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THE BIRTH OF VIDURA

Sri Vaisampayana Muni

Satyavati had borne two powerful sons, both died without producing an heir to the throne. To save the Kuru dynasty, she summoned upon the powerful *R̥ṣi* Vyasadeva, her first-born son. Vyasadeva came directly from his practice of harsh asceticism in the Himalayas and appeared in a repulsive condition. Satyawati was impatient, she asked the queen Ambika to immediately prepare to beget a son from the sage. The queen was in shock seeing the ascetic sage and closed her eyes in fear as soon as the sage arrived. Vyasadeva explained to Satyawati of the situation and warned her about his vows. He said "the queen will bear a son who will be as strong as ten thousand elephants. He will be vastly intelligent, wise and prosperous. He will have a hundred sons. But, O pious lady, for the fault of his mother he will be born blind."

Satyavati was shocked. She became very anxious and again asked Vyasadeva to approach the other queen, Ambalika. Vyasadeva looked upon his anxious mother with compassion. He soothed her fears and agreed to return only when Ambalika was prepared to receive him. Even though she had been warned by her sister what to expect, the

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princess was still struck with horror when the grim ascetic approached her. She turned pale with fright, although she kept her eyes open as she conceived.

Ambika gave birth to a blind child who was named Dhritarashtra. Ambalika delivered a pale child who was nevertheless effulgent and endowed with many auspicious marks on his body, and who was named Pandu in accord with Vyasadeva's words. Soon after, the sage again came to the palace in order to approach Ambika for a second time.

The queen was alarmed at the prospect of meeting again with the terrible-looking *ṛṣi*. She went to a maidservant who was an intimate friend and asked that she take her place. Giving the servant her own ornaments and adorning her with the finest robes, she had her wait in the bedchamber for the sage.

Although he knew everything the *ṛṣi* entered the chamber as before. As soon as she saw the exalted sage the maidservant rose up respectfully. She bowed at his feet and had him sit down comfortably. After gently washing his feet, the girl offered him many kinds of delicious foodstuffs. Vyasadeva was pleased. After laying with the girl, he said, "O good-natured girl, you shall be a maidservant no longer. Your son from our union will be wise, fortunate and the foremost of all intelligent men upon this earth."

Again Satyawati was waiting outside the bedchamber. Vyasadeva told her, "The queen deceived me and sent instead her servant. That simple girl received me with all respect. She will therefore bear an auspicious child. O Mother, I shall now go and continue my asceticism. I will return when you need me again, but I will not beget any more children." Vyasadeva vanished, leaving Bhishma and Satyawati reflecting on his words.

The maidservant gave birth to a child named Vidura, who later became the chief minister and advisor of the Kuru house. He was raised alongside his two brothers, and the three boys grew up like resplendent gods. Everyone was satisfied that the kingdom was secure. Happiness and prosperity were everywhere as the gods showered their blessings on the kingdom. Bhishma ruled as regent while the boys grew up.

— Taken from the book 'Mahābhārata' Retold by Krishna Dharma dasa. Chapter 1: Birth of the Kuru Elders. ❀

ANIMANDAVYA CURSES YAMARAJA

Mahābhārata

Once there was a famous *brāhmaṇa* named Mandavya*. He did *tapasya* (penance) for many years standing silent in front of his ashrama, under a tree, raising his hands in prayer. At that time some thieves happened to pass by that place, with stolen property belonging to the King. Finding that the King's men were pursuing them, the thieves fled away after leaving their stolen property in Mandavya's Ashrama. The King's men seized Mandavya with the king's property. Even prolonged and repeated questionings did not bring out a single word from Mandavya. At last the thieves were caught. Mistaking him as one of the thieves, the King's men produced Mandavya also along with the thieves before the King. The thieves were all condemned to death. The royal executioners took all of them to the place of execution and stuck them up at the tip of a trident (*Śūla*). The thieves died, but even after a long time Mandavya did not die.

