasties and asks Vidura as to what was the solution? Vidura says that there is only one solution, if Dhritarashtra genuinely wanted the royal dynasties to be alive and his people happy, he says the new born son should be killed. Dhritarashtra, who knew that his brother Vidura was speaking the truth out of blind love for his eldest son chooses to ignore this advice. Right through the epic Dhritarashtra initially takes the correct position but his inherent sentimentality makes him waver from the correct course of action.

When Bhima is one year old, Pandu asks Kunti to invoke the mantra again for another child. Kunti asks him as to which deity she should invoke now? Pandu says now that we have a son fit to rule and another with valour, the third son should be fit to rule, have valour, be beautiful and be skilled in all the arts known to man. So he asks Kunti to invoke a deity with all these attributes. The only deity who embodied all the traits requested by Pandu was only the King of the Devas, Indra.

Soon the other pots in Gandhari's chambers break and the 99 brothers of Duryodhana and their sister Dushala are born.

On Pandu's request again, Kunti, lady of milky sweet talk through the higher Vedic mantras thought of the King of the Devas. Invoked thus would he not avoid appear? Is there any need to tell what happened further? And he delightfully joined the lady with nectar like words. Arjuna was born in the month of Panguni (March), on a full moon day, under the auspicious star of Panguni Uthiram.

Pandu now asks Kunti to teach his other wife Madri the same mantra so that Madri could also have children of her own. Kunti had said that Sage Durvasa had given her the mantra with which she could invoke five divinities. But she does not mention that she, as a curious child had already invoked the mantra once by calling upon Surya the sun God. But when she teaches Madri the mantra she just tells her that Madri would be able to invoke just one other divinity with that mantra.

Madri the other wife of Pandu knows that if she invokes one deity she would just have one son. She ponders on a solution whereby she can have two sons. She realises that among the Devas, there were two Devas called the Ashwini brothers; who were twins and always travelled together. They were the Physicians of the Indraloga. To get two children she invoked the Ashwini twins. The Ashwini brothers came down to earth and blessed her.

The one with fragrant hair Madri, through her meditated chant of Vedic mantra mantras given to her invoked the appearance of the great twins (Ashwinis). They appeared as one and had a happy union with her. Without an iota of trouble, the pregnancy matured and the twin babies delivered. The ones full of goodness visible to all. In a single pregnancy, Madri gave birth to two children

The first born child was named Nakula and his twin was named Sahadeva. Though they are born and raised in the forest the Pandavas grew up as warriors with valour. Their frugal food was the fruits and vegetables available in the forest. Bhima was the glutton among them with an insatiable appetite for food.

Madri was an extremely beautiful woman and the favorite wife of Pandu. One day when Kunti and the five children were away. Pandu sees Madri bathing in the waterfall. The ascetic Pandu who had thought he had overcome all desires is struck by the beauty of Madri and he forgets the curse on him or as the poet says

The fate which he had managed to defer so far had finally caught up with him. Effect of the spring instigated by friend of spring, the deity of Love, (Manmata), by the beauty of the lady embellished with lovely smile, Pandu's desire for the one with beautiful blue water lily like eyes surged forgetting the curse on him, he fatefully desired his beautiful wife

King Pandu who had conquered all desires, suddenly due to his fate forgot the curse on him that he would die in the act of making love. He embraced his beautiful wife Madri and the curse on him caused his death. It was just for a few moments of pleasure, and for this King Pandu gave up his own life.

Madri is guilt ridden that she was not able to prevent her husband's death. When Kunti and the five boys return, they see Madri grieving over the body of King Pandu. The ascetics from

the nearby ashrams perform the cremation ceremony for Pandu. Madri for the sake of her sons has decided to immolate herself along with her dead husband on his funeral pyre. She says that if she lived, everyone would blame her for the death of her husband and that blame would also be attached to her children Nakula and Sahadeva. She asks Kunti to raise her two sons as her own and declares that now the five Pandavas have only one mother, Kunti. With that decisive act of hers, Madri erases herself from both history and the story. The five Pandavas are always referred to as Kunti's children in the rest of the Epic.

