

palace of the Kauravas. Śrī Kṛṣṇa came away from the palace of Duryodhana and entered the house of Vidura and visited Kuntī. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked her opinion on the idea of waging a war against the Kauravas. It is not meet and right on the part of a heroic mother to welcome a son who comes home being defeated in battle. To substantiate this point, she told Śrī Kṛṣṇa the story of Vidulā, as given below.

Vidulā was a brave woman, who lived in ancient India. Her son Sañjaya fought with the King of Sindhu and was defeated. When he came home Vidulā did not receive him. She emboldened him by saying that she would be more proud of a son, who had sacrificed his life in the battlefield than one who returned home defeated. All his arguments which were excuses for his cowardice, were refuted by his mother. At last Sañjaya engaged again in a battle with the King of Sindhu. On hearing this story told by Kuntī Śrī Kṛṣṇa became immensely pleased. (M.B. Udyoga Parva, 3 Chapters from 134).

VIDURA I.

1) *General information.* Vidura was a superhuman being, very famous in the story of Mahābhārata, as a brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as a man of colossal intelligence who had been closely watching the goings and comings of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, as the adviser of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and as a man of immense learning and wisdom.

2) *Incarnation of Dharmadeva.* There is a story in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 107, which describes Vidura as born from a portion of Dharmadeva. The story is given below.

Long ago there was a hermit called Māṇḍavya in India. As he was standing in deep meditation near his hermitage, the men of the King chased some thieves and came to the place where the hermit stood. The robbers placed the stolen property near the hermit and ran away. The king's men caught the hermit, and the thieves. The King ordered them to be placed on a trident. The thieves died on the trident. But Māṇḍavya was not dead. The King sawed the trident and got Māṇḍavya down. The hermit went to Dharmadeva and asked him what his blame was for suffering the punishment of the trident on him. Dharmadeva replied that the punishment was inflicted for a cruel deed he had done in his childhood. He had caught some flies and made a bunch of them by piercing them with the rib of a coconut-palm leaf. But Māṇḍavya argued that Dharmadeva was not right in punishing him because the Śāstras and rules of righteousness said that mistakes committed by boys below the age of twelve could not be considered to be sins. Further he cursed Dharmadeva that he would take birth on the earth from the womb of a Śūdrā. Accordingly Dharmadeva took birth from the womb of the servant of Ambikā and Ambālikā.

3) *Birth.* Vidura was born as the brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. (For detailed story see under Dhṛtarāṣṭra I, para 2).

4) *Up to marriage.* Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura spent their younger days in Hastināpura as inseparable brothers. Their teacher was Bhīṣma. Vidura learned the Vedas, Śāstras, Purāṇas, Itihāsas etc. also, along with the education given to a prince such as archery, club-fight, sword-fight, wrestling, controlling elephants etc. He understood that to be righteous was far better

than fighting. It is stated in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 108, that Vidura got the sense of righteousness, and education in fighting, at the same time.

Childhood ended. As Vidura was born to a Brahmin by a Śūdrā woman he had no right to become King. When he grew up, the duty to find a wife for him fell on Bhīṣma. At that time a damsel born to a Brahmin by a Śūdrā woman was being brought up in the palace of King Devaka. With the permission of Devaka, Bhīṣma brought the girl and gave her in marriage to Vidura. It is stated in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 114, that sons and daughters were born to the couple.

5) *Partiality towards the Pāṇḍavas.* Vidura was the most intelligent and wisest man of his time, and he always favoured righteousness. Though he viewed the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas with equal favour, in his heart he felt some partiality towards the Pāṇḍavas, because they were virtuous, whereas the Kauravas were becoming more and more wicked. As this partiality arose from his sense of righteousness, nobody could blame Vidura for this. His aim was the prosperity of the Lunar dynasty of Kings.

Many ill omens were seen at the time of the birth of Duryodhana. Vidura understood that if that infant grew up he would be a comet to the Lunar dynasty. It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 115, that Vidura advised Dhṛtarāṣṭra that it would be better for him to throw away that infant.

The death of Pāṇḍu drew Vidura closer to the Pāṇḍavas. Vidura took the lead in performing the funeral rites and other ceremonies which followed. The Pāṇḍavas were very sad and miserable at the death of their father. It was at this time that Duryodhana poisoned Bhīmasena, tied him with a rope and threw him into the river Ganges. Bhīmasena was carried to the world of nāgas (serpents). Kuntī felt grieved at the loss of her son Bhīma, but Vidura consoled her.

It was due to the wisdom of Vidura that the Pāṇḍavas escaped from the disaster in the lac-house. As soon as Duryodhana had completed the lac-house, Vidura understood the deception lying hidden under it. and he informed the Pāṇḍavas of everything about it. Moreover he sent a man named Khanaka and made an underground passage from the lac-house. When the lac-house was burnt down, the Pāṇḍavas escaped by the under-ground passage and reached the banks of the Ganges. Vidura had sent a ferryman secretly to take them to the other side of the Ganges. When Bhīṣma got the news that the Pāṇḍavas had been burnt to death in the lac-house he became very sad. It is mentioned in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 149, that Vidura informed Bhīṣma secretly that the Pāṇḍavas were not dead.

After this event the Pāṇḍavas come into the scene only at the Svayamvara (marriage) of Pāñcālī. Bhīṣma and Droṇa proposed that the Pāṇḍavas should be brought back and be given half of the kingdom. Vidura, by his arguments convinced Dhṛtarāṣṭra that the proposal of Bhīṣma and Droṇa was correct. Dhṛtarāṣṭra asked Vidura to bring the Pāṇḍavas back. Vidura went to the city of Drupada and brought the Pāṇḍavas back and consoled their mother Kuntī. After this Yudhiṣṭhira performed Rājasūya (sacrifice of royal consecration). Vidura took part in it and took the charge of financial