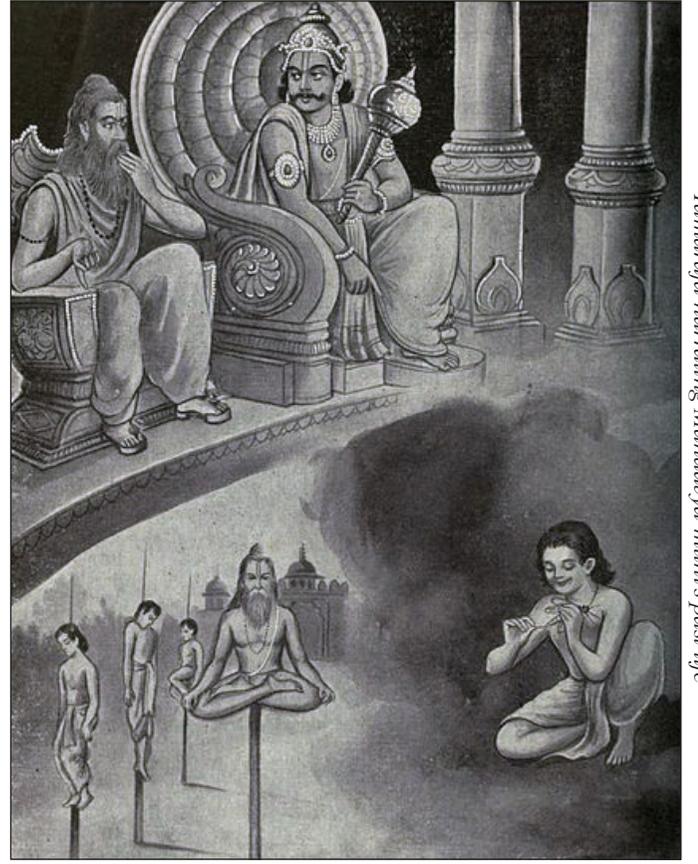
In *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsana-parva*, *Verses 4651*, it is said that at this stage Shiva appeared and blessed him with longevity and then vanished. Several *munis* in the shape of birds came near Mandavya who was lying on the trident and made enquiries about him. The King came to know of all these stories. Full of repentance, he went and begged pardon of Mandavya. The attempt to pull out the trident from Mandavya's body failed. At last it was removed by cutting it off. Since the tip (Ani) of the trident was left behind in his body he was thereafter known as "Ani Mandavya".

After going about in the world for many years with the tip of the trident in his body, Ani Mandavya once asked Dharmā : "Oh Lord! why is it that an innocent man like me is afflicted with the trident?". Dharmā answered: "In your boyhood you once caught small birds and pierced them with a grass reed. It is a result of that sin that you have been pierced with the trident." Mandavya replied : "The *śāstras* ordain

* *māṇḍavya-śāpād bhagavān prajā-saṁyamano yamaḥ
bhrātuh kṣetre bhūṣiṣyāyān jātaḥ satyavati-sutāt*

Translation: I know that you are now Vidura due to the cursing of Māṇḍavya Muni and that formerly you were King Yamarāja, the great controller of living entities after their death. You were begotten by the son of Satyavati, Vyāsadeva, in the kept wife of his brother.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa)* 3.5.20



Yamaraja narrating Mandavya muni's past life

that there shall be no punishment for sins committed till the age of twelve. Therefore the punishment inflicted on me is wrong. As the murder of a *brāhmaṇa* is a greater sin than any other murder, may you be born as a man in the *śūdra* caste."

By the above curse of Mandavya, Dharmā was born as son of a *śūdra* woman. It was this child who later on became the renowned Vidura.

