

APPSC PAPER I: GENERAL STUDIES & MENTAL ABILITY · HINDU PHILOSOPHY
AND TEMPLE SYSTEM

Bhagavatham

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1. The 12 Skandhas and their narrators
2. Avatars of Vishnu: the Dashavatara and the 22 avatars of the Bhagavatam
3. Devotees, stories and places of the Bhagavatham

1 The 12 Skandhas and their narrators

The Srimad Bhagavatam is the Vaishnava Mahapurana of 12 Skandhas that Vyasa composed, his son Shuka told King Parikshit in his last seven days, and Suta retold to the sages at Naimisharanya; in Telugu it lives as Potana's Andhra Maha Bhagavatamu.

Core facts

- **Type:** a **Mahapurana** (one of the 18), a **Sattvika** Purana devoted to **Vishnu** (Krishna). Usually counted 5th in the list of 18.
- **Size:** **12 Skandhas** (books), about **18,000 shlokas**, **335 adhyayas** (chapters). By the traditional count all 18 Mahapuranas together have about **4,00,000 shlokas**.
- **Composer:** **Veda Vyasa** (Krishna Dvaipayana), son of the sage **Parashara**. He wrote it at **Narada's** advice, after the Mahabharata left him unsatisfied.
- **Chain of the teaching:** the Lord → **Brahma** → **Narada** → **Vyasa** → his son **Shuka** (Shukadeva).
- **The two frames of narration:**
 - **Shuka** → **King Parikshit**, on the **bank of the Ganga**, over **seven days**. This is the **main dialogue** of the Bhagavatam.
 - **Suta** → **Shaunaka** and the sages at **Naimisharanya**, during their **satra** (long sacrifice) meant to last **a thousand years**. Suta had heard Shuka speak to Parikshit.
- **Suta:** called Suta Pauranika. APPSC's key gives his name as **Romaharshana** (Lomaharshana). The Bhagavatam calls the narrator simply "Suta", **son of Romaharshana**; tradition names him **Ugrashravas** (Romaharshana is killed by Balarama at Naimisharanya in Skandha 10), and both are called "Suta".
- **Parikshit:** son of **Abhimanyu** and **Uttara**, grandson of Arjuna. Saved in the womb by Krishna from Ashvatthama's Brahmastra; also called **Vishnurata** ("protected by Vishnu").
- **The curse:** Parikshit hung a dead snake on the neck of the silent sage **Shamika**. Shamika's son **Shringi** cursed him to die on the **seventh day** by the bite of the snake **Takshaka**.
- **Kali's places:** Parikshit let Kali live only where there is **gambling**, drink, illicit women and slaughter; when Kali asked for one more place, he added **gold**.
- **Ten lakshanas:** the Bhagavatam itself lists **ten marks of a Purana** (Skandha 2 and Skandha 12).
- **Bhagavata Saptaha:** recitation over seven days, after Parikshit's seven days.
- **Telugu:** **Bammera Potana** (15th century) wrote the **Andhra Maha Bhagavatamu** and dedicated it to **Sri Rama**, not to a king.

Skandha-wise contents

Skandha	Adhyayas	Main stories	Who tells whom
1 Prathama	19	Naimisharanya; Vyasa and Narada; 22 avatars (ch. 3) ; Ashvatthama punished; Kunti's and Bhishma's prayers; Parikshit's birth; Pandavas' Mahaprasthan; Kali; Shringi's curse; ends with Shuka's arrival	Suta to Shaunaka

Skandha	Adhyayas	Main stories	Who tells whom
2 Dvitiya	10	Shuka's first answer; Khatvanga; Virat Purusha; Brahma hears "Tapa"; Chatuhshloki Bhagavatam (ch. 9) ; ten lakshanas	Shuka to Parikshit; Brahma to Narada
3 Tritiya	33	Vidura meets Uddhava and Maitreya; Jaya-Vijaya cursed; Varaha kills Hiranyaksha ; Kardama-Devahuti; Kapila Gita	Maitreya to Vidura; Kapila to Devahuti
4 Chaturtha	31	Daksha yajna and Sati; Dhruva ; Vena and Prithu ; Prachetas and the Rudra Gita; Puranjana allegory	Maitreya to Vidura; Narada to Prachinabarhi
5 Panchama	26	Priyavrata; Rishabhadeva ; three births of Bharata (Jada Bharata and Rahugana); dvipas, Bharatavarsha, lower worlds, narakas	Shuka to Parikshit; Jada Bharata to Rahugana
6 Shashtha	19	Ajamila ; Daksha curses Narada; Narayana Kavacha (ch. 8) ; Vritrasura ; Chitraketu; 49 Maruts	Shuka to Parikshit
7 Saptama	15	Prahlada , Narasimha ; varnashrama dharma; Ajagara muni	Narada to Yudhishtira
8 Ashtama	24	14 manvantaras; Gajendra Moksha ; churning (Kurma, Mohini); Vamana and Bali; Matsya (last, ch. 24)	Shuka to Parikshit
9 Navama	24	Solar and Lunar lines; Ambarisha ; Sagara, Bhagiratha; Rama ; Parashurama; Yayati; Dushyanta; Rantideva	Shuka to Parikshit
10 Dashama	90	Krishna's life : birth, Gokula and Brindavana lilas, Kamsa-vadha , Rukmini, Narakasura, Banasura, Kuchela	Shuka to Parikshit
11 Ekadasha	31	Curse at Pindaraka; Nava Yogendras; Uddhava Gita (ch. 7-29) ; Mausala lila at Prabhasa; Balarama, then Krishna, leave	Narada to Vasudeva; Krishna to Uddhava
12 Dvadasha	13	Kali dynasties; Kalki; Bhumi Gita ; four pralayas; Takshaka; sarpa yaga; Vedas divided; Markandeya	Shuka, then Suta

Explained

How the Bhagavatam came to be (Skandha 1). After dividing the Vedas and writing the Mahabharata, Vyasa still felt empty at his ashram on the Sarasvati. **Narada** came and told him that he had described dharma but not enough of Hari's glories. Narada also told Vyasa of his own previous life as the **son of a maidservant**: as a boy he served the sages his mother served, heard Hari's stories from them, and after his mother died of a snakebite gave his life to Narayana. Vyasa then composed the Bhagavatam and taught it to Shuka, who was free of all worldly ties from birth.

Parikshit's reign and last seven days.

1. After Krishna left the earth, **Yudhishtira** crowned Parikshit at Hastinapura, made **Vajra** (Aniruddha's son) king of **Mathura**, and set out north on the **Mahaprasthan** with his brothers and Draupadi.
2. Parikshit ruled well. With **Kripacharya** as his guru he performed **three Ashvamedhas** on the bank of the Ganga. He was named **Parikshit** because, as a newborn, he **examined** everyone, looking for the being who had shielded him in the womb.
3. On a tour of conquest he met **Kali**, dressed as a king, beating a bull and a cow. The bull was **Dharma**, standing on one leg; the cow was the **Earth**. Dharma's four legs are **tapas, shaucha (purity), daya (compassion) and satya (truth)**; in Kali yuga only **satya** is left. Kali begged for a place to live and got gambling, drink, illicit women and slaughter; on a second plea, gold.
4. Tired and thirsty on a hunt, Parikshit entered Shamika's hermitage. The sage was in meditation and did not answer. Angry, the king lifted a dead snake with his bow and put it round his neck.
5. **Shringi**, the sage's young son, cursed the king: Takshaka would bite him on the seventh day. Shamika rebuked his son and sent word to the king.
6. Parikshit handed the kingdom to **Janamejaya** and sat on the bank of the Ganga in **prayopavesha** (fasting unto death). The great sages gathered. **Shuka**, about sixteen years old, arrived, and Parikshit asked what a dying man should do. The answer is the Bhagavatam.
7. On the seventh day **Takshaka**, disguised as a brahmin, bit him (Skandha 12). On the way Takshaka had turned back **Kashyapa**, a brahmin who could cure poison, by giving him wealth. Janamejaya later held the **sarpa yaga** to burn all snakes. In the Bhagavatam **Brihaspati** stops it by teaching him **karmaphala** (each being reaps its own karma; the snake was only an instrument). In the Mahabharata **Astika** stops it.

