

# Mahabharatham

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1. The 18 Parvas and the story line
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# 1 The 18 Parvas and the story line

The Mahabharata of Vyasa tells the Kuru family feud in 18 Parvas, from Adi to Swargarohana; it grew from the Jaya to the Bharata to the hundred-thousand-verse Mahabharata, was recited by Vaisampayana to Janamejaya and by Sauti to the sages of Naimisharanya, and was rendered in Telugu by the Kavitravam.

## Core facts

### The 18 Parvas, in order

| No. | Parva                           | Main events                                                                  |
|-----|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | <b>Adi</b>                      | Origins of the Kurus; births; lac house; Draupadi's swayamvara; Indraprastha |
| 2   | <b>Sabha</b>                    | Maya's hall; Rajasuya; dice game; exile decreed                              |
| 3   | <b>Vana</b> (Aranya / Aranyaka) | 12 years in the forest; Kirata; Yaksha's questions                           |
| 4   | <b>Virata</b>                   | Incognito year at Viratanagara                                               |
| 5   | <b>Udyoga</b>                   | Preparations; Krishna's peace mission                                        |
| 6   | <b>Bhishma</b>                  | War days 1-10; <b>Bhagavad Gita</b> ; Bhishma falls                          |
| 7   | <b>Drona</b>                    | Days 11-15; Abhimanyu, Jayadratha, Drona killed                              |
| 8   | <b>Karna</b>                    | Days 16-17; Karna killed                                                     |
| 9   | <b>Shalya</b>                   | Day 18; Shalya and Duryodhana fall                                           |
| 10  | <b>Sauptika</b>                 | Ashwatthama's night raid                                                     |
| 11  | <b>Stri</b>                     | The women's lament; Gandhari's curse                                         |
| 12  | <b>Shanti</b>                   | Bhishma teaches Yudhishtira (raja, apad, moksha dharma)                      |
| 13  | <b>Anushasana</b>               | More teaching; <b>Vishnu Sahasranama</b> ; Bhishma's death                   |
| 14  | <b>Ashvamedhika</b>             | Yudhishtira's horse sacrifice; <b>Anugita</b>                                |
| 15  | <b>Ashramavasika</b>            | Dhritarashtra, Gandhari, Kunti retire to the forest                          |
| 16  | <b>Mausala</b>                  | Yadavas destroy each other; Krishna's death                                  |
| 17  | <b>Mahaprasthanika</b>          | The Pandavas' last journey                                                   |
| 18  | <b>Swargarohana</b>             | Yudhishtira reaches heaven                                                   |

- **First Parva: Adi. Last: Swargarohana.** Number of Parvas: **18**. The war also lasted 18 days and had 18 akshauhini (Kauravas 11, Pandavas 7).
- **Harivamsha** is the appendix (*khila*), not one of the 18.

- The epic is called **Shatasahasri Samhita** (about one lakh verses). It is divided into about **100 upa-parvas**.
- Hindus honour it as the **Panchama Veda** (fifth Veda), an Itihasa open to all.
- Three stages, by tradition: **Jaya** (Jaya Samhita, **8,800** slokas, dictated by Vyasa) → **Bharata** (about **24,000** verses, recited by Vaisampayana) → **Mahabharata**.
- Author: **Vyasa**, **Krishna Dvaipayana**, son of **Parashara** and **Satyavati**. Called Vyasa because he **divided the Vedas**.
- Vyasa's disciples for the Vedas: **Paila** (Rig), **Vaisampayana** (Yajur), **Jaimini** (Sama), **Sumantu** (Atharva). His son: **Shuka**.
- Scribe (by popular tradition): **Ganesha**.

