

## Chapter 6. Vidura's Renunciation

### Who can overcome the decrees of fate?

In the palace, Vidura asked about the welfare of all of his kinsmen. Then Kunthi Devi, the queen mother, came in and, casting her endearing looks at him, said, "At last, we see you, O Vidura!" She could say no more.

After some time she resumed, "How could you stay away so long, ignoring the children whom you reared with so much love, as well as myself and others who revere you so much. Through your grace, my children are rulers of this land today. Where would they be today if you hadn't saved them on many a critical occasion? We were the target of many a disaster, but the greatest one was your being away from us. That affected us most. Even the hope of seeing you again was extinguished in us. Now, our hearts have sprouted again. Aspirations scattered by despair have come together. Today, our joy has attained fullness. O, what a happy day!" Kunthi sat for a while wiping her tears.

Vidura held her hands and could not resist his own tears, as he recapitulated the varied events of the past in the Pandava and Kaurava groups. He said, "Mother Kunthi Devi! Who can overcome the decrees of fate? What must happen happens. The good and evil that men do have to result in good and evil. How can man be called free when he is bound by this law of cause and effect? He is a puppet in the hands of this law. It pulls the strings, and then he moves. Our likes and dislikes are of no consequence. Everything is His will, His grace." As Vidura expounded the fundamental spiritual truths that govern human affairs, the brothers Dharmaraja, Bhima, Nakula, and Sahadeva sat near, wrapped in close attention.

Kunthi raised her head at last. "Through your blessings, we won the war, but we were powerless to save the lives of Droupadi's and Subhadra's sons. Misfortune haunted us so strongly. Of course, as you said, no one can escape one's destiny. Well, let the past be forgotten. It is meaningless to worry over what cannot be set right. I must say that my thirst has now been considerably relieved at meeting you at last. Where were you all this time? Tell us."

Vidura replied that he had been on a pilgrimage to some holy places. The brothers listened with rapt attention, prodding him with questions. Dharmaraja said often that he was waiting for the day when he too could go through all those holy experiences. He folded his palms in reverence whenever a holy shrine was mentioned and, with closed eyes, pictured to himself the sacred spot.

### Vidura describes the glory of Krishna

Meanwhile, Bhima interjected, "Did you go to Dwaraka? Please tell us your experiences there."

Dharmaraja added, "You must have met Lord Krishna there, right? Tell us all what happened, in full detail."

Kunthi Devi also became eager to hear his description, "Tell us, tell us. My son is there now; you must have met him too. How is everyone? I hope the old parents, Nanda and Yasoda, are well. And Devaki and Vasudeva?" A shower of questions fell on Vidura even before he started talking.

Vidura was not eager to answer. He talked as if he was anxious to avoid being drawn into the topic. He had

learned from Uddhava while on the way to Dwaraka that the Yadava clan had perished and that Krishna had closed His human career. He didn't want to plunge the Pandavas into grief just when they were elated at meeting him after a long time. "Why should I, who has given them so much joy, be the cause of wiping out that joy," he argued. "They are sure to know about it from Arjuna, who will return from Dwaraka with the sorrowful news." So he swallowed the news that popped up often into his mouth; he satisfied himself and them by describing the glory of Krishna. He said, "I did not like to visit kith and kin with these ascetic robes on, so I didn't meet any of the Yadava leaders or Nanda, Yasoda, and others," and kept quiet. He didn't dilate further on Dwaraka and his own pilgrimage.

"I came to you because I knew you won the war and are at last peacefully engaged in ruling over the kingdom, which was rightfully yours. I felt drawn toward these children, whom I had fostered from a tender age. It was affection toward them that drew me here. Among my kith and kin, I was tempted to visit only you; I didn't want to meet any others," he said, and he turned to the *Vedantic* teachings that he wanted to impart.

When the conversation ended, Dharmaraja invited Vidura to stay at quarters specially arranged for him and accompanied him to the mansion. There, he appointed certain people to serve Vidura and asked him to rest.

### **Vidura decides to visit his brother, the blind king**

Vidura didn't relish the idea of spending time in that seat of luxury, but he entered the mansion lest Dharmaraja be displeased. He lay on his bed, reviewing the past. He sighed when he realised that the stratagems that his blind brother, Dhritharashtra, used to destroy the Pandavas, the children of his other brother Pandu, recoiled and caused the destruction of his own clan. He admired Dharmaraja for the magnanimity he showed Dhritharashtra, in spite of the fact that he had tortured the Pandavas in various ways. Dharmaraja revered him with great faith and devotion and attended to his comforts. Vidura felt utmost disgust when he thought about the wickedness of Dhritharashtra's heart. He was ashamed that the old man coolly wallowed in the luxury of the palace instead of cultivating detachment from the flimsy pleasures of the senses and attempting to realise the goal of human life, liberation from the cycle of birth and death. He experienced uncontrollable agony that his brother was wasting his few remaining years of life.

His *yogic* vision told him that the Pandavas would also soon disappear, that the Krishna who guarded them here would look after their best interest in the hereafter too. But he guessed that the blind king would suffer more after the Pandavas' departure. He resolved to send his unfortunate brother out into pilgrimage and the ultimate realisation of his destiny. He didn't want any delay. So he slipped out in the darkness, without being noticed by anyone, and walked straight to Dhritharashtra's residence.