Skandha 2: Shuka's first answer.

- Hear, sing and remember Hari all through life, not only at its end.
- **Khatvanga**: a king who learnt he had very little life left, gave up all attachment, took refuge in Hari and was freed. Shuka's point: a short span of devotion is enough.
- **Virat Purusha**: a beginner may meditate on the whole universe as Vishnu's body, the worlds as his limbs.
- **Brahma's tapas**: born on the lotus, Brahma could not find his own source. He heard the word "**Tapa**", did penance and received the knowledge to create.
- **Chatuhshloki Bhagavatam**: four verses in **Skandha 2, chapter 9** in which Vishnu gave **Brahma** the whole Bhagavatam in seed form: before, during and after creation only the Lord is real; all else is his maya.
- **Wishes and the deities for them:**

Wish	Worship	Wish	Worship
Children	Prajapatis	Long life	Ashvini Kumaras
Sense power	Indra	Beauty	Gandharvas
Lustre	Agni	Lordship	Brahma
Wealth	Vasus	Happy marriage	Uma
Strength	Rudras	Learning	Shiva

Wish	Worship	Wish	Worship
Bodily vigour	Mother Earth	Liberation	Vishnu (Hari)

The dialogues inside. The Bhagavatam is a set of conversations nested one inside another.

Speaker	Listener	Skandha	About
Narada	Vyasa	1	Why Vyasa should sing of Hari
Brahma	Narada	2	Creation; the four-verse core given to Brahma by Vishnu
Uddhava	Vidura	3	Krishna's life and end, at their meeting on the Yamuna bank
Maitreya	Vidura	3–4	Creation, Varaha, Dhruva, Prithu (on the Ganga bank)
Kapila	Devahuti (his mother)	3	Sankhya and bhakti: the Kapila Gita
Narada	King Prachinabarhi	4	Allegory of Puranjana
Jada Bharata	King Rahugana	5	The self is not the body
Narada	Yudhishtira	7	Prahlada and Narasimha
Narada	Vasudeva	11	King Nimi and the Nava Yogendras
Krishna	Uddhava	11	Uddhava Gita; the Avadhuta's talk with King Yadu

Ten lakshanas. Skandha 2 lists ten topics a Mahapurana covers: *sarga* (primary creation), *visarga* (secondary creation), *sthana* (maintenance of the order), *poshana* (the Lord's protection), *uti* (impulses of karma), *manvantara* (eras of the Manus), *ishanukatha* (stories of the Lord and his devotees), *nirodha* (dissolution), *mukti* (liberation) and *ashraya* (the final support, the Lord). Skandha 12 gives a similar list of ten. The older **pancha-lakshana** (five marks) are sarga, pratisarga, vamsha, manvantara and vamshanucharita.

Navavidha bhakti (nine forms of devotion). Prahlada lists them in Skandha 7. Each has a famous example.

No.	Form	Meaning	Example
1	Shravanam	Hearing his stories	Parikshit
2	Kirtanam	Singing his names	Shuka
3	Smaranam	Constant remembrance	Prahlada
4	Padasevanam	Serving his feet	Lakshmi
5	Archanam	Worship	Prithu
6	Vandanam	Salutation, prayer	Akrura
7	Dasyam	Being his servant	Hanuman
8	Sakhyam	Friendship	Arjuna

No.	Form	Meaning	Example
9	Atmanivedanam	Total self-surrender	Bali

Avataras. Skandha 1 (chapter 3) lists **22 avataras** (table in HC-BH-02), says they are countless, and calls Krishna "the Lord himself". Told at length: Varaha and Kapila in 3, Rishabha in 5, Narasimha in 7, Matsya, Kurma, Mohini and Vamana in 8, Rama and Parashurama in 9, Krishna in 10–11, Kalki (foretold) in 12.

Skandha 10. The longest Skandha (**90 chapters**), in two halves: *purva* (chapters 1–49: Krishna in Gokula, Vrindavana and Mathura, Kamsa's death, Uddhava's visit to Vraja) and *uttara* (chapters 50–90: Jarasandha, Dwaraka, marriages, the Syamantaka gem, Kuchela). The **Rasa Panchadhyayi** (five chapters on the Rasa lila) and the **Gopika Gita** (chapter 31) are here. The **Bhramara Gita** (chapter 47) is the gopis' words to a bee when Uddhava brings Krishna's message.

Skandha 11: Krishna's teaching. Skandha 10 is the Skandha of Krishna's lilas; Skandha 11 is the most important for his **tattvabodha** (philosophical teaching).

- **Nava Yogendras:** nine sons of **Rishabhadeva** who answer King **Nimi of Videha**; Narada retells the talk to **Vasudeva**.

Yogendra	Teaches	Yogendra	Teaches
Kavi	Offer every act to Narayana	Avirhotra	Karma yoga (acts without desire)
Havi	Three grades of devotee	Drumila	Hari's avatars
Antariksha	What maya is	Chamasa	Fate of those without bhakti
Prabuddha	How to cross maya	Karabhajana	Dharma of the four yugas
Pippalayana	Brahman		

- **Practice for each yuga:** Satya, meditation; Treta, yajna; Dvapara, temple worship (archana); **Kali, nama-sankirtana** (singing Hari's name), the easy path of the Kali age.
- **Uddhava Gita:** Krishna's teaching to Uddhava, **chapters 7 to 29** of Skandha 11. Compare the Bhagavad Gita: Krishna to Arjuna, Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata, 18 chapters.
- **Other "Gitas" of Skandha 11:**
 - **Avadhuta's 24 gurus:** an Avadhuta tells **King Yadu** what he learnt from earth, air, the python, the moth, the honeybee, the courtesan **Pingala** and others.
 - **Hamsa Gita:** Vishnu appears as a **swan** to answer the **Sanakadi** sages.
 - **Bhikshu Gita:** a miser of **Avanti** loses his wealth, becomes a mendicant and learns that the mind is the cause of joy and sorrow.
 - **Aila Gita: Pururava** (Aila) on his folly over Urvashi.
- **End:** Krishna sends Uddhava to **Badarikashrama**. The Yadavas destroy one another at **Prabhasa** (the **Mausala lila**). **Balarama** leaves his body first, in yoga on the seashore; **then Krishna**, after the hunter Jara's arrow.

Skandha 12: the close.

- **Kali dynasties** of Magadha foretold by Shuka: Pradyotas → Shishunagas → Nandas → **Mauryas** → Shungas → Kanvas → Andhras. A brahmin (tradition: Chanakya) ends the Nandas.

- **Bhumi Gita** (chapter 3): Mother Earth laughs at kings who fight saying "this land is mine" and die leaving it.
- **Four pralayas:**

Pralaya	Meaning
Nitya	Constant change: birth and death every moment
Naimittika	At the end of Brahma's day (one kalpa)
Prakritika	At the end of Brahma's life; all prakriti dissolves
Atyantika	The final one for a jiva: liberation

- **Shuka's last teaching:** the body dies, the Self does not, as the space in a pot is not destroyed when the pot breaks.
- **Vedas divided by Vyasa:** Rig to **Paila**, Yajur to **Vaishampayana**, Sama to **Jaimini**, Atharva to **Sumantu**.
- **Markandeya** (chapters 8–10); the last chapter (13) praises the Bhagavatam and gives the shloka counts.