### Who told it to whom

| Narrator                                               | Listener                                    | Where / when                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vyasa                                                  | His disciples, incl. Vaisampayana and Shuka | —                                                                                       |
| <b>Vaisampayana</b>                                    | <b>Janamejaya</b> (son of Parikshit)        | At Janamejaya's <b>Sarpa Yaga</b> (snake sacrifice), at <b>Takshashila</b> by tradition |
| <b>Ugrashravas Sauti</b> (son of <b>Romaharshana</b> ) | <b>Shaunaka</b> and the sages               | <b>Naimisharanya</b> , during a 12-year sacrifice                                       |
| <b>Sanjaya</b>                                         | <b>Dhritarashtra</b>                        | Kurukshetra war, with the divine sight given by Vyasa                                   |

- Adi Parva also says: **Narada** told it to the gods, **Asita Devala** to the ancestors, **Shuka** to gandharvas, yakshas and rakshasas, **Vaisampayana** to men.
- **Astika** stopped Janamejaya's snake sacrifice and saved Takshaka. His mother was the sister of the Naga king **Vasuki**.

### Story line to the war

- **Lac house** (**Lakshagriha**, **Jatugriha**) at **Varanavata**, built of lac, ghee and oil by **Purochana** for Duryodhana. **Vidura** warned the Pandavas in coded words and sent a digger who made a tunnel.
- After escaping: Bhima killed **Hidimba** and married **Hidimbi** (son **Ghatotkacha**).
- On **Vyasa's advice** the Pandavas lived disguised as **Brahmins** in **Ekachakrapura**. When their host's turn came, **Kunti sent Bhima**, who killed **Bakasura**.
- On the way to Panchala Arjuna defeated the Gandharva **Angaraparna** (Chitraratha), who advised them to take **Dhaumya** as their priest.
- **Draupadi's swayamvara** at **Kampilya** (capital of South Panchala). **Arjuna**, disguised as a Brahmin, hit the target (matsya-yantra).
- **Vyasa** removed Drupada's doubt about five husbands: in her past birth Draupadi had asked **Shiva** again and again for a virtuous husband and got the boon of five.
- Dhritarashtra gave them half the kingdom, **Khandavaprastha**, which became **Indraprastha**. **Maya** built the assembly hall.

- **Dice game** (Sabha Parva): **Shakuni** played for Duryodhana. Draupadi was dragged into court by **Dushasana**; Krishna protected her.
- Second game (**anudyuta**): **12 years** in the forest + **1 year incognito** (*ajnatavasa*). If found in the 13th year, the whole exile would be repeated.
- Forests of the exile: **Kamyaka** and **Dvaitavana**.
- Pandavas' priest: **Dhaumya** (Dhoumya).

#### Incognito year at Viratanagara (Matsya kingdom, King Virata, Queen Sudeshna)

| Pandava     | Name in disguise                                       | Role                             |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yudhishtira | <b>Kanka</b> (Telugu: Kankubhattu)                     | Brahmin companion at dice        |
| Bhima       | <b>Ballava</b> (also Vallabha; Telugu: <b>Valala</b> ) | Cook and wrestler                |
| Arjuna      | <b>Brihannala</b>                                      | Dance teacher to princess Uttara |
| Nakula      | <b>Granthika</b> (Telugu: <b>Damagranthi</b> )         | Keeper of horses                 |
| Sahadeva    | <b>Tantipala</b> (Telugu: Tantripala)                  | Keeper of cattle                 |
| Draupadi    | <b>Sairandhri</b> (named herself Malini)               | Maid to Queen Sudeshna           |

- Weapons hidden in a **Shami** tree. Bhima killed **Kichaka**, Sudeshna's brother, at night in the **dance hall** (Nartanashala).

#### Kavitrayam (the Telugu Mahabharatam)

- **Nannaya** (11th c., Rajaraja Narendra): **Adi**, **Sabha** and part of **Aranya**.
- **Tikkana** (13th c., Manumasiddhi of Nellore): **Virata to Swargarohana** (15 Parvas).
- **Errana** (14th c., Prolaya Vema Reddi): the rest of the **Aranya Parva**.