Kunti and her children lived for sometime in the forest. The ascetics in the forest advice Kunti that her children needed to be in Hastinapura to learn state craft. Kunti along with the Rishi's in the forest took the five Pandavas to Hastinapura. For the Pandavas who were raised in the forest this was the first time they came to know what a city was.

The son of Ganga, expert archer Viduran and others showed affection twin tears rolled down, one of joy and other of sorrow. Joy at the sight of the sons of Pandu; and sorrow thinking of the deceased Pandu, in heaven.

This was the first time the Pandavas saw Hastinapura and their grandfather Bhishma and Vidura shed tears of joy on seeing Pandu's children. They also arranged the cremation rites for King Pandu on a grand scale on the banks of the Ganga. Krishna comes from Gokula to attend the cremation rites. Shakuni also came from his own kingdom of Gandhara for the ceremony

Both Shakuni and Krishna seemed to have ulterior motives for attending Pandu's funeral rites. Both came ostensibly to participate in the last rites of Pandu which were performed on a grand scale. All the Kings who had come to Hastinapura, left after the ceremony. Only two Kings who had ulterior motives stayed back. Who were they?

Krishna did not leave and Shakuni also stayed back. Krishna meets Dharmaraja and speaks to him. Our Krishna, the creator and the lord all the celestials looked at the incarnation of Dharma born to Pandu and said "We will remove all distress that arises in this universe surrounded by the oceans, and we together will restore Dharma on earth!" All the mourners for King Pandu's funeral depart to their respective countries excepting for Shakuni and Krishna.

In the Mahabharata, Shakuni comes along with his sister after her marriage to Dhritarashtra and stays on in Hastinapura plotting the end of the Kauravas. In Tamil Bharatham Shakuni comes to attend Pandu's funeral where he sees the potential of a conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas which he could use for his own purpose.

In Tamil Bharatham, it is Krishna who lays the seeds to this conflict which, as most conflicts go, usually start on an extremely childish, trivial matter. Krishna has come with a gift of a jackfruit to his cousins the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Duryodhana has taken the task on himself of distributing a portion of this fruit to each of the brothers. Bhima, who was by nature a glutton, sees that there were hundred Kauravas and only five Pandavas and he realises that the Kauravas were getting a bigger share of the fruit than the Pandavas. So, he wants the jackfruit to be cut into two halves, one half, which would be given to the Kauravas and another to the Pandavs.

Shakuni seizes this opportunity to poison Duryodhana's mind by saying now the Pandavas are only speaking about division of the fruit but in a short while, he says they might also ask for the division of the kingdom as well. Again in Tamil traditions it is Shakuni who first notices Karna's potential and actively encourages the friendship between Duryodhana and Karna.

The nascent battle lines for the impending Great War are drawn just immediately after the funeral rites of King Pandu are completed.

Once when the Pandavas and Kauravas were playing by the river side, adharma personified Suyodhanan saw Karna, the son of Surya practicing archery and thinking that he would be a good friend to have by his side, befriended Karna. Karna the son of Kunti and Surya was practicing archery on the banks of the Ganga. Karna, though he was raised by a charioteer was practicing archery which he had learned from the Sage Parashurama

Shakuni who sees Karna's dexterity in archery asks Duryodhana as to who the man was? Duryodhana replies that he was the son of his father's charioteer. Shakuni tells Duryodhana not to underestimate Karna as he looked like a great warrior! He says war between the Kauravas and Pandavas was certain

To defeat the Pandavas it was essential that a warrior like Karna was by his side and that Duryodhana should actively cultivate his friendship. Duryodhana immediately runs towards Karna and embraces him and declares that henceforth all his friends would also be Karna's friends and that all his wealth also belonged to Karna and his ninety nine younger brothers

were also the younger brothers to Karna. More importantly, he says, all of Duryodhana's enemies were henceforth Karna's enemies too.

Karna though he was a brave warrior, a handsome man and a great archer, the society did not give him the respect he deserved as he was raised in a lower jati. So when King Dhritarashtra's crown prince Duryodhana addressed these words to him, Karna was elated and did not stop to think whether Duryodhana meant him good or harm

Initially the conflict is only between Duryodhana and Bhima, which Shakuni actively foments. Numerous attempts are made on Bhima's life by Shakuni and Duryodhana all of which Bhima survives miraculously

One night when all the hundred and five cousins were sleeping on the shores of the Ganga, Bhima notices that every time he drew his breath in, the ninety nine brothers of Duryodhana being drawn, rolling towards him and with every out breath of his he sees them rolling away from him!