Bhagavata Mahatmya. The six-chapter praise of the Bhagavatam is attached to the Padma Purana. In it **Narada** meets the goddess **Bhakti** and her sons Jnana and Vairagya, grown old in Kali yuga; the four Kumaras recite the Bhagavatam and they become young again. It also tells of **Gokarna**, who freed his brother **Dhundhukari** from ghost-life by a seven-day Bhagavata recital. The Mahatmya is printed at the head of most Bhagavatam editions, so questions may call the Gokarna story a Bhagavata story.

AP angle

- **Bammera Potana** (c. 1450–1510) was born at **Bammera** near Warangal (now in Telangana); a Rayalaseema tradition links him instead with **Ontimitta** (Kadapa). He is the best-loved Telugu poet of bhakti.
- He refused to dedicate his work to the Rachakonda king **Sarvajna Singa Bhupala** and offered it to **Sri Rama**. Tradition says Rama appeared to him and asked for the Bhagavatam.
- Parts of his manuscript were lost; his pupils completed it: **Bopparaju Gangana** (Skandha 5), **Ercuri Singana** (Skandha 6) and **Veligandala Narayya** (Skandhas 11 and 12).
- Famous Telugu passages: **Gajendra Moksham** (Skandha 8), **Prahlada Charitra** (7), **Vamana Charitra** (8), **Rukmini Kalyanam** (10). Other works of Potana: *Bhogini Dandakam*, *Virabhadra Vijayam*.
- **Kuchipudi** dance-dramas draw on Skandha 10 stories (Rukmini, Satyabhama, Krishna's lila). **Bhagavata Saptaha** recitals are common in Andhra temples, and TTD publishes the Bhagavatam in Telugu.
- In Telugu the books are called **Skandhamu** (Prathama Skandhamu, Navama Skandhamu...). The English version of the 2026 paper wrongly printed "verse" for Skandha.

Common traps

✗ "Sage Shamika cursed Parikshit." ✓ His son **Shringi** cursed him; Shamika regretted it.

X "Shuka told the Bhagavatam at Naimisharanya." ✓ Shuka spoke to Parikshit on the **bank of the Ganga**; **Suta** spoke at **Naimisharanya**.

X "Vaisampayana narrated the Bhagavatam to Parikshit." ✓ **Shuka** did. Vaisampayana told the **Mahabharata** to **Janamejaya**.

X "The First Skandha ends with Parikshit's death." ✓ It ends with **Shuka's arrival**; Takshaka's bite is in **Skandha 12**.

X "In the Bhagavatam Astika stopped the snake sacrifice." ✓ **Brihaspati** stopped it by teaching karmaphala; Astika is the **Mahabharata** version.

X "Rama's story is in Skandha 10." ✓ Rama is in **Skandha 9** (Navama). Krishna is in Skandha 10.

X "Prahlada is in Skandha 6." ✓ Prahlada is in **Skandha 7** (Saptama). Ambarisha is in **Skandha 9**.

X "The Uddhava Gita is part of the Bhagavad Gita." ✓ It is Skandha 11, chapters 7–29 of the **Bhagavatam**; the Bhagavad Gita is in the Mahabharata.

X "Tapas is one of the nine forms of bhakti." ✓ The nine are shravanam, kirtanam, smaranam, padasevanam, archanam, vandanam, dasyam, sakhyam, atmanivedanam.

X "Krishna and Balarama left the world together." ✓ **Balarama first**, in yoga on the seashore; **then Krishna**.

X "The Bhagavatam is an Upapurana." ✓ It is a **Mahapurana** (the Devi Bhagavatam is the disputed one).

X "Potana dedicated his Bhagavatam to Sarvajna Singa Bhupala." ✓ He dedicated it to **Sri Rama**.

Quick revision

- Mahapurana, Sattvika, Vishnu; 12 Skandhas, 335 adhyayas, about 18,000 shlokas.
- Vyasa (son of Parashara, at Narada's advice) → Shuka → Parikshit on the Ganga bank, seven days.
- Suta (son of Romaharshana) → Shaunaka at Naimisharanya, thousand-year satra.
- Shrungi son of Shamika cursed Parikshit; Takshaka bit him on day seven; Brihaspati stopped the sarpa yaga.
- Kali's places: gambling, drink, women, slaughter, gold; Dharma kept only satya.
- Sk 2 Chatuhshloki; Sk 3 Varaha, Kapila; Sk 4 Dhruva, Prithu; Sk 5 Rishabha, Bharata; Sk 6 Ajamila, Vritra.
- Sk 7 Prahlada; Sk 8 Gajendra, churning, Vamana, Matsya; Sk 9 Ambarisha, Rama; Sk 10 Krishna (90 adhyayas).
- Sk 11 Uddhava Gita (7–29), Nava Yogendras, Mausala lila; Sk 12 Bhumi Gita, pralayas, Markandeya.
- Navavidha bhakti: Parikshit hearing, Prahlada remembering, Arjuna friendship, Bali self-surrender.

- Bammara Potana: Andhra Maha Bhagavatamu, dedicated to Sri Rama; Ercuri Singana did Skandha 6.

2 Avatars of Vishnu: the Dashavatara and the 22 avatars of the Bhagavatam

Vishnu descends (avatara) whenever dharma declines; the popular list has ten avatars (Dashavatara) spread over the four yugas, while the first Skandha of the Bhagavatam names 22 and says the avatars are countless.

Core facts

- **Avatara** means "descent". Purpose in the Gita (4.7-8): to protect the good, destroy the wicked and re-establish dharma, age after age.
- **Dashavatara** (order in most Telugu books): **Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki**. So **Vamana comes right after Narasimha** and **Buddha is 9th**. Some lists put **Balarama** 8th and Krishna 9th.
- **By yuga** (exam count):
 - **Satya (Krita) yuga: 4**, Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha.
 - **Treta yuga: 3**, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama.
 - **Dvapara yuga: Krishna** (with Balarama in lists that count him).
 - **Kali yuga: Buddha** (at its start), **Kalki** (at its end, still to come).
- **Animal forms:** Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar). **Half-man half-lion:** Narasimha. **First human form:** Vamana (dwarf).
- **Bhagavatam list:** Skandha 1, chapter 3 names **22 avatars**: Varaha 2nd, **Matsya 10th, Kurma 11th**, Narasimha **14th**, Vamana 15th, Rama 18th, **Balarama 19th**, Krishna 20th, Buddha 21st, Kalki 22nd. Even 22 is not the total: the avatars are **innumerable**.
- The same chapter says **"Krishna is Bhagavan himself"** (Krishnastu Bhagavan svayam); the others are parts (amsha) or powers.
- **Kapila** (teacher of **Samkhya**) is an avatar of Vishnu in the **Bhagavata Purana**.
- **Parents to remember:**
 - Vamana: **Aditi and Kashyapa**; called **Upendra**, Indra's younger brother.
 - Parashurama: **Jamadagni and Renuka**.
 - Rama: Dasharatha and Kausalya.
 - Balarama: **Vasudeva and Rohini** (moved from Devaki's womb, hence **Sankarshana**); a part of **Adishesha**.
 - Krishna: **Vasudeva and Devaki**, raised by **Nanda and Yashoda**.
 - Kapila: **Kardama and Devahuti**.
 - Dattatreya: **Atri and Anasuya**.
 - Rishabha: **Nabhi and Merudevi**.
 - Kalki: to be born to **Vishnuyasha** in the village of **Shambhala**; rides the horse **Devadatta**.

Explained

The ten avatars and why each came.