## Explained

### Adi Parva: the family.

- The family (details in HC-MB-02): **Shantanu** and Ganga → **Bhishma**; Shantanu and **Satyavati** → Chitrangada, Vichitravirya; by **niyoga**, **Vyasa** → **Dhritarashtra**, **Pandu**, **Vidura**; Dhritarashtra and **Gandhari** → 100 Kauravas; Pandu's wives **Kunti** and **Madri** → the five Pandavas (Karna was Kunti's son before marriage).
- Teachers **Kripa**, then **Drona**. Drona's pupils captured **Drupada**, whose sacrifice then produced **Dhrishtadyumna** and **Draupadi**.
- Sub-stories in the Adi Parva: **Kacha-Devayani**, **Yayati**, **Shakuntala-Dushyanta**, **Sunda-Upasunda**.
- **Khandava forest**. **Agni**, as a Brahmin, asked Krishna and Arjuna for help. **Indra** kept sending rain to save his friend, the Naga **Takshaka**; Arjuna stopped it with a canopy of arrows. Through **Varuna**, Arjuna got the bow **Gandiva**, two inexhaustible quivers and the monkey-banner chariot; Krishna got the discus and the mace **Kaumodaki**. **Maya**, spared by them, later built the hall to repay them.
- **The brothers' rule**. **Narada** told them of the asuras **Sunda and Upasunda**, who killed each other over the apsara **Tilottama**. Whoever broke in on Draupadi with another brother was to go to the forest for **12**

**years.** Arjuna broke the rule to fetch his weapons and save a **Brahmin's cows**.

- In that exile Arjuna married **Ulupi**, **Chitrangada** of Manipura, and **Subhadra**, whom he carried off from **Dvaraka** in a chariot on Krishna's advice (son **Abhimanyu**).

### Sabha Parva.

- Maya's hall took **14 months**: water looked like floor and floor like water. Maya gave Bhima a mace and Arjuna the conch **Devadatta**.
- **Narada** questioned Yudhishtira on good government; the verses begin with *kacchit* ("I hope...?"), so the section is the **Kacchit Sarga**.
- Bhima killed **Jarasandha** of Magadha in a wrestling duel at **Girivraja**; Krishna split a blade of grass as the signal. Jarasandha's son **Sahadeva** was made king.
- **Digvijaya** before the Rajasuya: **Arjuna north**, **Bhima east**, **Sahadeva south**, **Nakula west**.
- **Rajasuya priests**: **Vyasa** Brahma, **Yajnavalkya** Adhvaryu, **Susama** Udgata, **Paila and Dhaumya** Hotas. Krishna washed the feet of the Brahmin guests.
- **Bhishma** proposed the first honour (**agrapuja**) for Krishna. **Shishupala** of Chedi objected and was killed by the Sudarshana.
- Duryodhana fell into water in Maya's hall and the onlookers laughed. **Shakuni**, prince of **Gandhara**, proposed the dice game.
- **First game**. Yudhishtira lost his wealth and kingdom, then staked **Nakula** first, then Sahadeva, Arjuna and Bhima, then himself, and last **Draupadi**.
- **Draupadi's question**: had Yudhishtira lost himself before he staked her? **Vikarna** spoke for her; **Karna** mocked her.
- Bhima's two vows: to drink **Dushasana's** blood and to break **Duryodhana's thigh**.
- **Dhritarashtra's boons**: Draupadi asked for **Yudhishtira's freedom**, then for **the four brothers'**, and refused a third boon.
- **Leaving for the forest**: Yudhishtira covered his face, Bhima looked at his arms, **Arjuna scattered sand** (the arrows to come) and Draupadi went with loose hair. **Kunti stayed with Vidura**.

