

## Dronacharya

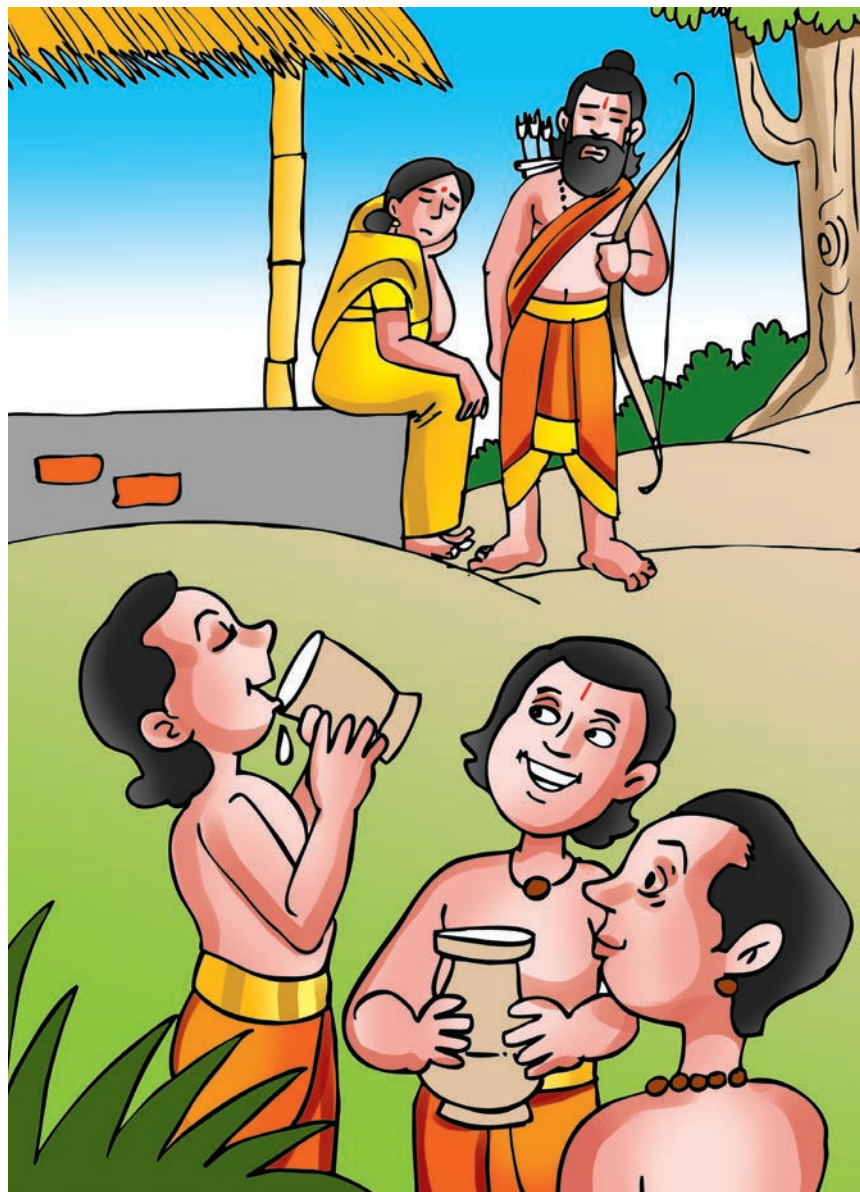
In many movies, we observe that the protagonist or the hero gets introduced and his background is revealed. Simultaneously, the movie depicts the background of other characters. At some point in the movie, the various characters come together and their life intermingles to create the rest of the story. Similarly, the Mahabharata, being an epic of magnitude, has several characters.

The first of these characters is Drona. He got this name because Drona was not gestated in a womb, but was formed outside in a vessel called 'Dona'. Such mystical occurrences were common in the Mahabharata era as Sages, Rishis and divine powers were very much a part of their everyday life.

Drona grew up in poverty. He learned the Vedas and Shastras and was particularly skilled in archery. When Drona was a student, another student studied along with him. This student was Drupada - the Panchala Prince. When they studied together, Drupada and Drona were very close friends. They shared everything from meals to clothes. Drupada promised Drona that whenever he became the king, he would give the latter half his kingdom. Later on, Drupada

went on to become the king of Panchala. Drona however, pursued his Brahminical ways.

The land of Panchala was east of Hastinapura. In present day, it encompasses the states of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.