Avatar	Why he came	Opponent / person helped	Skandha
Matsya	Saved the Vedas and the seeds of life in the flood (pralaya)	Demon who stole the Vedas (Hayagriva in the Bhagavatam; Somakasura in Telugu tradition); saved King Satyavrata , later Vaivasvata Manu	8
Kurma	Held up the sinking Mandara mountain on his back during the churning of the ocean	Devas and asuras; rope was the serpent Vasuki	8
Varaha	Lifted the Earth (Bhudevi) out of the cosmic waters on his tusks	Killed Hiranyaksha	3
Narasimha	Protected the child devotee Prahlada	Killed Hiranyakashipu	7
Vamana	Took back the three worlds for Indra without war	Begged three paces of land from Bali ; became Trivikrama	8
Parashurama	Punished arrogant Kshatriyas	Kartavirya Arjuna (Sahasrarjuna) of the Haihayas; cleared the earth of Kshatriyas 21 times	9
Rama	Ideal king; ended Ravana	Ravana , Kumbhakarna	9
Krishna	Destroyed Kamsa and the burden of wicked kings; gave the Gita	Kamsa , Putana, Naraka, Shishupala	10
Buddha	At the start of Kali, to turn away those misusing the Vedic rites	Son of Anjana, born in Kikata (Gaya region)	1
Kalki	To end the evil of Kali yuga and begin a new Satya yuga	Rides the white horse Devadatta with a sword	12

Matsya in more detail (Skandha 8, last chapter, 24).

- **Satyavrata**, a royal sage who ruled the **Dravida** country, was offering water in the river **Kritamala**. A tiny fish fell into his palms and begged for safety from bigger fish.
- It outgrew his water-pot, a bigger vessel, a pool and a lake, until he knew it was Vishnu.
- The fish warned that the flood would come on the **seventh day**. He was to board a boat with the **seven sages** (Saptarshis), plants and seeds. The boat was tied to the fish's **single horn** with the serpent **Vasuki**, and Matsya taught him the knowledge of Brahman on the way.
- The asura **Hayagriva** had stolen the Vedas as they slipped from the mouth of the sleeping Brahma; Matsya killed him and gave the Vedas back.
- Satyavrata was later born as **Shraddhadeva**, son of **Vivasvan** (the Sun): he is **Vaivasvata Manu**, Manu of the present (7th) manvantara. The **Matsya Purana** is the teaching Matsya gave to **Manu** on that

boat.

Kurma and the churning (Samudra Manthana, Skandha 8).

- The devas lost their strength through **Durvasa's** curse on Indra, so on Vishnu's advice they made a truce with the asuras, led by **Bali**, and churned the **Ocean of Milk** for amrita.
- Churning rod: **Mandara**, which devas and asuras could not lift; **Garuda** carried it to the ocean for Vishnu. Rope: **Vasuki**. Support: **Kurma**, when Mandara began to sink.
- The **asuras** took Vasuki's **head** end, thinking the tail beneath them; the devas held the tail.
- First** to come out was the poison **Halahala** (Kalakuta). **Shiva** drank it and held it in his throat, so he is **Nilakantha**.

Came out	Went to	Came out	Went to
Kamadhenu (Surabhi)	Therishis , for yajna offerings	Kaustubha gem	Vishnu , worn on his chest
Uchchaihshravas, the horse	Bali	Lakshmi	Chose Vishnu
Airavata, four-tusked elephant	Indra	Varuni	The asuras
Parijata tree, apsaras	Devaloka	Dhanvantari with amrita	Asuras snatched the pot

- Mohini** (Vishnu's enchanting female form) charmed the asuras into handing her the pot and served the amrita to the devas only.
- Rahu** sat in the devas' row in disguise; the **Sun and the Moon** pointed him out, and Vishnu cut off his head with the **Sudarshana**. The head had tasted amrita and lived on; hence the eclipse story.

Varaha (Skandha 3).

- The Earth had sunk to **Rasatala**. A tiny boar came from **Brahma's nostril**, grew to a huge size, dived in and lifted the Earth on his **tusks**.
- Hiranyaksha** wanted a fight. He challenged **Varuna** in the ocean; Varuna said only Hari could defeat him. Hiranyaksha found Varaha lifting the Earth and mocked him.
- Varaha first set the Earth safely on the waters, then fought him, mostly with **maces**, and killed him as twilight neared.

Varaha and Narasimha: the two brothers. Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu were sons of **Diti and Kashyapa**. They were the gatekeepers **Jaya and Vijaya** of Vaikuntha, cursed by the four **Kumaras** to be born as asuras.

Birth	Yuga	As	Killed by
1st	Satya	Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakashipu	Varaha, Narasimha
2nd	Treta	Ravana, Kumbhakarna	Rama
3rd	Dvapara	Shishupala, Dantavakra	Krishna

Narasimha's boon-breaking (Skandha 7). Brahma's boon said Hiranyakashipu could not be killed by man or beast, by day or night, inside or outside, on earth or in the sky, by any weapon. Narasimha was neither man nor beast. He came out of a **pillar**, killed him at **twilight**, on the **threshold**, holding him on his **lap**, and tore him with his **nails**. No god, not even Lakshmi, could calm him afterwards; **Brahma sent Prahlada**, and the Lord grew gentle when the boy bowed at his feet.

Vamana and Bali (Skandha 8).

- **Aditi**, grieving for the devas, kept the **Payovrata** taught by Kashyapa: twelve days (Phalguna Shukla 1 to 12) living on **milk** and chanting "Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya".
- Vamana was born on **Bhadrapada Shukla Dvadashi**, in the **Shravana** nakshatra (Vamana Jayanti). As Indra's younger brother he is **Upendra**.
- Gifts at his sacred-thread ceremony:

Giver	Gift	Giver	Gift
Surya	Gayatri mantra	Brahma	Water-pot
Brihaspati	Sacred thread	Sarasvati	Rosary
Kashyapa	Girdle	Saptarshis	Darbha grass
Aditi	Loincloth	Kubera	Alms bowl
Bhudevi	Deer skin	Parvati	First alms
Chandra	Staff	The sky	Umbrella

- Bali, grandson of Prahlada, had won the three worlds. Vamana came to his sacrifice at **Bhrigukachchha** on the Narmada and asked for three paces.
- **Shukracharya** warned Bali and, when Bali kept his word, cursed him to lose his kingdom. Bali's wife **Vindhyavali** brought the **golden water-pot** for the gift.
- Vamana grew into Trivikrama: one step covered the earth, the second the heavens; the water Brahma poured on that foot became the Ganga. **Garuda** bound Bali with **Varuna's noose**, and Bali offered his own **head** for the third step.
- Bali was sent to rule **Sutala**, with Vishnu as his gatekeeper, and promised to be **Indra** in the **Savarni** (8th) manvantara.

Parashurama and Kartavirya (Skandha 9).

- **Kartaviryarjuna**, Haihaya king of **Mahishmati**, got his **thousand arms** by serving **Dattatreya**. He once even captured Ravana.
- He took **Kamadhenu** from **Jamadagni's** hermitage by force. Parashurama destroyed his army of 17 akshauhinis, cut off his arms and brought the cow back.
- Jamadagni said a brahmin must forgive and sent him on a year's pilgrimage. Kartavirya's sons later killed Jamadagni; **Renuka** beat her breast **21 times**, and Parashurama cleared the earth of wicked Kshatriyas **21 times**. Their blood filled five lakes, **Samantapanchaka**. He gave the earth to brahmins and lives on **Mount Mahendra**.

Dattatreya. Atri and Anasuya had three sons: **Dattatreya** (Vishnu's part), **Soma** (Brahma's part) and **Durvasa** (**Rudra's** part). His birth is in Skandha 4.