### Vana Parva highlights.

- **Akshaya Patra** from **Surya**, worshipped on Dhaumya's advice. It gave food until Draupadi had eaten.
- **Durvasa** came for a meal after she had eaten; Krishna ate a bit of leaf left in the vessel, and the sages, bathing in the river, felt full and left.
- Bhima killed **Kirmira**, Bakasura's brother. Sage **Maitreya**, mocked by Duryodhana, who slapped his thigh, cursed that Bhima would break that thigh.
- **Kirata** on **Indrakiladri**: the demon **Mooka** came as a wild boar; Arjuna and Shiva, as a hunter, shot it together. Arjuna knew it was Shiva when the flowers he offered to a linga appeared on the hunter's head. Shiva gave the **Pashupatastra**.
- In Indra's heaven **Urvashi** cursed Arjuna to live as a eunuch, because he called her mother (she had been the wife of his ancestor **Pururava**). Indra limited it to **one year**, which became the year as Brihannala.
- Bhima met **Hanuman** on **Gandhamadana** while looking for the **Saugandhika** flower.
- The python that seized Bhima was King **Nahusha**, cursed by Agastya. Yudhishtira's answers (a Brahmin is known by conduct, not birth) freed him.

- **Ghoshayatra:** the Gandharva **Chitrasena** captured Duryodhana. **Yudhishtira** had him freed: "among ourselves they are a hundred and we are five; against outsiders we are a **hundred and five**".
- **Jayadratha** abducted Draupadi. He was spared as **Dusshala's** husband, then won from **Shiva** the power to hold back four Pandavas (all but Arjuna) for one day.
- **Karna** gave his armour and earrings to **Indra** and got the **Shakti** weapon.
- Stories told: **Nala–Damayanti** (by **Brihadashva**), **Savitri–Satyavan** and the **Ramopakhyana** (by **Markandeya**), and the **Dharmavyadha** of Mithila, a meat-seller who taught the Brahmin Kaushika.
- **Yaksha prashna:** a deer carried off a Brahmin's **arani** (fire-sticks). Chasing it, four brothers drank from a lake against the Yaksha's warning and fell. Yudhishtira answered, chose **Nakula** to be revived (so that a son of Madri would live) and got all four back. The Yaksha was **Yama**; his boon: no one would recognise them in the incognito year.

| Yaksha asked                   | Yudhishtira answered                                           |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heavier than the earth?        | The mother                                                     |
| Higher than the sky?           | The father                                                     |
| Swifter than the wind?         | The mind                                                       |
| Grows faster than grass?       | Worry                                                          |
| Never shuts its eyes in sleep? | The fish                                                       |
| The greatest gain?             | Health                                                         |
| The greatest happiness?        | Contentment                                                    |
| The highest dharma?            | Non-violence (ahimsa)                                          |
| The greatest wonder?           | Each day men die, yet the living think they will live for ever |

**Virata Parva.** The **Trigartas** (under **Susharma**) raided Virata's cattle from the south and the Kauravas from the north (**go-grahana**). Arjuna, with prince **Uttara** (Uttarakumara) as charioteer, defeated the Kaurava army. Duryodhana said they had been found out too early; **Bhishma** counted the months, with the extra (adhika) months, and declared the 13 years complete. Princess **Uttara** married **Abhimanyu**.

**Udyoga Parva** (*udyoga* = effort).

- Pandava base: **Upaplavya**.
- **Arjuna** chose the unarmed Krishna; **Duryodhana** chose Krishna's **Narayani** army. Duryodhana secretly hosted **Shalya** on his way; Shalya promised a boon to his host and had to join the Kauravas.
- Envoys in order: **Drupada's priest**, then **Sanjaya** (from Dhritarashtra), then **Krishna**, who asked for just five villages and showed his **Vishwarupa** when Duryodhana tried to seize him. **Uluka**, Shakuni's son, carried Duryodhana's challenge.
- **Vidura Niti**, spoken through Dhritarashtra's sleepless night, forms the **Prajagara Parva**; the **Sanatsujatiya** follows. Kunti told **Karna** his birth.