— *Mahābhārata Ādi-parva: Adivansavatarana Parva: Section LXIII.*
Taken from the book 'The Mahābhārata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa'
Translated into English Prose from the Original Sanskrit Text by Kisari
Mohan Ganguli [1883-1896] ❧

NO ONE EQUAL TO VIDURA

Mahābhārata

Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura were of great intelligence from their birth brought up by Bhishma, as if they were his own sons. And the children, having passed through the usual rites of their order, devoted themselves to vows and study. And they grew up into fine young men skilled in the Vedas and all athletic sports. And they became well skilled in the practice of bow, in horsemanship, in encounters with mace, sword and shield, in

the management of elephants in battle, and in the science of morality. Well-read in history and the *Purāṇas* and various branches of learning, and acquainted with the truths of the *Vedas* and their branches they acquired knowledge, which was versatile and deep. And Pandu, possessed of great prowess, excelled all men in archery while Dhritarashtra excelled all in personal strength, while in the three worlds there was no one equal to Vidura in devotion to virtue and in the knowledge of the dictates of morality. And beholding the restoration of the extinct line of Shantanu, the saying became current in all countries that among mothers of heroes, the daughters of the king of Kashi were the first; that among countries Kurujangala was the first; that among virtuous men, Vidura was the first; that among cities Hastinapura was the first.

Meanwhile the son of Ganga (Bhishma) heard that king Devaka had a daughter endued with youth and beauty and begotten upon a *sūdra* wife. Bringing her from her father's abode, Bhishma married her to Vidura of great wisdom. And Vidura begot upon her many children like himself in accomplishments.

— *The Mahābhārata, Book 1: Ādi-parva: Sambhava Parva: Section CIX & CXIV taken from the book 'The Mahābhārata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa' Translated into English Prose from the Original Sanskrit Text by Kisari Mohan Ganguli [1883-1896]* ❧

PARTIALITY TOWARDS THE PANDAVAS

Mahābhārata

Vidura was the most intelligent and wisest man of his time, and he always favoured righteousness. Though he viewed the Kauravas and the Pandavas with equal favour, in his heart he felt some partiality towards the Pandavas, 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 Dhritarashtra that it would be better for him to throw away that infant.

The death of Pandu drew Vidura closer to the Pandavas. Vidura took the lead

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in performing the funeral rites and other ceremonies which followed. The Pandavas were very sad and miserable at the death of their father. It was at this time that Duryodhana poisoned Bhimasena, tied him with a rope and threw him into the river Ganges. Bhimasena was carried to the world of nagas (serpents). Kunti felt grieved at the loss of her son Bhima, but Vidura consoled her.

It was due to the wisdom of Vidura that the Pandavas 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 Pandavas 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 Pandavas escaped by the underground 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 Bhishma got the news that the Pandavas 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 Bhishma secretly that the Pandavas were not dead.

After this event the Pandavas come into the scene only at the *svayamvara* (marriage) of Panchali or Draupadi. Bhishma and Drona proposed that the Pandavas should be brought back and be given half of the kingdom. Vidura, by his arguments convinced Dhritarashtra that the proposal of Bhishma and Drona was correct. Dhritarashtra asked Vidura to bring the Pandavas back. Vidura went to the city of Drupada and brought the Pandavas back and consoled their mother Kunti. After this Yudhishthira performed *rājasūya-yajña* (sacrifice of royal consecration). Vidura took part in it and took the charge of financial part of the sacrifice. It was after this, Duryodhana challenged Yudhishthira for a game of dice. Vidura saw beforehand that this move on the part of Duryodhana was dangerous. So he talked forcibly against this, and gave warning to all concerned. As Duryodhana did not agree with Vidura, he was scolded. But Duryodhana was firm and the game was conducted. Panchali was harassed by means of stripping and the Pandavas went to the forest. It is stated in *Mahābhārata, Vāna-parva, Chapter 3*, that Vidura had been witnessing all these scenes

with wet eyes.