Balarama. A part of **Adishesha**. Yogamaya moved Devaki's **seventh** child into **Rohini's** womb, so he is **Sankarshana** ("drawn out"). Other names: Balabhadra, **Haladhara** (he carries a **plough**), Halayudha; his second weapon is the pestle (musala). **Upendra** is not his name; it is Vamana's.

Krishna.

- In earlier ages Devaki and Vasudeva were **Prishni and Sutapa**, and Vishnu was their son **Prishnigarbha**; then they were Aditi and Kashyapa, and he was Vamana; the third time he was Krishna.
- He held **Govardhana** on one hand for **seven days** against Indra's storm (popular telling: on his little finger).
- The sages **Nara and Narayana** were born again as **Arjuna and Krishna**.

The 22 avatars of Skandha 1, chapter 3 (in the text's order):

No.	Avatar	No.	Avatar
1	Four Kumaras (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanatkumara)	12	Dhanvantari
2	Varaha	13	Mohini
3	Narada	14	Narasimha
4	Nara-Narayana	15	Vamana
5	Kapila	16	Parashurama
6	Dattatreya	17	Vyasa
7	Yajna	18	Rama
8	Rishabha	19	Balarama
9	Prithu	20	Krishna
10	Matsya	21	Buddha
11	Kurma	22	Kalki

What the less familiar avatars did.

- **Kumaras:** sons of Brahma who stayed lifelong celibates and taught knowledge.
- **Narada:** taught the **Satvata (Pancharatra) tantra**, the way of works done for God.
- **Nara-Narayana:** sons of **Dharma and Murti**; did penance at **Badarikashrama**.
- **Kapila:** taught **Samkhya** and bhakti to his mother **Devahuti** (Skandha 3). The 60,000 sons of King **Sagara** were burnt to ashes when they insulted him and accused him of stealing the sacrificial horse that **Indra** had hidden (Skandha 9).
- **Dattatreya:** taught self-knowledge (anvikshiki) to Alarka and Prahlada. In Skandha 11 an avadhuta, identified with him, tells King Yadu of his **24 gurus** from nature.
- **Yajna:** son of Ruchi and Akuti; served as Indra in the first (Svayambhuva) manvantara.

- **Rishabha:** son of Nabhi and Merudevi; father of **Bharata**, after whom **Bharatavarsha** is named; showed the path of renunciation. Jains honour him as the first Tirthankara.
- **Prithu:** born from the arm of the dead wicked king **Vena**; milked the Earth as a cow for crops, so the Earth is called **Prithvi**.
- **Dhanvantari:** came out of the ocean with the amrita pot; god of **Ayurveda**.
- **Vyasa:** son of **Parashara and Satyawati**; divided the Veda and composed the Mahabharata and the Puranas.
- **Hamsa** (in the longer list of Skandha 2): Vishnu as a **swan** answered the **Sanakadi** sages (the Hamsa Gita, Skandha 11).

The 14 Manus (Skandha 8). One day of Brahma has 14 manvantaras.

No.	Manu	No.	Manu
1	Svayambhuva	8	Savarni
2	Svarochisha	9	Dakshasavarni
3	Uttama	10	Brahmasavarni
4	Tamasa	11	Dharmasavarni
5	Raivata	12	Rudrasavarni
6	Chakshusha	13	Devasavarni
7	Vaivasvata (now)	14	Indrasavarni

AP angle

- **Ahobilam** (Nandyal district): local tradition places Narasimha's fight with Hiranyakashipu here; the **Nava Narasimha** shrines and the Ugra Stambha pillar. Seat of the **Ahobila Matham**.
- **Simhachalam** (Visakhapatnam): **Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha**, a combined Varaha-Narasimha form, covered with sandal paste all year except at **Chandanotsavam** (Akshaya Tritiya, Vaisakha). Legend credits Prahlada with the first shrine.
- **Srikurmam** (Srikakulam district): a rare temple where Vishnu is worshipped as **Kurma**.
- **Tirumala:** the **Bhu Varaha Swamy** temple on the bank of the **Swami Pushkarini**. Tirumala is called **Adi Varaha Kshetra**, and tradition offers first worship and naivedya to Varaha before Venkateswara.
- Other Narasimha shrines: **Mangalagiri** (Panakala Narasimha, offered jaggery water), **Antarvedi** (Konaseema), **Vedadri** (NTR district).
- **Vontimitta** (Kadapa district): Kodandarama temple; the state's official **Sri Rama Navami** celebrations have been held here since 2015.
- **Potana's Andhra Maha Bhagavatamu** made Vamana charitra and Prahlada charitra household stories in Telugu. The scene of Shukracharya losing an eye while blocking the spout of Bali's water-pot is a favourite of these Telugu tellings.

Common traps

✗ "Satya yuga had five avatars, including Vamana." ✓ **Four**: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha. Vamana is the first of **Treta**.

✗ "Narasimha killed Hiranyaksha." ✓ Varaha killed **Hiranyaksha**; Narasimha killed **Hiranyakashipu**.

✗ "Kurma recovered the stolen Vedas." ✓ **Matsya** recovered the Vedas; Kurma held up **Mandara**.

✗ "Matsya saved Parikshit / Daksha in the flood." ✓ He saved **Manu** (Satyavrata).

✗ "Matsya said the flood would come on the fifth day." ✓ On the **seventh** day.

✗ "The devas held Vasuki's head." ✓ The **asuras** held the head; the devas held the tail.

✗ "The Sudarshana chakra came out of the churning." ✓ It did not; the Kaustubha, Airavata, Kamadhenu, Lakshmi and the amrita did.

✗ "Vamana was the son of Diti." ✓ Vamana was the son of **Aditi** and Kashyapa; Diti was mother of the asuras.

✗ "Upendra is a name of Balarama." ✓ **Upendra** is Vamana; Balarama is Sankarshana, Haladhara, Balabhadra.

✗ "The Sanskrit Bhagavatam says Shukracharya lost an eye in the water-pot." ✓ It says only that **Vindhyavali** brought the golden pot; the eye story is a popular and Telugu addition.

✗ "Mohini of the churning tricked Bhasmasura." ✓ The Bhasmasura story is a separate tradition; in the churning Mohini only shares out the amrita.

✗ "The Bhagavatam lets Jaya-Vijaya choose three births as foes over seven as friends." ✓ That choice is a later popular telling; the Bhagavatam simply has **three** births.

✗ "Kapila is an avatar according to the Vishnu Purana." ✓ The exam answer is the **Bhagavata Purana**.

✗ "Baka was killed by Varaha." ✓ **Bakasura** was killed by Krishna in Vrindavana (a different Baka was killed by Bhima at Ekachakrapura).

✗ "Balarama was Devaki's son only." ✓ He was conceived by Devaki and moved to **Rohini's** womb; Rohini is his mother.

Quick revision

- Dashavatara: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha (9th), Kalki.

- Satya 4, Treta 3 (Vamana, Parashurama, Rama); Kali: Buddha, Kalki.
- 22-list: Matsya 10, Kurma 11, Narasimha 14, Balarama 19; total innumerable.
- Matsya: Satyavrata of Dravida, Kritamala, seventh day, Vasuki to the horn; later Vaivasvata Manu.
- Churning: Durvasa's curse, Bali led asuras, Garuda brought Mandara, Halahala first, Kamadhenu to rishis.
- Varaha lifted Earth on tusks, killed Hiranyaksha; Narasimha: twilight, threshold, nails.
- Vamana: Payovrata, Shravana nakshatra, Upendra; Vindhya's pot; Bali Indra in Savarni.
- Parashurama: Jamadagni's son; Kartavirya (arms from Dattatreya); 21 times.
- Balarama: Adishesha, Sankarshana, Haladhara; Krishna was Prishnigarbha before.
- Kalki: Shambhala, son of Vishnuyasha, horse Devadatta.