**After the war.**

| Parva           | Key facts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sauptika        | <b>Kripa and Kritavarma</b> guarded the gate while Ashwatthama killed the sleepers; <b>Bhima</b> gave his head-jewel to Draupadi; Krishna cursed him to wander <b>3,000 years</b>                                                                              |
| Stri            | Dhritarashtra crushed an <b>iron statue</b> of Bhima; Gandhari's glance under her blindfold scorched Yudhishtira's <b>toenails</b> ; she cursed the Yadavas to perish in the <b>36th year</b>                                                                  |
| Shanti          | Three divisions: <b>Rajadharma, Apaddharma, Mokshadharma</b> ; the sages churned King <b>Vena's</b> right arm and <b>Prithu</b> came out (the earth is Prithvi after him)                                                                                      |
| Anushasana      | <b>Danadharma</b> ; Vishnu Sahasranama; Bhishma dies at Uttarayana                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Ashvamedhika    | Gold left from King <b>Marutta's</b> sacrifice in the Himalayas; <b>Babhruvahana</b> felled Arjuna and <b>Ulupi's</b> Naga gem revived him; the half-golden <b>mongoose</b> said the great yaga did not equal a poor family's gift of its only food to a guest |
| Ashramavasika   | <b>Vidura's</b> life passed into Yudhishtira through his gaze; the three elders died in a <b>forest fire</b> , as <b>Narada</b> reported; Sanjaya went to the Himalayas                                                                                        |
| Mausala         | <b>Samba's</b> iron pestle; at Prabhasa <b>Satyaki killed Kritavarma</b> ; hunter <b>Jara</b> shot Krishna; Dwaraka sank                                                                                                                                       |
| Mahaprasthanika | <b>Agni</b> asked Arjuna to return the Gandiva and quivers (into the sea, to Varuna)                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Svargarohana    | Duryodhana seen in heaven; vision of hell; bath in the <b>Akasha Ganga</b> gave a divine body                                                                                                                                                                  |

- **Parikshit**, son of Abhimanyu and Uttara, was struck in the womb by Ashwatthama's weapon and revived by Krishna; named so because he was born when the Kuru line had dwindled (*parikshina*). He was crowned before the last journey.

### The last journey: who fell, and the fault Yudhishtira named

| Order | Who fell | Fault                                                   |
|-------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Draupadi | Loved Arjuna more than the others                       |
| 2     | Sahadeva | Pride in his wisdom                                     |
| 3     | Nakula   | Pride in his beauty                                     |
| 4     | Arjuna   | Pride in valour; his boast to kill all enemies in a day |
| 5     | Bhima    | Over-eating and pride in strength                       |

- Only **Yudhishtira** and the **dog** went on. He refused heaven without the dog, which was **Dharma (Yama)**. Yama said he had tested his son three times: as the **Yaksha**, as the **dog** and through the **vision of hell**.
- Final states told by Vaisampayana: **Karna** into the Sun, **Bhishma** the Vasus, **Drona** Brihaspati, **Abhimanyu** the Moon, **Dhrishtadyumna** Agni, **Balarama** Ananta.

## AP angle

- The **Andhra Mahabharatam** of the **Kavitrayam** is the founding work of Telugu literature. Nannaya began it at **Rajamahendravaram** for the Eastern Chalukya king **Rajaraja Narendra**. Tikkana (Nellore)

dedicated his part to **Harihara-natha**. Errana completed the Aranya Parva in Nannaya's style.

- Titles: **Nannaya**: Adikavi, Vaganushasana. **Tikkana**: Kavi Brahma, Ubhaya Kavi Mitra. **Errana**: Prabandha Parameswara, Shambhudasa.
- Telugu disguise names are asked in the papers: **Kankubhattu, Valala, Brihannala, Damagranthi, Tantripala, Sairandhri (Malini)**.
- **Indrakiladri** in Vijayawada is held to be the hill of Arjuna's penance and the Kirata fight.
- Telugu stage: the **Krishna Rayabaram** (Krishna's embassy) verses from **Pandavodyogam** by the **Tirupati Venkata Kavulu** are among the best-known Telugu stage poems.

## Common traps

✗ "The Mahabharata has 16 / 20 Parvas." ✓ **18**. First **Adi**, last **Swargarohana**.

✗ "The Gita is in the Drona / Udyoga Parva." ✓ In the **Bhishma Parva**.

