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THE MAHABHARATA MIRROR — A POLITICAL ALLEGORY

The Queen of *Andha Prem*

Mamata, Abhishek & the Eternal Sin of Blind Parental Love

When Bengal's first family becomes an echo of Hastinapur's cursed court — and a state pays the price for a mother's wilful blindness

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India's greatest epic, the Mahabharata, is not merely a tale of ancient warriors and divine intervention. It is a timeless mirror held up to power, politics, and the catastrophic consequences of blind love. Today, as West Bengal groans under the weight of political violence, corruption, and dynastic impunity, that mirror reflects a haunting contemporary face — that of **Mamata Banerjee**, the Didi of Bengal, who stands before history wearing the very blindfold of Gandhari, gripping the staff of Dhritarashtra, and shielding, with every fibre of her being, her own Duryodhana — **Abhishek Banerjee**.

I — PROLOGUE

When Hastinapur Wore a White Sari

The palace of Hastinapur was once the mightiest court in Aryavarta. Yet it fell — not to an external enemy, not to drought or disease, but to the wilful blindness of its own rulers. King Dhritarashtra, born without sight, chose the further darkness of partiality over the light of justice. His queen, Gandhari, tied her own eyes in an act of conjugal solidarity that transformed into complicity. Together, they watched their son Duryodhana loot, plunder, insult, and destroy — and together, they called it love.

Replace Hastinapur with **Nabanna**, the secretariat of West Bengal. Replace the Kuru throne with the **Trinamool Congress (TMC)** party. Replace Dhritarashtra and Gandhari with **Mamata Banerjee**. And replace Duryodhana with her nephew and political heir, **Abhishek Banerjee** — the Prince of Diamond Harbour, the shadow administrator of Bengal — and the allegory writes itself with disturbing precision.

"The greatest tragedy of Hastinapur was not that it had a blind king. It was that the king chose to remain blind even when given sight."

— Mahabharata, Adi Parva | As relevant today as it was five thousand years ago

II — THE BLINDFOLD OF GANDHARI

Mamata Banerjee: A Mother in Politics Who Cannot See

Dhritarashtra's blindness was physical. Gandhari's blindness was chosen. Mamata's blindness is strategic — the most dangerous kind, for it comes dressed in the language of defiance, and it calls itself courage.

Gandhari's blindfold is one of the most poignant symbols in all of Indian mythology. She chose to cover her eyes not in ignorance, but in love — an act of total submission to her husband, a refusal to possess any advantage over him. The tragedy, however, lies not in the gesture itself, but in what it *enabled*. A queen who could see chose permanent darkness, and in that darkness, the crimes of her children grew unchecked, unquestioned, and ultimately, unstoppable.

Mamata Banerjee, the woman who walked barefoot on roads, who fasted against injustice, who built her political career on the rhetoric of *ma, mati, manush* (mother, soil, people), has today become the most sophisticated practitioner of **wilful blindness** in Indian democratic politics. Where Gandhari used cloth, Mamata uses the armour of denial — dismissing every allegation against Abhishek Banerjee as 'political conspiracy,' characterising every legal notice from central agencies as BJP vendetta, and standing like a wall between her nephew and accountability.

Gandhari was not ignorant of Duryodhana's nature. She knew. She heard the court whisper. She felt the dread of Vidura's warnings. But she chose, consciously, to unsee. Similarly, Mamata Banerjee has not been kept in darkness. She has access to every intelligence report, every ED charge sheet, every CBI finding, every SIT recommendation. The coking coal scam, the cattle smuggling network, the teacher recruitment fraud, the post-poll violence dossiers — they have all been laid before her. And she has, each time, chosen to look away.

III — THE SCEPTRE OF DHRITARASHTRA

A Chief Minister's Authority in Service of Nepotism

Dhritarashtra's greatest failure was not his blindness — it was his **abdication of kingship in favour of fatherhood**. A king must be just before he is a father. But Dhritarashtra subordinated every royal duty to paternal love. He gave Duryodhana the throne he was never entitled to. He overruled Bhishma's counsel. He silenced Vidura. He granted Duryodhana command of armies, kingdoms, and eventually, the mandate

to drag the Pandavas into exile.

Mamata Banerjee commands one of India's most powerful state governments. West Bengal's chief ministerial machinery — police, bureaucracy, district administration, party cadre — is famously loyal to her personal command. This power, accumulated over a decade and a half of astute political battle, has been placed, time and again, at the service of shielding **Abhishek Banerjee**.

When the Enforcement Directorate summoned Abhishek in connection with the coal scam, state machinery was mobilised. When the CBI sought documents, bureaucratic delays appeared. When central teams arrived to investigate post-poll violence, local police stood in their path. **The sceptre of Bengal's chief minister, meant to deliver governance, has repeatedly become a shield for her nephew.**

Dhritarashtra wept in private but surrendered to Duryodhana in public. Mamata, too, has — in unguarded moments — betrayed awareness of the reputational damage caused by Abhishek's controversies. Yet in Parliament, in press conferences, on the streets of Kolkata, she stands unyielding. The sceptre serves the son, not the state.