3 Devotees, stories and places of the Bhagavatham

The Bhagavatam teaches bhakti through the lives of its great devotees (Parikshit, Dhruva, Prithu, Ajamila, Prahlada, Gajendra, Ambarisha, Bali) and is set in sacred places from Naimisharanya and the Ganga bank to Dwaraka, Prabhasa and Kamarupa.

Core facts

- **Who told whom:** **Shuka** (son of Vyasa) told the Bhagavatam to **King Parikshit** on the bank of the **Ganga** over **seven days**. **Suta** (Ugrashravas) later retold it to **Shaunaka** and the sages at **Naimisharanya**.
- **Parikshit:** son of **Abhimanyu and Uttara**, grandson of Arjuna. Cursed by **Shringi** (APPSC spelling **Srunji**; son of sage **Shamika**) to die of **Takshaka's** bite in seven days. Gave **Kali** places to live: **gambling**, drinking, illicit women, slaughter, and gold.
- **Dhruva:** son of King **Uttanapada** and **Suniti**; stepmother **Suruchi**, stepbrother **Uttama**. Guru **Narada**; penance at **Madhuvana** on the **Yamuna**; became the **Pole Star** (Dhruva loka). **Skandha 4**.
- **Prithu:** born from the dead king **Vena**; milked the Earth, which is therefore **Prithvi**. **Skandha 4**.
- **Ajamila:** fallen brahmin of **Kanyakubja**, saved by calling "**Narayana**" at death. **Skandha 6**.
- **Prahlada:** son of **Hiranyakashipu** and **Kayadhu**; learnt bhakti from **Narada** while in his mother's womb; saved by **Narasimha**. **Skandha 7**.
- **Gajendra:** elephant king caught by a crocodile in a lake on Mount **Trikuta**; freed by Vishnu with the **Sudarshana** chakra. **Skandha 8**.
- **Ambarisha:** king of Manu's line (son of **Nabhaga**, not the Ikshvaku Ambarisha of the Shunahshepa story) and **Ekadashi** observer; **Durvasa's** anger was chased by the **Sudarshana** chakra. **Skandha 9**.
- **Bali (Bali Chakravarti):** son of **Virochana**, grandson of **Prahlada**; guru **Shukracharya**; wife **Vindhyavali** (Vindhyawali); gave three paces to **Vamana**; sent to **Sutala**. **Skandha 8**.
- **Bhakti examples:** **Parikshit** = hearing (shravanam); **Prahlada** = remembrance (smaranam); **Prithu** = worship (archanam); **Akrura** = salutation; **Hanuman** = service; **Arjuna** = friendship; **Bali** = self-surrender (atmanivedanam).
- **Dwaraka:** Krishna's sea city in Gujarat, built by **Vishwakarma**. **Prabhasa:** where the Yadavas destroyed one another and **Krishna left his body**. **Kamarupa** (Pragjyotishapura, Assam): **Narakasura** held **16,100** princesses (many books round it to 16,000).

Explained

Parikshit (Skandhas 1 and 12).

- In the womb he was struck by **Ashvatthama's Brahmastra**; Krishna entered the womb and shielded him. He was named **Vishnurata** ("given by Vishnu"). He was called **Parikshit** because he kept examining (pariksha) everyone, looking for the being he saw in the womb.

- He let **Kali** (found beating Dharma as a bull and the Earth as a cow) live only in **gambling (dyuta)**, drinking, illicit women, slaughter and **gold**. Later, hunting and thirsty, he hung a dead snake on the silent sage **Shamika**, and **Shringi** cursed him to die of **Takshaka's** bite.
- He gave up the throne to **Janamejaya**, fasted on the Ganga bank, and heard the Bhagavatam from Shuka. The seven-day reading (**Bhagavata Saptaha**) comes from this.
- After his death, **Janamejaya** held the **Sarpa Yaga** (snake sacrifice) to avenge him. In the Mahabharata (Adi Parva) **Astika** stopped it; the Bhagavatam (Skandha 12) has **Brihaspati** persuade him to end it.

Dhruva (Skandha 4).

- A grandson of **Svayambhuva Manu**. At about five years of age he was pushed off his father's lap by Suruchi.
- His mother Suniti told him to seek God. **Narada** gave him the twelve-syllable mantra "**Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya**" and sent him to **Madhuvana** on the **Yamuna**.
- After hard penance, Vishnu appeared on Garuda and touched his cheek with the conch. Dhruva got a kingdom and, after death, the fixed place of the Pole Star.
- When a Yaksha killed Uttama, Dhruva made war on the **Yakshas** (Kubera's people). His grandfather **Svayambhuva Manu** stopped him: a whole race must not suffer for one person's crime. Offered a boon by **Kubera**, Dhruva asked only never to forget Hari.

Vena and Prithu (Skandha 4).

- **Vena**, son of King **Anga** and **Sunitha**, banned yajnas and demanded worship for himself; the sages killed him with their curse.
- The sages churned his body. From the **thigh** came **Nishada**, a dark, short man; from the **arms** came **Prithu** and his queen **Archi**.
- The Earth had hidden her crops; she fled as a **cow**. Prithu milked her, with **Svayambhuva Manu** as the calf and his own hands as the pail, and levelled the land for farms and towns.
- He completed **99 Ashvamedhas**. **Indra** stole the horse of the **hundredth**; Brahma stopped the yajna and Vishnu reconciled them. As a boon Prithu asked only to keep hearing Hari's stories.

Prachetas and Puranjana (Skandha 4).

- King **Prachinabarhi** of Prithu's line had ten sons, the **Prachetas**. **Shiva** taught them a hymn to Vishnu, the **Rudra Gita**, which they chanted in the sea for 10,000 years. Daksha was reborn as their son by **Marisha**.
- To turn Prachinabarhi from animal sacrifice, **Narada** told him the allegory of **King Puranjana**:

In the story	Stands for
King Puranjana	The jiva (individual soul)
City of nine gates	The human body
His queen	Intellect (buddhi)
Chandavega and his 360 gandharvas and 360 gandharva women	Time: the days and nights of a year
The unknown brahmin friend	The Paramatma

Skandha 5: Priyavrata and Bharata.

- **Priyavrata**, son of Svayambhuva Manu, drove his shining chariot seven times round the earth behind the Sun. The **wheel ruts** became the **seven oceans**, and the land between them the seven dvipas:

Dvipa	Ocean around it	Dvipa	Ocean around it
1 Jambu	Salt water	5 Krauncha	Milk
2 Plaksha	Sugarcane juice	6 Shaka	Curd
3 Shalmali	Wine	7 Pushkara	Pure water
4 Kusha	Ghee		

- Jambudvipa has nine varshas, with Mount **Meru** at the centre. The land once called **Ajanabhavarsha** took the name **Bharatavarsha** from King Bharata, son of **Rishabhadeva**.
- **Bharata's three births:**
 1. A king who retired to Pulaha's hermitage on the **Gandaki** and grew attached to a motherless **fawn**.
 2. A **deer**, because he thought of the fawn at death.
 3. **Jada Bharata**, a brahmin who acted dull and mute to avoid new attachment. King **Rahugana** of Sindhu-Sauvira made him carry his palanquin; Jada Bharata taught him that the Self is not the body, and the king fell at his feet.

Skandha 6: Ajamila, Narada's curse, Vritra.