✗ "Vyasa told the Mahabharata to Janamejaya." ✓ **Vaisampayana** did, at the snake sacrifice.

✗ "Janamejaya's snake sacrifice was performed by Parikshit." ✓ **Janamejaya** performed it, to avenge his father Parikshit, killed by Takshaka.

✗ "Janamejaya was Arjuna's grandson" (as the course book says). ✓ **Great-grandson**: Arjuna → Abhimanyu → Parikshit → Janamejaya.

✗ "The Pandavas hid in Ekachakrapura in the 13th year." ✓ Ekachakrapura was **after the lac house**. The incognito year was at **Viratanagara**.

✗ "Valala was Nakula." ✓ **Valala (Ballava) = Bhima; Damagranthi = Nakula; Tantipala = Sahadeva; Kanka = Yudhishtira**.

✗ "Vishnu Sahasranama is in the Shanti Parva." ✓ In the **Anushasana Parva**, told by **Bhishma** to Yudhishtira.

✗ "Danadharma is a division of the Shanti Parva." ✓ Shanti's three are **Rajadharma, Apaddharma, Mokshadharma**; giving is taught in the **Anushasana**.

✗ "Bhima fell first on the last journey." ✓ **Draupadi** fell first and **Bhima** last; only Yudhishtira and the dog went on.

✗ "Tikkana completed the Aranya Parva." ✓ **Errana** did. Tikkana began at **Virata**.

✗ "The Kavitravam translated the epic in the 14th century" (as the course book says). ✓ Over three centuries: Nannaya 11th, Tikkana 13th, Errana 14th.

✗ "The epic was composed about 4000 BCE in Devanagari" (as the course book says). ✓ Scholars date the text to about **400 BCE–400 CE**, in Sanskrit; the Devanagari script came many centuries later.

✗ "The Pandavas' priest was Vyasa." ✓ **Dhaumya**.

✗ "Harivamsha is the 19th Parva." ✓ It is an appendix (khila).

## Quick revision

- Adi, Sabha, Vana, Virata, Udyoga, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Shalya.
- Saptika, Stri, Shanti, Anushasana, Ashvamedhika, Ashramavasika, Mausala, Mahaprasthanika, Swargarohana.
- Jaya (8,800) → Bharata (24,000) → Mahabharata (Shatasahasri); Panchama Veda; Harivamsha = appendix.
- Vaisampayana → Janamejaya (Sarpa Yaga, Takshashila); Sauti → Shaunaka (Naimisharanya); Sanjaya → Dhritarashtra.
- Lac house at Varanavata (Purochana) → Ekachakrapura (Bakasura) → Angaraparna, Dhaumya → Kampilya.
- Dice: Shakuni; Nakula staked first; Draupadi's question; 12 years forest + 1 year incognito.
- Yaksha: mother heavier than earth, mind swifter than wind; Nakula revived; Yaksha = Yama.
- Virata: Kanka, Ballava/Valala, Brihannala, Granthika/Damagranthi, Tantipala, Sairandhri.
- Falls: Draupadi, Sahadeva, Nakula, Arjuna, Bhima; dog = Dharma; Akasha Ganga.
- Kavitravam: Nannaya 2½ Parvas, Tikkana 15, Errana rest of Aranya.

## 2 Characters and dynasties of the Mahabharatham

The Mahabharatham is the story of the Kuru family of the Lunar (Chandra) dynasty, the Pandavas and Kauravas, tied by marriage to the Panchala, Yadu and other royal lines, with gurus such as Drona and Kripa and the sage Vyasa at its centre.