When the Pandavas were driven to the forest, Dhritarashtra felt sorry. He became more afraid of the people than he was sorry for the Pandavas. He understood that his subjects would unite and rise against his sons. He called Vidura and asked him for a remedy. Vidura who was full of impatience, made a speech against the wickedness of the sons of Dhritarashtra and advised him to forsake his own sons and to bring the Pandavas back and give them the kingdom. Dhritarashtra did not like this approach. He said that Vidura was partial to the Pandavas and asked him to go away from the palace. Vidura became aggrieved at this. He followed the Pandavas, and walking a long distance, reached the forest Kamyaka and met the Pandavas. When Vidura had gone Dhritarashtra felt miserable. He sent for Vidura and when he returned Dhritarashtra begged for pardon. Vidura again became the adviser of Dhritarashtra. (*Mahābhārata, Vāna-parva, Chapter 6*).

— Taken from the book *Puranic Encyclopaedia, A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Puranic Literature* by Vettam Mami

VIDURA GOES FOR PILGRIMAGE

Srila Sukadeva Goswami

King Dhritarashtra became blind under the influence of impious desires to nourish his dishonest sons, and thus he set fire to the lacquer house to burn his fatherless nephews, the Pandavas. The King did not forbid his son Dushasana's abominable action of grabbing the hair of Draupadi, the wife of the godly King Yudhishthira, even though her tears washed the red dust on her breast. Yudhishthira, who was born without any enemy, was unfairly defeated in gambling. But because he had taken the vow of truthfulness, he went off to the forest. When he came back in due course and begged the return of his rightful share of the kingdom, he was refused by Dhritarashtra, who was overwhelmed by illusion.

Lord Krishna was sent by Arjuna into the assembly as the spiritual master of the whole world, and although His words were heard by some [like Bhishma] as pure nectar, it was not so for the others, who were completely bereft of the last farthing of past pious works. The King [Dhritarashtra or Duryodhana] did not

take the words of Lord Krishna very seriously. When Vidura was invited by his elder brother [Dhritarashtra] for consultation, he entered the house and gave instructions which were exactly to the point. His advice is well known, and instructions by Vidura are approved by expert ministers of state.

Vidura said: You must now return the legitimate share to Yudhishthira, who has no enemies and who has been forbearing through untold sufferings due to your offenses. He is waiting with his younger brothers, among whom is the revengeful Bhima, breathing heavily like a snake. Surely you are afraid of him. Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, has accepted the sons of Pritha as His kinsmen, and all the kings of the world are with Lord Sri Krishna. He is present in His home with all His family members, the kings and princes of the Yadu dynasty, who have conquered an unlimited number of rulers, and He is their Lord. You are maintaining offense personified, Duryodhana, as your infallible son, but he is envious of Lord Krishna. And because you are thus maintaining a nondevotee of Krishna, you are devoid of all auspicious qualities. Relieve yourself of this ill fortune as soon as possible and do good to the whole family!

While speaking thus, Vidura, whose personal character was esteemed by respectable persons, was insulted by Duryodhana, who was swollen with anger and whose lips were trembling. Duryodhana was in company with Karna, his younger brothers and his maternal uncle Shakuni. He said: Who asked him to come here, this son of a kept mistress? He is so crooked that he spies in the interest of the enemy against those on whose support he has grown up. Toss him out of the palace immediately and leave him with only his breath.

Thus being pierced by arrows through his ears and afflicted to the core of his heart, Vidura placed his bow on the door and quit his brother's palace. He was not sorry, for he considered the acts of the external energy to be supreme. By his piety, Vidura achieved the advantages of the pious Kauravas. After leaving Hastinapura, he took shelter of many places of pilgrimages, which are the Lord's lotus feet. With a desire to gain a high order of pious life, he traveled to holy places where thousands of transcendental forms of the Lord are situated. He began to travel alone, thinking only of Krishna,

through various holy places like Ayodhya, Dwaraka and Mathura. He traveled where the air, hill, orchard, river and lake are all pure and sinless and where the forms of the Unlimited decorate the temples. Thus he performed the pilgrim's progress.

While so traversing the earth, he simply performed duties to please the Supreme Lord Hari. His occupation was pure and independent. He was constantly sanctified by taking his bath in holy places, although he was in the dress of a mendicant and had no hair dressing nor a bed on which to lie. Thus he was always unseen by his various relatives. Thus, when he was in the land of Bharatavarsha travelling to all the places of pilgrimage, he visited Prabhasakshetra. At that time Maharaja Yudhisthira was the emperor and held the world under one military strength and one flag.