- **Ajamila**, a brahmin of **Kanyakubja**, left his wife and Vedic life for a woman of bad conduct. He named his youngest son **Narayana**. At death, as three messengers of **Yama** came, he cried out "Narayana!" to the boy, and four messengers of **Vishnu** stopped Yama's men.
- Spared, he went to **Haridwar** (Gangadvara), lived in devotion and reached Vaikuntha. The story teaches the **glory of the Lord's name**.
- **Yama** told his men to leave Hari's devotees alone and named the **twelve mahajanas** who know true dharma: **Brahma, Narada, Shiva, the Kumaras, Kapila, Svayambhuva Manu, Prahlada, Janaka, Bhishma, Bali, Shuka and Yama** himself.
- **Daksha** had 10,000 sons (Haryashvas) and then 1,000 more (Shabalashvas); Narada led all of them to renunciation instead of begetting children. Daksha cursed Narada **never to stay long in one place**.
- **Vritrasura** rose from the fire of **Tvashta's** yajna to avenge his son Vishvarupa. Indra killed him with the **vajra** made from the sage **Dadhichi's** bones. Vritra, though an asura, prayed only for service to Hari.
- In his previous birth Vritra was King **Chitraketu** of Shurasena. Seeing **Shiva** seat **Parvati** on his lap in an assembly, Chitraketu joked about it; Parvati cursed him to be born an asura.

Prahlada (Skandha 7).

- Narada narrated this story to **Yudhishtira** at the Rajasuya.
- **Hiranyakashipu**, son of **Diti**, did fierce penance on Mount **Mandara** to win Brahma's boons. Meanwhile Indra seized his pregnant wife **Kayadhu**; Narada rescued her and taught her in his hermitage, and the child in her womb learnt it all. Hiranyakashipu and his brother Hiranyaksha were Vaikuntha's gatekeepers **Jaya and Vijaya**; in their second birth they were **Ravana and Kumbhakarna**, in the third Shishupala and Dantavakra.

- Teachers: **Shanda and Amarka**, sons of Shukracharya.
- Prahlada listed the **nine forms of bhakti** (navavidha bhakti): hearing (shravana), singing (kirtana), remembering (smarana), serving the feet (padasevana), worship (archana), salutation (vandana), service (dasya), friendship (sakhya) and self-surrender (atmanivedana). He himself is the model of **smarana**.
- His father tried to kill him with weapons, elephants, snakes, poison, fire and a fall from a height. Then Narasimha came out of the pillar and killed Hiranyakashipu at **twilight** on the **threshold**.
- Asked for a boon, Prahlada asked for none for himself and prayed for his father's release. Narasimha said 21 generations of his family were purified.
- Line: **Hiranyakashipu** → **Prahlada** → **Virochana** → **Bali** → **Bana**.

Gajendra Moksha (Skandha 8).

- In the **Tamasa** manvantara, Gajendra lived on Mount Trikuta. A crocodile (graha) seized his **leg** in a lake, and they struggled for a thousand years.
- When his strength failed he lifted a **lotus** in his trunk and prayed to the Supreme with no name or form in mind (the **Gajendra stuti**). Vishnu (the **Hari** avatar) came on **Garuda** and cut the crocodile's mouth with the Sudarshana. Gajendra gained a form like Vishnu's.
- Past births: Gajendra was the **Pandya** king **Indradyumna**, cursed by **Agastya** for not rising to greet him. The crocodile was the gandharva **Huhu**, cursed by **Devala**.

Ambarisha and Rantideva (Skandha 9).

- Ambarisha, son of **Nabhaga**, kept the **Dvadashi** vow. **Durvasa** came as a guest and went to bathe in the Yamuna. To end the fast at the right time on Dvadashi, Ambarisha only sipped water. Durvasa took offence and sent a fiery demoness (**kritya**) at him.
- The **Sudarshana** destroyed her and chased Durvasa to Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. Vishnu said he is under the control of his devotees and sent him back to Ambarisha, who had waited a year living on water alone and now calmed the chakra.
- **Rantideva**, after **48 days** without food or water, gave his little food to a brahmin, a shudra and a man with dogs, and his last water to an outcaste. The guests were gods testing him.

Bali (Skandha 8).

- Bali conquered heaven. At his sacrifice at **Bhrigukachchha** on the Narmada, Vamana asked for three paces. Shukracharya warned him and cursed him when he would not listen. **Vindhyavali** brought the water-pot for the gift.
- After the third step was placed on his head, Bali was bound with **Varuna's noose**, then sent to **Sutala**. Vishnu became his gatekeeper. Bali is to be **Indra** in the eighth (**Savarni**) manvantara and is one of the **chiranjeevis**. His eldest son **Banasura** had a thousand arms.

Krishna's childhood and youth (Skandha 10).

Episode	What happened	Where
Putana, Shakata, Trinavarta	Poison-breasted demoness, cart demon, whirlwind demon killed	Gokula

Episode	What happened	Where
Damodara	Tied to a mortar, he pulled down two arjuna trees: Nalakubara and Manigriva , sons of Kubera, cursed by Narada for sporting drunk and naked	Gokula
Vatsa, Baka , Agha	Demons as a calf, a crane and a python	Vrindavana
Kaliya	Danced on the serpent's hoods, then sent him to Ramanaka island	Yamuna pool
Govardhana	Held up the hill seven days; named Govinda	Vraja
Arishta, Keshi, Vyoma	Bull, horse and cave-hider demons; after Keshi, Narada called him Keshava	Vrindavana
Kamsa-vadha	Elephant Kuvalayapida, wrestler Chanura, then Kamsa	Mathura
Studies	64 arts in 64 days under Sandipani ; guru's son brought back from Yama	Avanti
Kalayavana	Lured into a cave and burnt by the glance of the sleeping Muchukunda	Cave near Mathura

- **Balarama** was Devaki's seventh child, moved by Yogamaya into **Rohini's** womb; he is **Haladhara**, the plough-bearer. **His kills:** Dhenuka (donkey demon of Talavana), Pralamba (disguised as a cowherd boy), the wrestler Mushtika, the ape Dvidida, Romaharshana, Balvala and Rukmi. **Keshi** was killed by **Krishna**, not Balarama.
- **Uddhava** took Krishna's message to Vraja; the gopis' words to a bee are the **Bhramara Gita**.

Krishna's eight chief queens (Ashtamahishis).

Queen	Note	Queen	Note
Rukmini	Daughter of Bhishmaka of Vidarbha; carried off from the temple at Kundinapura	Kalindi	Did penance on the Yamuna for him
Jambavati	Daughter of Jambavan , given with the Syamantaka gem after a 28-day duel	Mitravinda	Princess of Avanti
Satyabhama	Daughter of Satrajit , owner of the Syamantaka	Nagnajiti (Satya)	Won by taming seven bulls
Bhadra	Princess of Kekaya	Lakshmana	Princess of Madra

- **Revati** is **Balarama's** wife, not one of Krishna's queens.
- **Sons and grandson: Pradyumna** (Rukmini's son, Manmatha reborn) was thrown into the sea by **Shambara**, swallowed by a fish and raised by **Mayavati** (Rati); he killed Shambara. **Samba** was Jambavati's son. **Aniruddha**, Pradyumna's son, was carried by **Chित्रalekha** to **Shonitapura**, capital of **Banasura**, whose daughter **Usha** loved him. Shiva fought for Bana; Krishna cut Bana's thousand arms down to four.

Places.