IV — THE CROWN PRINCE OF CORRUPTION

Abhishek Banerjee as Duryodhana: The Parallel Sins

Duryodhana was not simply a villain — he was the embodiment of *adharma* wearing the face of legitimate authority. His sins were not those of a bandit; they were the sins of **institutional capture**, of turning the apparatus of the state into a personal instrument of ego, greed, and power.

The comparison with Abhishek Banerjee is structural. As National General Secretary of the Trinamool Congress and Member of Parliament from Diamond Harbour, Abhishek has constructed around himself a **parallel power architecture** within Bengal that often operates independently of — and sometimes in open competition with — even the formal party hierarchy. Like Duryodhana who ran his own court within Hastinapur, Abhishek has, allegedly, built his own fiefdom within the TMC.

THE MIRROR OF AGES — DURYODHANA & ABHISHEK: PARALLEL SINS

Duryodhana — Prince of Hastinapur	Abhishek Banerjee — Prince of Diamond Harbour	Parallel Sins
Attempted to deny Pandavas their rightful share through deceit and political manoeuvring	Alleged construction of a parallel power structure within TMC that bypasses democratic processes and party seniority	Dynastic seizure of institutional space
Organised the infamous game of dice — a rigged system to strip rivals under cover of legitimate custom	Named in coal scam investigations — a massive organised network allegedly extracting illegal levies from coal movement	Institutionalised fraud in legal garb
Used treasury, armies, and allies for personal vendetta and territorial expansion	Cattle smuggling network connections probed by CBI — institutionalised extraction along Bengal-Bangladesh border corridors	Systematic extraction via political muscle

THE MIRROR OF AGES — DURYODHANA & ABHISHEK: PARALLEL SINS

Duryodhana — Prince of Hastinapur	Abhishek Banerjee — Prince of Diamond Harbour	Parallel Sins
Publicly humiliated Draupadi — treatment of women as collateral in power games	Teacher recruitment scam — systematic corruption in Bengal's SSC process allegedly involving TMC-linked operatives	Stripping dignity from ordinary aspirants
Surrounded himself with enablers: Shakuni, Karna, Dushasana	Alleged use of party infrastructure to silence critics, with senior TMC figures reportedly sidelined	Ecosystem of impunity
Triggered catastrophic war rather than submit to accountability	Repeated non-cooperation with ED and CBI summons — choosing legal battle over transparency	Defiance over accountability

V — THE COAL & CATTLE KURUKSHETRA

Duryodhana's Dice Table, Recast as Modern Extraction

"The game of dice was not about gambling. It was about a prince who believed the law was his personal instrument. The court did not stop him. The king did not stop him. And the queen, eyes bound, heard every throw."

— Symbolic Reading of the Sabha Parva

Duryodhana's most iconic act of *adharma* was the game of dice — a system designed to look like fair competition while being rigged from within. It was not theft at knifepoint; it was **institutionalised fraud**, dressed in ceremony, validated by court procedure, and fatal in its consequences.

The coal scam, as investigated by the CBI, allegedly involved a systematic network of illegal levies extracted from coal transportation in West Bengal. This was not opportunistic corruption — it was organised, regularised, and deeply embedded in the political economy of the coalfields. Just as the dice game required the presence of the king, the endorsement of the court, and the silence of the nobility, the coal extraction network reportedly required political protection at multiple levels — protection that agencies have alleged flowed from the highest levels of Bengal's ruling establishment.

Similarly, the cattle smuggling network along Bengal's borders — an operation spanning hundreds of kilometres of porous frontier — is alleged to have functioned as a **quasi-taxation system** on illegal cattle trade, with proceeds allegedly flowing to political beneficiaries. This is the modern equivalent of Duryodhana taxing the Pandavas' rightful territories — a systematic extraction of value from geography and governance, enabled by political muscle.

VI — THE DRAUPADI OF BENGAL

When Democratic Dignity Is Dishonoured in Open Court

One of the most morally devastating episodes in the Mahabharata is the attempted disrobing of Draupadi in the Kuru court — an act of public humiliation enabled by the silence of kings and elders who watched from their seats. Bhishma knew it was wrong. Drona knew. Dhritarashtra knew. Gandhari, had she eyes uncovered, would have known. Yet not one of them rose with sufficient force to stop it. Their silence was their sin.

West Bengal has had its Draupadi moment too — and it has had it repeatedly. The post-poll violence of 2021, documented by the National Human Rights Commission as well as multiple judicial bodies, described a state in which political opponents — particularly women — were subjected to violence, humiliation, and dispossession in the aftermath of the state election. These were not spontaneous acts. They bore the hallmarks of **organised political retribution**.

The teacher recruitment scam carries a different but equally disturbing resonance. Thousands of young aspirants — men and women who had studied for years, who had paid fees, who had placed their futures in the state's examination system — were allegedly cheated of their rightful positions by a network of bribery and manipulation. Their dignity was stripped as surely as Draupadi's was in that ancient court.

