

5 Akshaya Patra

This is a short story from the Mahabharata.

Scene 1

(Duryodhana's palace)

Narrator Duryodhana was very envious of his cousins, the Pandavas. He was constantly thinking of ways to trouble them.

Duryodhana Pandavas ! Pandavas ! Pandavas ! Why is everyone always singing their glories? Indeed my heart burns whenever I hear their names. We have to think of a way to teach the Pandavas a lesson. Please listen Karna and my dear brothers, we have to make a plan to harm the Pandavas before they return from the forest.

Kaurava 1 Yes!Yes! We'll have to destroy them. Ha!Ha!Ha!

Another Ha ! Ha !

A servant Your majesty the great Sage Durvasa has arrived, accompanied by ten thousand disciples. They wish to have food and take rest here.

Duryodhana Durvasa Muni and ten thousand disciples ! Please lay out a wonderful feast and make all arrangements for them to be comfortable. Go quickly don't just stand here looking at my face.

Servant Yes, your majesty. (He exits)

Kaurava 1 Yes, yes. We should be careful. Durvasa Muni is known for his temper.

Kaurava 2 He often curses the people who offend him.

Duryodhana Come now, let's go and greet him.

Scene 2

(Durvasa Muni and his disciples are seated and Duryodhana and others are serving them)

Narrator Duryodhana took great pains to serve Durvasa Muni and his disciples. He didn't want to displease Durvasa Muni in any way.

Durvasa Muni Duryodhana come here. These dishes have become cold. Please take them away.

Duryodhana Yes. Yes. O dear sage. We will remove them immediately

Durvasa Muni And these fruits! I think you can feed them to the monkeys.

Sages Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

Duryodhana Yes. Yes. O great Sage , I will do as you say.

Narrator It was not easy to please Durvasa Muni. Sometimes he would ask for a meal to be prepared immediately. Then

he would go for a bath and return after a long time or he would say he was not hungry. On other occasions he would rise at midnight and ask for food. On the day he was about to leave he called for Duryodhana.

Duryodhana How can I serve you great sage ?

Durvasa Muni We are leaving today. Duryodhana, I am very pleased with you. You have served me well. Ask from me whatever you desire.

Narrator In his heart, Duryodhana was very pleased. He had already thought of a wicked plan to take revenge on the Pandavas. He spoke in a sweet voice

Duryodhana O great brahmana, just as you have been a guest in my house, I would like you to become a guest of Yudhisthira in the forest. He is a great king, with all good qualities. He is the best and eldest of our family. He therefore deserves to receive your blessings. You should go to him, when his entire family has finished eating and are preparing to rest. You will then be well received by these pious men.

Durvasa Yes. O king, I will do as you ask.

Narrator He then left with his disciples. They set off for the forest of Kamyaka. Duryodhana was overjoyed.

Duryodhana O Karna, our plan has worked.

Karna Yes. You have pleased Durvasa Muni and your desire will soon be fulfilled.

- Kaurava 1 Your enemies are cast into an ocean of misery.
- Kaurava 2 Through their own fault, they now face great danger.
- Duryodhana Durvasa Muni and ten thousand disciples. How will they feed them. Ha! Ha! Ha!
- Narrator Laughing and embracing they all rejoice.
- Scene 3
(A few cottages in the forest.)
- Narrator Some days later Durvasa Muni arrived at the Pandava camp just after Draupadi had eaten. Leaving his disciples on the outskirts of the camp, he walked in alone and appeared before the brothers. They all stood up with folded hands.
- Yudhisthira O great sage. We are so pleased that you have come to our humble abode. Please be comfortable on this seat.
- Narrator When Durvasa Muni was seated, Yudhisthira worshipped him very carefully by washing his feet and offering a lamp.
- Durvasa Muni I have come here with my ten thousand disciples and we need to eat. We have been walking all day and are hungry. O King, please arrange for our food. We shall first take our bath and then return for the meal.
- Yudhisthira Yes, we will do our best to serve you.

- Narrator When Durvasa Muni left, Yudhisthira expressed his great anxiety.
- Yudhisthira How can we possibly feed so many people? My dear Draupadi, please come here. Have you eaten?
- Draupadi Yes, I have finished my meal. Now our akshaya patra will not yield any more till tomorrow morning. Oh, what are we going to do? I am so frightened that Durvasa Muni will curse us.
- Yudhisthira Draupadi can you think of something?
- Draupadi For me, the welfare of my husband is more dear to me than my life itself. I think my only hope is to sincerely pray.
- Narrator Draupadi went to a corner and started praying very fervently.
- Draupadi O Krishna, O Lord of the Universe, Please hear my prayer. O Unlimited and all Powerful one, You always protect Your devotees when they are in danger. We seek Your shelter. O Lord! Please save us.
- Narrator The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna is so kind and merciful. He always comes to help His devotees when they sincerely call out to Him. Within a few moments, He was standing in front of Draupadi who fell at His feet with tears in Her eyes.
- Draupadi Oh! Krishna, You have come. Please save us. We are in great danger of being cursed by Durvasa Muni. What shall we do?