Bhima not wanting to disturb the sleep of his cousins decides to sleep afar from his cousins. Shakuni notices this and tells Duryodhana that this was the right moment for them. Duryodhana is bewildered

Shakuni says that Bhima was sleeping alone and that too on elevated ground. He says that they should tie up Bhima and roll him down the hill into the river. Bhima would be unable to release himself from the bonds and would drown in the river! Duryodhana is amazed at Shakuni's plan!

Duryodhana and his brothers tie up a sleeping Bhima with creepers from the forest and try to push him down. Bhima was so huge, that with great difficulty they finally managed to push him into the river.

Once Bhima fell in the river, the brothers thought that they had seen the last of Bhima and went to sleep peacefully.

Bhima who fell in the river awakens and is unable to swim as he has been tied up. With a loud roar Bhima stretched out his arms and broke free. He just pressed down on the water and rose to the surface. A naive Bhima wonders as to how he had fallen into the Ganges? He thinks that may be because he was sleeping on elevated ground he must have accidentally rolled down in his sleep. But then he also realises that it looked as though he was tied up and

reasons innocently that may be when he rolled down the forest creepers must have twined around his body.

Bhima is so naive that he blindly trusted everyone! He did not realise that there was a group plotting his death which was responsible! Here Villibharatham brings in as a subtext an idea from Yoga of the three Granthas or blockages which have to be overcome on the path towards self-realization. These three blockages or granthas are called Bramha Grantha, Vishnu Grantha and Roudra Grantha respectively.

The first journey on this path is taken by Bhima who, as the poet describes is like Prana in the Muladhara Chakra. The second journey is of Arjuna or 'fire' and the third journey is of Dharmaraja or "Akasha" or "ether". Bhima represents 'air' among the Panchabutas and he naively thinks that all the mishaps which were happening to him were just accidents and he does not suspect any real foul play.

The next day all the cousins go to a festival in a village called Brahmanakodi and decide to spend the night there itself. All the cousins were fed but Shakuni took Bhima out separately to serve him food as Bhima had much more appetite for food than his brothers. He says people might look enviously at the amount of food you eat and serves him royally. But all the food that Bhima is served is poisoned.

There is poison in the rice, poison in the lentil soup and poison in all the side dishes! Drugged by the poisoned food, Bhima collapses. Bhima who collapsed and lost consciousness after consuming the poisoned food was bound by a rope aided by heartless, but able-bodied servant crowd and was thrown in the deepest waters of Ganga. Because Bhima escaped the last time as he was just tied by creepers his cousins now tie him up with the thickest ropes that they can find and with the help of able bodied servants throw him into the middle of the river. They tossed him into the middle of the river

The place he fell was the way to the world of the snakes and Bhima descended straight into the Kingdom of the Snakes. Again his cousins were happy that Bhima was finished!

After successive attempts to kill Bhima have failed, the desperate Shakuni and Duryodhana poison Bhima's food and to ensure his death they tie him up after he is rendered unconscious and throw him into the Ganges. Significantly, Bhima reaches, 'Nagaloka' the abode of the snakes in the nether world where his awakening happens

Snakes in the Nagaloka bite the unconscious Bhima and the poison of their bites works as an antidote to the poison that Bhima has been fed with. As a thorn can only be removed with another thorn so too with poison; One poison becomes the antidote for another

When Bhima awoke cured of the poison in his body, he saw snakes biting him and started hitting back at them. The snakes were amazed that not only was Bhima unaffected by their poison, he was also hitting back at them! They realised that he was not an ordinary human being! The snakes rushed to their King Vasuki and reported this miraculous incident. As soon as Vasuki was alerted of this new arrival, he realized that it was Bhima, the son of his friend Vayu. Vasuki chose ten golden pots of nectar and lovingly fed Bhima the impeccable ambrosia. King Vasuki realised that Bhima must be the son of his friend the God of Wind, Vayu as he was unaffected by the poison of snake bites. He asked for Bhima to be brought to him with great respect. The snakes took Bhima to Vasuki. Bhima bowed respectfully to the King of snakes who enquired as to who Bhima was?