At the place of pilgrimage at Prabhasa, it came to his knowledge that all his relatives had died due to violent passion, just as an entire forest burns due to fire produced by the friction of bamboos. After this he proceeded west, where the River Sarasvati flows. On the bank of the River Sarasvati there were eleven places of pilgrimage, namely, (1) Trita, (2) Ushana, (3) Manu, (4) Prithu, (5) Agni, (6) Asita, (7) Vayu, (8) Sudasa, (9) Go, (10) Guha and (11) Sraddhadeva. Vidura visited all of them and duly performed rituals. There were also many other temples of various forms of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Vishnu, established by great sages and demigods. These temples were marked with the chief emblems of the Lord, and they reminded one always of the original Personality of Godhead, Lord Krishna.

Thereafter he passed through very wealthy provinces like Surat, Sauvira and Matsya and through western India, known as Kurujangala. At last he reached the bank of the Yamuna, where he happened to meet Uddhava, the great devotee of Lord Krishna. Then, due to his great love and feeling, Vidura embraced him [Uddhava], who was a constant companion of Lord Krishna and formerly a great student of Brihaspati's. Vidura then asked him for news of the family of Lord Krishna, the Personality of Godhead.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāna) » Canto 3: The Status Quo » Chapter 1: Questions by Vidura » Verses: 6 to 25* ❀

VIDURA'S RETURNING TO HASTINAPUR

Sri Suta Goswami

While traveling on a pilgrimage, Vidura received knowledge of the destination of the self from the great sage Maitreya and then returned to Hastinapura. He became as well versed in the subject as he desired. After asking various questions and becoming established in the transcendental loving service of Lord Krishna, Vidura retired from putting questions to Maitreya Muni. When they saw Vidura return to the palace, all the inhabitants—Maharaja Yudhisthira, his younger brothers, Dhritarashtra, Satyaki, Sanjaya, Kripacharya, Kunti, Gandhari, Draupadi, Subhadra, Uttara, Kripa, many other wives of the Kauravas, and other ladies with children—all hurried to him in great delight. It so appeared that they had regained their consciousness after a long period. With great delight they all approached him, as if life had returned to their bodies. They exchanged obeisances and welcomed each other with embraces. Due to anxieties and long separation, they all cried out of affection. King Yudhisthira then arranged to offer sitting accommodations and a reception. After Vidura ate sumptuously and took sufficient rest, he was comfortably seated. Then the King began to speak to him, and all who were present there listened.

Maharaja Yudhisthira said: My uncle, do you remember how you always protected us, along with our mother, from all sorts of calamities? Your partiality, like the wings of a bird, saved us from poisoning and arson. While traveling on the surface of the earth, how did you maintain your livelihood? At which holy places and pilgrimage sites did you render service? My Lord, devotees like your good self are verily holy places personified. Because you carry the Personality of Godhead within your heart, you turn all places into places of pilgrimage. My uncle, you must have visited Dwaraka. In that holy place are our friends and well-wishers, the descendants of Yadu, who are always rapt in the service of the Lord Sri Krishna. You might have seen them or heard about them. Are they all living happily in their abodes?