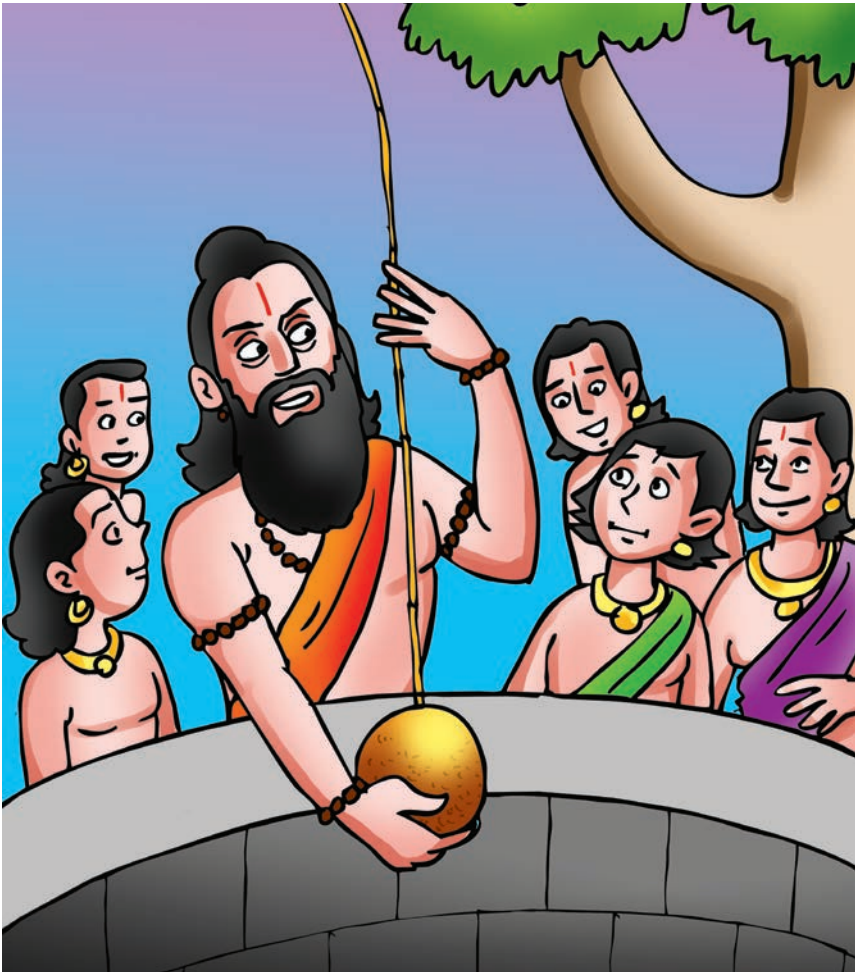
Drona married Kripa - the sister of Kripacharya, and had a son called Ashwaththama. Drona was content with what he had even though he lived in poverty. However, his heart wept when he watched Kripa and Ashwaththama struggle as a result of being poor.

Drona loved his son very dearly. Once when Ashwaththama was a child, he was very hungry. There wasn't any milk in the house. His mother did not even own a cow to give him milk. She mixed some wheat flour with water to make it look like milk and fed him. Drona felt very sad on seeing this.

Drona heard that the great Parashurama was giving away all his wealth to poor Brahmanas before retiring into the forest. He went to see Parashurama. Unfortunately, Parashurama had given away all his wealth before Drona got there. Parashurama felt sorry and said, "O Brahmana! I have nothing left to give. The only things left in my possession are my body and my weapons. Choose which you want and I shall gladly give it to you." Drona chose the weapons. Parashurama gave him the Divine weapons and taught him the magical Mantras that went along with them. He also taught him the use of the famous Brahmastra - a weapon created by Lord Brahma. It was considered to be the deadliest weapon. This made Drona a very powerful warrior.

However, Drona was still poor. He still had no money or possessions. He remembered the promise made by his childhood friend, prince Drupada, who was now King Drupada, that he would give Drona half his kingdom upon becoming the king. For the sake of his wife and son, Drona went to see Drupada. He was not interested in getting half the kingdom. All Drona wanted was a few little items that would enable his wife and son to live a comfortable life and eat hearty meals.

When Drona reached Drupada's palace, his childhood friend was very indifferent to him. Drupada was drunk with power. He neither respected nor regarded Drona. He taunted him saying,



“How dare you claim yourself to be my friend? How can a king like me be a friend of a beggar like you? Go before I imprison you.”

Drona’s feelings were hurt. He felt betrayed by someone whom he considered to be a close friend. He left the palace silently but in his heart, he vowed revenge.

Drona then took his wife and son and left for Hastinapura to his brother-in-law Kripacharya’s house. Kripacharya was the teacher of the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

On reaching Hastinapura, Drona saw the Pandavas and Kauravas playing with a ball. Drona stood by a side watching the boys play. During the course of the game, the ball fell into a well. The children surrounded the well, not knowing how to get the ball out. While looking down the well, Yudhishtira's ring fell inside too. The boys were anxious and confused.

Drona, who watched all this said, "O Princes! You are the descendants of the great Bharata race and have been taught to handle weapons. Do you not know how to get a ball out of a well?"

To this Yudhishtira, the eldest laughed and said, "Well, since you seem so confident, why don't you do it?"

Drona took a blade of grass and uttered a Mantra. He then used the blade of grass as an arrow and shot it into the well. The grass stuck onto the skin of the ball. Drona then shot another blade of grass, which stuck behind the first blade of grass. He did this again and again in quick succession to form a long chain. Holding the last blade of grass, Drona pulled the ball out of the well. He then shot an arrow into the well that went through Yudhishtira's ring and looped it around. The boys were astounded as Drona extricated the ring from the well. With excitement, they rushed to the palace and reported this incident to Bhishma, their grandfather.

Bhishma instantly recognized that this stranger was none but Drona, who had many powers and skills. He invited Drona respectfully and requested him to become the Guru of the Kuru princes, to train them in advanced military arts. Drona then established his Gurukula - a residential school, near the city where the Pandava and Kaurava princes studied under him. This village came to be known as Guru-Gram, 'Guru' meaning teacher and 'Gram' meaning village. Today, that place is known as the city of Gurgaon.

Drona henceforth became known as Dronacharya - 'Drona the Guru'.