Place	Today	What happened there
Naimisharanya	Uttar Pradesh (Sitapur district)	Suta narrated the Bhagavatam to Shaunaka and the sages
Ganga bank (Shukatal by tradition)	Uttar Pradesh	Shuka narrated to Parikshit
Dwaraka (Kushasthali)	Gujarat	Krishna moved the Yadavas here from Mathura; sank into the sea after he left
Prabhasa	Gujarat (Somnath)	Yadavas killed one another; hunter Jara shot Krishna's foot
Kamarupa / Pragjyotishapura	Assam	Narakasura's capital; Krishna killed him and freed the princesses
Shonitapura	Traditionally Assam (Tezpur)	Banasura's capital; Usha and Aniruddha
Kundinapura	Vidarbha, Maharashtra	Rukmini's home
Avanti (Ujjain)	Madhya Pradesh	Sandipani's school
Madhuvana	Near Mathura, on the Yamuna	Dhruva's penance
Kanyakubja, Haridwar	Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand	Ajamila's city; his last years
Badarikashrama	Uttarakhand	Nara-Narayana; Krishna sent Uddhava here
Trikuta	Mythic mountain in the Ocean of Milk	Gajendra moksha
Bhrigukachchha	Bharuch, Gujarat	Bali's sacrifice; Vamana's request

Dwaraka, Prabhasa, Kamarupa in more detail.

- **Dwaraka:** Krishna had Vishwakarma build a city in the sea after **Jarasandha's** seventeen attacks on Mathura and the threat of **Kalayavana**. Rukmini, Satyabhama and the other queens lived there. Dwaraka is one of the seven moksha-giving cities (Saptapuri) and the western seat of Shankara's four mathas.
- **Prabhasa:**
 - At **Pindaraka**, Yadava boys dressed Krishna's son **Samba** as a pregnant woman and mocked a group of sages (Vishvamisra, Kanva, Durvasa, Narada and others). Together they cursed: he would bear an iron pestle (musala) that would destroy the clan.
 - The pestle was ground and thrown into the sea; the powder grew on the shore as **eraka** reeds. A fish swallowed the last iron piece, and the hunter Jara made it his arrowhead.
 - At Prabhasa the Yadavas, drunk on **maireya**, fought with the reeds and died: the **Mausala lila**. Balarama left his body in yoga on the shore.
 - Krishna sat under a **peepal** tree; Jara mistook his foot for a deer and shot it. Krishna forgave him and sent his charioteer **Daruka** to Dwaraka with the news. **Arjuna** led the survivors to Indraprastha, and the sea took the city.

- Prabhasa is the site of **Somnath** and is praised in the **Prabhasa Khanda** of the Skanda Purana.
- **Kamarupa: Narakasura** (Bhauma, son of the Earth) seized Aditi's earrings and Varuna's umbrella and imprisoned the princesses. Krishna flew there on Garuda with **Satyabhama**, killed his general **Mura** (hence **Murari**), killed Naraka with the Sudarshana, married the freed princesses and crowned Naraka's son **Bhagadatta**. On the way back he took the **Parijata** tree from Indra's garden for Satyabhama. **Naraka Chaturdashi**, the day before Deepavali, recalls this victory. Kamarupa is also home to **Kamakhyā**, a Shakti peetha.

Other devotees and stories often asked.

Person	Story in one line	Skandha
Sagara, Bhagiratha	Sons burnt near Kapila; Bhagiratha brought down the Ganga	9
Jarasandha	Killed by Bhima, who tore him in two at Krishna's sign	10
Shishupala	Killed with the Sudarshana at the Rajasuya; his light entered Krishna	10
Kuchela (Sudama)	Poor friend who brought flattened rice to Krishna	10
Akrura	Took Krishna to Mathura; saw his vision in the Yamuna	10
Nruga	King born as a lizard for giving one cow to two brahmins; freed by Krishna's touch	10
Uddhava	Received Krishna's final teaching (Uddhava Gita)	11
Markandeya	In the deluge saw the infant Balamukunda on a banyan leaf	12

AP angle

- **Bammera Potana** (15th century) wrote the **Andhra Maha Bhagavatamu** in Telugu. The best-loved episodes are **Gajendra Mokshamu**, **Prahlada charitra**, **Vamana charitra**, **Dhruva charitra** and **Rukmini Kalyanam**. Parts of Skandhas 5, 6, 11 and 12 were completed by other poets: Bopparaju Gangana (5), Ercuri Singana (6) and Veligandala Narayana (11, 12).
- **Simhachalam**: the temple legend links its first shrine to Prahlada.
- **Ahobilam**: tradition says Hiranyakashipu's palace stood here and Prahlada was saved here.
- **Nandi Timmana's Parijatapaharanamu** (court of Krishnadevaraya) retells Krishna bringing the Parijata tree for Satyabhama.
- **Bhama Kalapam** of **Kuchipudi** (Siddhendra Yogi) is centred on Satyabhama.
- **Dwaraka Tirumala** (Eluru district) is named after the sage **Dwaraka**, who found the idol there; it is not Krishna's Dwaraka.

Common traps

✗ "Vyasa / Narada narrated the Bhagavatam to Parikshit." ✓ **Shuka** narrated it.

✗ "Shamika cursed Parikshit." ✓ His son **Shringi** cursed him.

✗ "Parikshit held the snake sacrifice." ✓ His son **Janamejaya** held it; **Astika** stopped it (Mahabharata).

✗ "Dhruva's mother was Suruchi." ✓ His mother was **Suniti**; Suruchi was the stepmother.

✗ "Prithu came from Vena's thigh." ✓ **Nishada** came from the thigh; Prithu from the **arms**.

✗ "Prahlada is in Skandha 6." ✓ **Skandha 7**. Ambarisha is in **Skandha 9**; Gajendra and Bali in **Skandha 8**.

✗ "Bali was Prahlada's son." ✓ Bali was his **grandson** (son of Virochana).

✗ "Vritra could die by nothing wet or dry, so Indra used foam." ✓ That is **Namuchi**; Vritra died by the vajra of **Dadhichi's** bones.

✗ "Kaliya was sent to Ratnakara island." ✓ The Bhagavatam says **Ramanaka** island.

✗ "Narakasura held exactly 16,000 princesses." ✓ The Bhagavatam says **16,100**; with the eight chief queens Krishna had 16,108.

✗ "Revati was one of Krishna's eight queens." ✓ Revati is **Balarama's** wife.

✗ "Durvasa alone cursed the Yadavas." ✓ A **group of sages** at Pindaraka cursed them together.

✗ "The Bhagavatam says Jara was Vali reborn." ✓ Skandha 11 says no such thing.

✗ "Krishna left his body at Dwaraka / Kurukshetra." ✓ At **Prabhasa**.

✗ "Markandeya was granted only 16 years and conquered Yama, as the Bhagavatam tells." ✓ That is the **Shaiva** tradition; the Bhagavatam tells of the **banyan-leaf** infant.

✗ "The Holika story is in the Bhagavatam." ✓ Holika is from later Puranic and folk tradition, not the Bhagavatam's Prahlada story.

Quick revision

- Shuka → Parikshit on the Ganga bank, 7 days; Suta → Shaunaka at Naimisharanya.
- Dhruva: Uttanapada-Suniti; Narada's mantra; Madhuvana on the Yamuna; Manu stopped the Yaksha war.
- Prithu from Vena's arms (Nishada from the thigh); 99 Ashvamedhas; Indra stole the 100th horse.
- Puranjana's nine-gated city = body; Priyavrata's wheel ruts = seven oceans.
- Ajamila of Kanyakubja: "Narayana", Vishnu's messengers, Haridwar; Vritra was Chitraketu.
- Prahlada: Kayadhu, Narada in the womb, smaranam; Hiranyakashipu's penance on Mandara.
- Gajendra: Indradyumna of Pandya, Huhu cursed by Devala, a lotus offered; Skandha 8.

- Ambarisha son of Nabhaga; Rantideva fasted 48 days; Bali's wife Vindhyavali.
- Krishna: Sandipani at Avanti; Rukmini-Bhishmaka, Satyabhama-Satrajit, Jambavati-Jambavan.
- Prabhasa: Mausala lila, eraka reeds, Jara's arrow, Daruka; Kamarupa: Narakasura, 16,100 princesses.