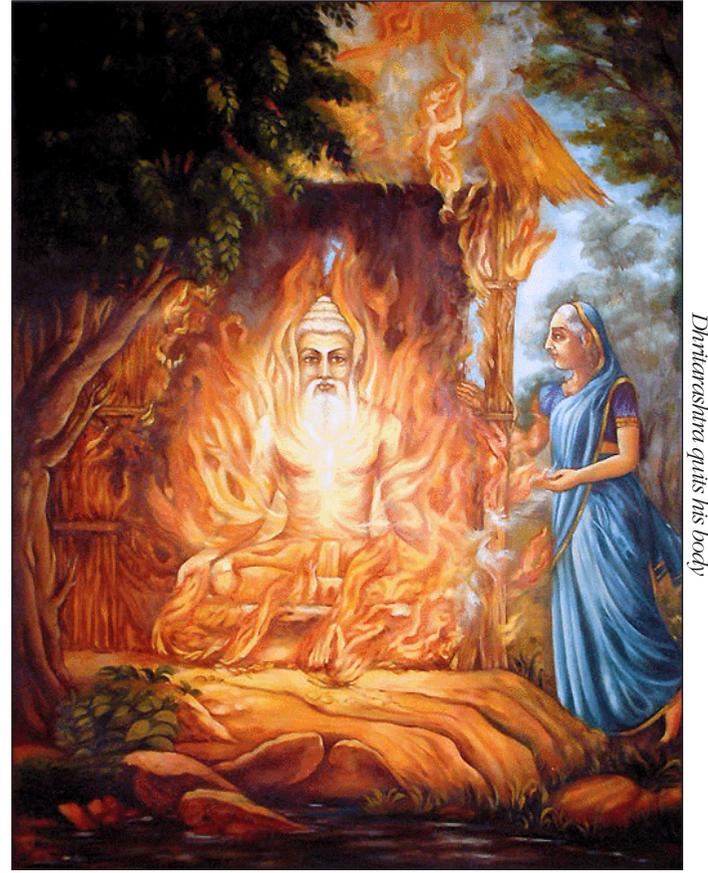
Thus being questioned by Maharaja Yudhisthira, Mahatma Vidura gradually described everything he had personally experienced, except news of the annihilation

of the Yadu dynasty. Compassionate Mahatma Vidura could not stand to see the Pandavas distressed at any time. Therefore he did not disclose this unpalatable and unbearable incident because calamities come of their own accord. Thus Mahatma Vidura, being treated just like a godly person by his kinsmen, remained there for a certain period just to rectify the mentality of his eldest brother and in this way bring happiness to all the others. As long as Vidura played the part of a *śūdra*, being cursed by Mandavya Muni, Aryama officiated at the post of Yamaraja to punish those who committed sinful acts.

Having won his kingdom and observed the birth of one grandson competent to continue the noble tradition of his family, Maharaja Yudhishthira reigned peacefully and enjoyed uncommon opulence in cooperation with his younger brothers, who were all expert administrators to the common people. Insurmountable, eternal time imperceptibly overcomes those who are too much attached to family affairs and are always engrossed in their thought.

Mahatma Vidura knew all this, and therefore he addressed Dhritarashtra, saying: My dear King, please get out of here immediately. Do not delay. Just see how fear has overtaken you. This frightful situation cannot be remedied by any person in this material world. My lord, it is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as eternal time [*kāla*] that has approached us all. Whoever is under the influence of supreme *kāla* [eternal time] must surrender his most dear life, and what to speak of other things, such as wealth, honor, children, land and home. Your father, brother, well-wishers and sons are all dead and passed away. You yourself have expended the major portion of your life, your body is now overtaken by invalidity, and you are living in the home of another. You have been blind from your very birth, and recently you have become hard of hearing. Your memory is shortened, and your intelligence is disturbed. Your teeth are loose, your liver is defective, and you are coughing up mucus.

Alas, how powerful are the hopes of a living being to continue his life. Verily, you are living just like a household dog and are eating remnants of food given by Bhima. There is no need to live a degraded life and subsist on the charity of those whom you tried to kill by