### Core facts

- **Dynasty:** the Kurus belong to the **Chandravamsha** (Lunar dynasty): Chandra → Budha → **Pururava** (married Urvashi) → Ayu → **Nahusha** → **Yayati**.
- **Yayati's sons:** with **Devayani** (daughter of **Shukracharya**): **Yadu** and **Turvasu**. With **Sharmishtha** (daughter of the asura king **Vrishaparva**): Druhyu, Anu and **Puru**. Yadu → Yadavas; Puru → Pauravas → Kurus.
- **Puru line:** Dushyanta + Shakuntala → **Bharata** (the land Bharatavarsha) → ... **Hasti** (founded Hastinapura) → ... **Kuru** → ... Pratipa → **Shantanu**.
- **Pratipa's sons:** Devapi, **Bahlika** and **Shantanu**. So the old warrior Bahlika was Bhishma's uncle.
- **Shantanu + Ganga** → **Devavrata**, later **Bhishma** (also **Gangeya**). He was the eighth **Vasu** born as a man.
- **Shantanu + Satyawati** → **Chitrangada** (killed by a Gandharva of the same name) and **Vichitravirya**.
- **Satyawati:** born of the apsara **Adrika**, who lived as a fish under a curse; raised by the fisher chief **Dasharaja**. Called **Matsyagandhi** (fish-smell) until Parashara's boon made her **Yojanagandhi** (fragrant for a yojana).
- **Satyawati + sage Parashara** (before marriage) → **Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa**, born on an island (*dvipa*) in the Yamuna.
- Bhishma won **Amba, Ambika and Ambalika**, daughters of the king of **Kashi**, for Vichitravirya. Amba loved King **Shalva**, who refused her; she was reborn as **Shikhandi**.
- **Niyoga by Vyasa:** Ambika shut her eyes → **Dhritarashtra** (born blind); Ambalika turned pale → **Pandu** (born pale); a maid → **Vidura** (Yama/Dharma born as a man).
- **Dhritarashtra + Gandhari** (princess of **Gandhara**, daughter of Subala, sister of **Shakuni**) → 100 sons, eldest **Duryodhana** (Suyodhana), then **Dushasana**, **Vikarna** and others, and one daughter **Dusshala** (wife of **Jayadratha** of Sindhu). **Yuyutsu** was his son by a **Vaishya woman**; he was the only son to join the Pandavas.
- **Pandu's wives:** **Kunti** (Pritha; daughter of **Shura**/Shurasena of the Yadu line, adopted by Kuntibhoja) and **Madri** (sister of **Shalya**, king of **Madra**).
- **Pandavas and their divine fathers:** Yudhishtira (**Yama/Dharma**), Bhima (**Vayu**), Arjuna (**Indra**) by Kunti; **Nakula and Sahadeva** (the **Ashvini** twins) by Madri.
- **Karna:** Kunti's son by **Surya** before marriage, born with armour and earrings (**kavacha-kundala**). Raised by the charioteer **Adhiratha** and **Radha** (hence **Radheya**, birth name **Vasusena**). Duryodhana made him king of **Anga**. His best-known son: **Vrishasena**.
- **Draupadi** (Panchali, Yajnaseni, **Krishnaa** for her dark skin): daughter of **Drupada** of **Panchala**, born from the sacrificial fire with her brother **Dhrishtadyumna**, so called **Ayonija** (not born of a

womb). Wife of all five Pandavas.

