

DRDHEYU. A maharṣi who lived in the western part of India. (Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 150, Verse 36).

DRDHEṢṬADHĪ. A King in ancient India. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 1, Verse 238).

DROṆA I. The teacher in archery of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas.

1) *Birth.* Droṇa was the son of Bharadvāja who had his hermitage erected on the bank of the Ganges. Once Bharadvāja went to bathe in the river. When he got into the river he saw the celestial maid Ghṛtācī. The celestial maid ran away as soon as she saw the hermit. But her cloth was caught in grass and slipped off her body. When the hermit saw the complete form of her body which was bright and beautiful, he had seminal discharge. The discharged semen was kept in a Droṇa (trough). A child was born from that and he was named Droṇa, who was brought up in the hermitage. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 13).

2) *Education and Marriage.* Droṇa learned the art of using weapons from his father and the hermit Agniveśa. Drupada the prince of Pāṇcāla was the fellow student of Droṇa. They became great friends. On completion of education Drupada returned to Pāṇcāla. Droṇa married Kṛpī the daughter of Śaradvān. A son was born to them. At his birth the child neighed like the horse Uccaiśravas; so his parents named him Aśvatthāmā. Hearing that Paraśurāma was giving Brāhmaṇas free gift of wealth and property, Droṇa reached there. Droṇa's desire was to get Dhanurveda (the art of archery). Droṇa with his disciples went to Mahendragiri and saw Paraśurāma, who was about to enter forest giving away everything he had. Paraśurāma said, "I have given away to the Brāhmaṇas gold and everything I had. The land I had conquered is given to Kaśyapa. Now there remains only my body and some weapons. You can have one of them."

Droṇa preferred the weapons. Thus Droṇa got the entire armoury of Paraśurāma. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapter 13).

3) *He became the teacher of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas.* After receiving dhanurveda from Paraśurāma Droṇa went to Pāṇcāla. Drupada who had been a fellow student of Droṇa was the King of Uttarapāṇcāla. Then, though Droṇa had become proficient in archery, he was very poor.

He had no money even to buy milk for his child. Once the playmates of Aśvatthāmā made him drink a mixture of water and flour saying that it was milk. So Droṇa approached Drupada for financial help. But Drupada shunned his fellow student, scolded him and sent him away without giving any help. Droṇa vowed that he would, somehow or other, take revenge upon Drupada and departed from Pāṇcāla.

The aim of Droṇa was to get some capable disciples. He reached Hastināpura and stayed in disguise with Gautama for a while. Once the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas who were boys were engaged in the game of Kāra (a kind of cricket play) outside the palace premises. The ball fell in a well by chance. The princess stood round the well and began to ponder how to get the 'ball' out of the well. They tried all means but in vain. At that time a Brāhmaṇa of dark complexion, short and aged, came by that way. It was Droṇa. The boys gathered round the old man. Droṇa threw his ring also into the

1. To take revenge on Drupada was the thought that was

well and said: "Your kingly qualities are very poor. Your education in using weapons is not complete. If you give me a meal I will get both the ring and the ball together" The boys agreed to the conditions. Droṇa took a grass and evoked arrow into it by mantra (spell) and shot it at the 'Kāra'. The next grass was shot at the first grass. It struck the first grass. Thus he shot grasses one after another till the grass reached the brink of the well and by pulling the grass he took the ball out. In the same way he took the ring also out of the well. When they got the 'Kāra' the boys stood round Droṇa and asked him what he would like as the reward for his deed. Droṇa said that they need only tell Bhīṣma how a short man of dark complexion took the ball out of the well. Accordingly the boys went to Bhīṣma and told him everything. Immediately Bhīṣma understood that it was Droṇa. Bhīṣma thought that Droṇa was the best person to teach the princes. So Droṇa was brought to the palace and was engaged as the teacher in archery. (M. B. Ādi Parva, Chapters 130 and 131).

4) *Education in Archery of the Kauravas and reward.*

(a) *First vow.* Droṇa asked the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas to sit together and then told them. "There is one thing that you should do for me when your education is over". Hearing this they all kept silent. But Arjuna came forward and took the vow that he would achieve that task according to the wish of the teacher.

(b) *The disciple who is second to none.* The training in weapons commenced. Hearing of the fame of Droṇa, disciples came from places far and near. Arjuna was the first of all the students. Sending all the students to fetch water Droṇa taught his son Aśvatthāmā certain special lessons.<sup>1</sup> Arjuna secretly knew this. So he brought water as quickly as possible before the others. As Droṇa loved his brilliant student Arjuna, he taught both his son and Arjuna alike the secrets. Seeing the brilliance of Arjuna Droṇa ordered the cook not to seat Arjuna in a dark place for meals. Yet it happened once that the light was extinguished by wind while the princes were having their meals. All sat still, without eating, while Arjuna alone ate his food. From this Arjuna discovered that without seeing the object one could hit the target by constant practice. Droṇa was greatly pleased at this and embracing him promised to try to make him such an expert that there would be none equal to him in archery.

(c) *Ekalavya.* Once Arjuna and the other disciples went to the forest for a hunt and there they met Ekalavya who was superior to Arjuna in archery. This Ekalavya had once approached Droṇa to learn archery from him. But it was against the rule for a Brahmin to teach a forester the art of fighting. So Ekalavya returned to the forest and making an earthen image of Droṇa worshipped it and began self-learning in archery. Now he had become superior to Arjuna in archery. The teacher had said that none would be equal to Arjuna in archery. Arjuna told Droṇa about Ekalavya. The teacher went to the forest and got the thumb of Ekalavya as the reward due to the teacher. Since then Ekalavya became a great archer though only of a lower level than Arjuna (See under Ekalavya).

d) *Expert disciple.* The education in archery and the use of weapons was nearing completion. In archery Arjuna was second to none. Duryodhana and Bhīma

uppermost in the mind of Droṇa.