Dhritarashtra quits his body

arson and poisoning. You also insulted one of their wives and usurped their kingdom and wealth. Despite your unwillingness to die and your desire to live even at the cost of honor and prestige, your miserly body will certainly dwindle and deteriorate like an old garment. He is called undisturbed who goes to an unknown, remote place and, freed from all obligations, quits his material body when it has become useless. He is certainly a first-class man who awakens and understands, either by himself or from others, the falsity and misery of this material world and thus leaves home and depends fully on the Personality of Godhead residing within his heart. Please, therefore, leave for the north immediately, without letting your relatives know, for soon that time will approach which will diminish the good qualities of men. Thus Maharaja Dhritarashtra, the scion of the family of Ajamidha, firmly convinced by introspective knowledge [*prajñā*], broke at once the strong network of familial affection by his resolute determination. Thus he immediately left home to set out on the path of liberation, as directed by his younger brother Vidura. The gentle and chaste Gandhari, who was the daughter of King Subala of Kandahar [or Gandhar], followed her husband, seeing that he was

going to the Himalaya Mountains, which are the delight of those who have accepted the staff of the renounced order like fighters who have accepted a good lashing from the enemy.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa)» Canto 1: Creation » Chapter13: Dhritarashtra Quits Home » Verses: 1 to 30 ❧

VIDURA WAS NEVER A ŚŪDRA

His Divine Grace

A .C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Vidura, born of the womb of a *śūdra* woman, was forbidden even to be a party of royal heritage along with his brothers Dhritarashtra and Pandu. Then how could he occupy the post of a preacher to instruct such learned kings and *ksatriyas* as Dhritarashtra and Maharaja Yudhishthira? The first answer is that even though it is accepted that he was a *śūdra* by birth, because he renounced the world for spiritual enlightenment by the authority of *Rṣi* Maitreya and was thoroughly educated by him in transcendental knowledge, he was quite competent to occupy the post of an *ācārya*, or spiritual preceptor. According to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, anyone who is conversant in the transcendental knowledge, or the science of Godhead, be he a *brāhmaṇa* or a *śūdra*, a householder or a *sannyāsi*, is eligible to become a spiritual master. Even in the ordinary moral codes (as stated by Chanakya Pandit, the great politician and moralist) there is no harm in taking lessons from a person who may be by birth less than a *śūdra*. This is one part of the answer. The other is that Vidura was not actually a *śūdra*. He was to play the part of a so-called *śūdra* for one hundred years, being cursed by Mandavya Muni. He was the incarnation of Yamaraja, one of the twelve *mahājanas*, on the level with such exalted personalities as Brahma, Narada, Shiva, Kapila, Bhishma, Prahlada, etc. Being a *mahājana*, it is the duty of Yamaraja to preach the cult of devotion to the people of the world, as Narada, Brahma, and other *mahājanas* do. But Yamaraja is always busy in his Plutonic kingdom punishing the doers of sinful acts. Yamaraja is deputed by the Lord to a particular planet, some hundreds of thousands of miles away from the planet of earth, to take away the corrupt souls after death and convict them in accordance with their respective sinful activities.

Thus Yamaraja has very little time to take

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leave from his responsible office of punishing the wrongdoers. There are more wrongdoers than righteous men. Therefore Yamaraja has to do more work than other demigods who are also authorized agents of the Supreme Lord. But he wanted to preach the glories of the Lord, and therefore by the will of the Lord he was cursed by Mandavya Muni to come into the world in the incarnation of Vidura and work very hard as a great devotee. Such a devotee is neither a *śūdra* nor a *brāhmaṇa*. He is transcendental to such divisions of mundane society, just as the Personality of Godhead assumes His incarnation as a hog but He is neither a hog nor a Brahma. He is above all mundane creatures. The Lord and His different authorized devotees sometimes have to play the role of many lower creatures to claim the conditioned souls, but both the Lord and His pure devotees are always in the transcendental position. When Yamaraja thus incarnated himself as Vidura, his post was officiated by Aryama, one of the many sons of Kashyapa and Aditi. The Adityas are sons of Aditi, and there are twelve Adityas. Aryama is one of the twelve Adityas, and therefore it was quite possible for him to take charge of the office of Yamaraja during his one hundred years' absence in the form of Vidura. The conclusion is that Vidura was never a *śūdra*, but was greater than the purest type of *brāhmaṇa*.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa)» Canto 1: Creation » Chapter13: Dhritarashtra Quits Home » Verses : 15 Purport ❧



!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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