But Bhima could only repeat that he was extremely thirsty. They gave him one pot of Ambrosia which Bhima drank. If one drinks one pot of Ambrosia, one will have the power of a thousand elephants!

Bhima asked for another pot of Ambrosia, which also he drank. He was so thirsty, his thirst was only sated after drinking ten pots of nectar. Now tell how much strength he had? If one drank a pot of Ambrosia one would gain the power of a thousand elephants. Now that Bhima has drunk ten pots of nectar, what would be his strength? He had the strength of ten thousand elephants now!

Bhima said that they were students in the Gurukula or school. He said he was the younger brother of Dharmaraja and his name was Bhima. He said that the last thing he remembers is eating food, and suddenly he was in Nagaloka! That's when Vasuki remarks on Bhima's innocence. He says that somebody wanting to kill Bhima had poisoned him, tied him up with ropes and threw him into the river Ganga. He said that the place he fell in was the entrance of Nagaloka and because he was the son of his friend Vayu, the venom of the snakes did not harm him.

Only then Bhima realised why Shakuni kept feeding him so generously. Only then he realised that Duryodhana was a terrible person. Vasuki said as Bhima was the son of his friend, he requested him to feast with them for a few days in Nagaloka. The moment Bhima heard the word food, the glutton in him readily accepted.

The next day dawned in Hastinapura and everyone realised that Bhima was missing. Everybody is searching for Bhima and this news reaches his mother Kunti who is worried about the well being of her son.

In Nagaloka Bhima took leave from Vasuki as his mother would be worried. He is gifted with a huge amount of precious stones. On the way out Bhima saw a gigantic mace and stopped before it, Vasuki asked as to what was the matter? Bhima said that the mace was beautiful and Vasuki said that he could take it with him if he so wanted. Bhima wanted Vasuki to give it to him personally and Vasuki laughed and said that the mace was lying there because no one could lift it. Bhima lifted the mace easily and swung it over his shoulder. The mace looked as though it was made for Bhima.

The snakes with great difficulty transport Bhima with the heavy mace, Shatrugadhani, to the river bank.

Once he landed on the river bank, Bhima raced wanting to see his mother. He also wanted his revenge against Duryodhana and ran with his mace. Again he roared and all the animals in the forest ran in fear away from Bhima.

Only when Bhima comes out of the water does he realise all that were happening to him were not mishaps, but were actively attempts to take his life. An awakened Bhima immediately wants to avenge these attempts to kill him but his mother Kunti restrains him saying that the time was not yet right and she advises caution

Bhima first went and met his mother and showered her with all the precious ornaments he was gifted by Vasuki and Kunti was pleased. A worried Kunti questions him about his absence and Bhima replies that Duryodhana had tried to poison him and threw him into the river. He wants to take revenge on Duryodhana which is why he has brought this mace with him. Kunti restrains him and says that if there was a being called God, it was his duty to punish Duryodhana.

Bhishma is worried about the constant fight between the cousins and he was looking for a teacher who could teach the cousins both archery and the Shastras. Bhishma's father Shantanu had seen twin children, the twins, a boy and a girl who were the children of a warrior sage Sharadvan and the celestial nymph Janapada. Shantanu out of pity adopted these two abandoned children and named them Kripa and Kripi, literally which meant mercy

Sharadvan, who had realised that his children were adopted by Shantanu, declares the children's parentage and he personally trains his son Kripa to be one of the finest archers and warriors in the land.

Bhishma appoints Sharadvan's son Kripachari as a tutor for both the Pandavas and Kauravas.

Bhishmachari is worried seeing that when they should be acquiring knowledge the cousins were only fighting and he decides to get them educated. He realises that if a fine building has to be built, then the foundation must be very strong. The young age must be well spent learning. The cousins begin the education under Kripachari and now Arjuna shines as the best student amongst all the cousins.

This again provokes Duryodhana's jealousy and he wants another tutor. He makes an accusation to Bhishma that Kripachari was being partial towards Arjuna. Now Bhishma is again searching for another teacher and the stage is set for another major character in the Epic, Dronachari to enter the narrative.