Krishna
(smiling)

Yes, Yes. Don't worry. I will do whatever can be done. But right now I am hungry. Please feed me first.

Draupadi
(feeling
ashamed)

Oh ! How can I feed you my Lord ? The vessel given by the Sun God remains full until I have eaten. After I finish eating it will not yield any more food till the next day.

Krishna

Well I am too hungry to listen to all this. Just get the akshaya patra and show it to Me.

Draupadi

Here it is my Lord.



Krishna

Let me look at it carefully. Oh ! See there is a particle of rice and vegetable stuck here.

- Narrator The Lord quickly takes the particle and eats it happily.
- Krishna May the Lord of all sacrifices be satisfied with this food. Sahadeva, go quickly and bring the sage and his disciples here and feed them.
- Sahadev sets off to the river bank.
- Narrator The Pandavas looked around fearfully. There was no sign of food but they had full faith in Krishna.
- Scene 4
- Narrator Meanwhile, Durvasa Muni and his disciples were bathing in the river and chanting their prayers. Suddenly Durvasa Muni felt as if he had just eaten a large meal.
- Durvasa Muni Oh! I don't know why I am feeling so full. I don't think I'll be able to eat even a single morsel.
- Disciples Gurudev, we are also feeling like that. What's happening to all of us?
(all look at each other in surprise)
- Durvasa Muni Yudhisthira must have prepared a great feast for ten thousand of us.
- follower 1 If we don't eat , it will be a great offence.
- Another follower Yudhisthira has great powers. He is a great devotee of the Lord.
- Durvasa Muni Yes, the Pandavas can consume us with their anger just as fire can consume a bale of cotton. Come let us quickly depart from this place before they see us again.

Narrator Although Durvasa Muni was a powerful mystic yogi, he knew that his power was nothing compared to the devotees of the Lord. He came out of the river and quickly walked away. His ten thousands disciples also fled in all directions so as not to meet any of the Pandavas.

Sahadeva Oh ! where is Durvasa Muni and his ten thousand disciples? I can see some waterpots and pieces of cloth lying around. But there is no sign of the brahmanas.

A passerby Who are you looking for?

Sahadeva I am looking for Durvasa Muni and his followers.

A passerby I saw them all departing sometime ago. They seemed to be in a great hurry to leave.

Sahadeva You mean they've all gone ? Are you sure ?

A passerby Yes..Yes..I saw them leave, with my own eyes.

Narrator Sahadeva returned to Yudhisthira and informed them of what had happened. Yudhisthira was still a bit anxious and wondered whether the sages would return. But Krishna reassured them that they were out of danger. Then He took permission to leave for His abode.

The Pandavas thanked their beloved friend for protecting them and then entered their cottages and rested for the night.



Activity Time

Discussion: The day Mr. Hand goes on strike

What an unusual title for a Puppet Show! Just follow the instructions and you'll see what its all about.

Two partners sit together and paint each others' hands. One is 'Mr. Hand' and the other is 'Mr. Stomach'. Now enact a little skit based on the following outline.



Hand	Fingers please come for a meeting I have a serious matter to discuss We do the hard work and Stomach does the eating Let's go on a strike, make no fuss
Fingers	Yes, yes we are ready to agree Come, there's no time to waste
Narrator	They dipped into dishes with great glee Hoping to enjoy the taste
Fingers	One, two, three days have gone by We're struggling with all our might Squeezing, squashing we did try Things aren't turning out quite right.

Narrator They were becoming weaker day by day
The strike had caused loss not gain.

Hand We must feed the stomach today
Only then we'll be healthy again.

Stomach I'm happy you have understood
That we all have a role to play
This is for everyone's good
Please do end the strike today

Everyone We're working together satisfied
Serving the stomach happily
Living separately we tried
We learnt our lesson as you see

Actually, this funny show has a deep meaning. Like the hand is a part of the body, we are all parts of Krishna. When we work and do things to make Krishna happy, we also become happy.

As pouring water on the root of a tree gives energy to the trunk, leaves, twigs and everything else, as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies all living entities who are parts of the Supreme Lord.