VII — SHAKUNI IN THE SHADOWS

The Ecosystem of Enablers

Duryodhana's greatest asset was not his army or his kingdom's wealth. It was the certainty that his father would never hold him accountable. When power knows it will not be checked by the one person with the authority to check it, impunity becomes structural — and structural impunity becomes, over time, the culture of an institution, a party, a state.

Duryodhana did not act alone. Behind every act of *adharma* stood his ecosystem — Shakuni, his scheming maternal uncle, who provided strategy and malice; Karna, his loyal friend, who provided strength and legitimacy; Dushasana, who provided the brute willingness to execute.

Political observers of Bengal have long noted that Abhishek Banerjee, too, has operated within a political ecosystem far larger than his individual agency. The allegedly compromised sections of the state police force that protected syndicate networks, the lower bureaucracy that processed fraudulent teacher appointments, the border security ecosystem that allegedly enabled cattle movement, the party cadres who enforced compliance with violence — these were all, collectively, the **Shakuni-Karna-Dushasana apparatus** of contemporary Bengal. They gave the prince's will institutional muscle. And they were emboldened, ultimately, by the knowledge that Nabanna would not look.

VIII — THE VIDURA NO ONE HEEDED

When Wise Voices Were Silenced

In the Mahabharata, Vidura stands as the court's conscience — the half-brother who told Dhritarashtra, repeatedly and without flinching, that the path he was choosing would lead to ruin. Vidura warned against the game of dice. He warned against the treatment of the Pandavas. He warned against war. And he was ignored, sidelined, and ultimately marginalised precisely because his counsel was truthful.

West Bengal has not lacked its Viduras. The **High Court of Calcutta** and, subsequently, the **Supreme Court of India** have functioned as institutional Viduras — delivering judgment after judgment pointing to governance failure, instructing the state to protect victims, questioning the integrity of the recruitment process, and transferring cases to the CBI when the state's own agencies proved compromised. The NHRC's report on post-poll violence was Vidura's clearest warning. All of it was dismissed, characterised as political vendetta, and publicly rejected by Mamata Banerjee with the same contemptuous certainty with which Dhritarashtra waved away his half-brother's counsel.

IX — THE KURUKSHETRA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Will History Demand Its Reckoning?

The Mahabharata does not end with Duryodhana's victory. The epic's unsparing moral architecture ensures that *adharma*, however protected, however entrenched, however wrapped in the legitimacy of lineage and the shield of parental love, must eventually answer to the field of consequence. **Kurukshetra was not simply a battle — it was history's invoice arriving, long after the crimes.**

India's democratic Kurukshetra is slower, messier, and far less cinematic than Vyasa's. But it moves. The Supreme Court has already intervened decisively in the teacher recruitment case. The CBI and ED investigations have survived repeated political resistance. Multiple courts have rejected the state's attempts to shield accused persons from central scrutiny. The 2024 general election delivered Abhishek Banerjee's Diamond Harbour constituency a reduced majority, signalling that even his political stronghold was not immune to public exhaustion with impunity.

The Kurukshetra of Bengal's accountability will not be decided in eighteen days. It may take elections, court verdicts, investigative journalism, and the organic accumulation of public disillusionment. But the epic's grammar suggests the direction is inevitable. **Blindfolds, in the end, protect no one. Not the wearer. Not the beloved. Not the kingdom.**

X — CONCLUSION

The Price of a Mother's Blindfold

Gandhari's blindfold did not save Duryodhana. It saved nothing and no one. On the eighteenth day of Kurukshetra, when she walked the battlefield and saw the carnage — her hundred sons among the fallen, Hastinapur's finest destroyed, the Kuru dynasty's glory ashes — she finally removed what her eyes had never truly abandoned. The vision that had always been available to her arrived too late to prevent anything. The blindfold had been an illusion of love that was, in reality, **the deepest form of**

abandonment — abandoning her son to his own worst nature by refusing to restrain it.

This is the most profound dimension of the Mamata-Dhritarashtra parallel. A mother who truly loves does not shield her child from accountability. A leader who truly loves her people does not shield a corrupt relative from justice. Mamata Banerjee's fierce protection of Abhishek Banerjee has not served him well — it has enabled a political culture around him that may ultimately **consume both their legacies**.

Bengal is a land of extraordinary civilisational depth — of Tagore, of Vivekananda, of the Ramakrishna tradition that sought the divine in service and truth. It deserves better than a governing arrangement modelled on Hastinapur's cursed court. It deserves a Yudhishtira where it has a Duryodhana, a Vidura where it has a Shakuni, and above all, a queen who opens her eyes — not to the demands of dynasty, but to the cry of *ma, mati, manush* that Mamata Banerjee herself once made the anthem of her ascent.

"History is recording. The field awaits. And the blindfold, as Gandhari eventually learned, changes nothing — it only delays, and in delaying, deepens, the reckoning."

EDITORIAL VERDICT

"Dhritarashtra's blindness was a metaphor. Gandhari's was a choice. Mamata's is a strategy. But all three serve the same god — and all three pay the same price."

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