- **Upapandavas** (Draupadi's sons): **Prativindhya** (by Yudhishtira), **Sutasoma** (Bhima), **Shrutakirti** (Arjuna; Shrutakarma in the Sanskrit text), **Shatanika** (Nakula), **Shrutasena** (Sahadeva). All killed by Ashwatthama.
- **Other wives and sons:** Bhima + **Hidimbi** (sister of **Hidimba**) → **Ghatotkacha**. Arjuna + **Ulupi** (Naga princess) → **Iravan**; + **Chitrangada** (Manipura) → **Babhruvahana**; + **Subhadra** (Krishna's sister) → **Abhimanyu**, so Abhimanyu was Krishna's nephew.
- **Abhimanyu + Uttara** (daughter of **Virata**) → **Parikshit** (Arjuna's grandson) → **Janamejaya** (performed the **Sarpa Yaga**).
- **Gurus:** **Kripacharya** first taught the princes; **Dronacharya** next. **Kripa and Kripa**, twins born to **Sharadvan** of the **Gautama** line, were raised by Shantanu. Drona married **Kripa**, so **Kripa is Drona's brother-in-law**. Their son: **Ashwatthama**.
- **Drona's own teacher:** **Parashurama** (weapons). Drona was the son of sage **Bharadvaja**.
- **Ekalavya**, son of the Nishada king **Hiranyadhanus**, practised before a **clay image** of Drona, closed a barking dog's mouth with **seven arrows**, and gave his **right thumb** as gurudakshina.
- **Priest of the Pandavas:** **Dhousmya** (Dhaumya).
- **Yadu line:** Shura → **Vasudeva** and **Kunti**. Vasudeva + **Devaki** → **Krishna**; Vasudeva + **Rohini** → **Balarama**; also **Subhadra**. So Krishna is the Pandavas' cousin (Kunti is his father's sister).
- **Krishna's family:** **Rukmini** → **Pradyumna** → **Aniruddha** (married **Usha**) → **Vajra**; **Jambavati** → **Samba**.
- **Chedi:** **Shishupala**, son of Damaghosha and Shrutashrava (another sister of Vasudeva). **Dantavakra** (Dantavakra), king of Karusha, is the answer APPSC keys give for "Shishupala's brother" (2026); strictly he was a cousin (son of Shrutadeva, another sister of Vasudeva), and the two were the last birth of the brothers Jaya and Vijaya.
- **Nara and Narayana** are born as **Arjuna and Krishna**.
- **Ajnatavasa (13th year, at Virata's court):** Yudhishtira **Kanka**, Bhima **Ballava** (Vallabha), Arjuna **Brihannala**, Nakula **Granthika**, Sahadeva **Tantipala**, Draupadi **Sairandhri**.

## Explained

### The Kuru family tree in one view.

| Generation | Kuru line                      | Married to              | Children                                |
|------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1          | Shantanu                       | Ganga; Satyawati        | Bhishma; Chitrangada, Vichitravirya     |
| 2          | Vichitravirya                  | Ambika, Ambalika        | (by Vyasa) Dhritarashtra, Pandu; Vidura |
| 3          | Dhritarashtra / Pandu          | Gandhari / Kunti, Madri | 100 Kauravas + Dusshala / 5 Pandavas    |
| 4-6        | Arjuna → Abhimanyu → Parikshit | Subhadra → Uttara       | Janamejaya                              |

## Before the Kurus (Adi Parva stories).

- **Kacha**, son of **Brihaspati**, became **Shukracharya's** pupil to learn the **Mritasanjivani** (the art of reviving the dead). Shukra's daughter **Devayani** loved him; when he refused her, calling her his sister (he had come out of her father's body), she cursed that the art would not work for him.
- **Sharmishtha** pushed Devayani into a well; King **Yayati** pulled her out and married her, and Sharmishtha became her attendant.
- **Shukracharya** cursed Yayati with early old age for his sons by Sharmishtha. Only **Puru** took his father's old age, so Puru got the kingdom.
- **Shakuntala**, daughter of **Vishwamitra** and the apsara **Menaka**, was raised by sage **Kanva**. **Dushyanta** married her in the **Gandharva** form (by consent, without rites); their son **Bharata** gave his name to the line.

**Bhishma.** Devavrata gave up the throne and marriage so that Shantanu could marry Satyawati. For this terrible vow (*bhishma pratijna*) the gods called him Bhishma, and his father gave him the boon of **death at will** (*iccha mrityu*). Ganga taught him first; his weapons teacher was **Parashurama**. He fought Parashurama over Amba and neither won. In the previous birth he was the Vasu **Dyau (Prabhasa)**, who stole **Vasishtha's** cow **Nandini**; that curse made the eight Vasus take human birth. Ganga drowned the first seven at birth to free them; Shantanu stopped her at the eighth.

**Vyasa.** Called **Krishna** for his dark colour and **Dvaipayana** for his island birth. He got the name **Vyasa** for **dividing (arranging) the Vedas** into four. His disciples: **Paila** (Rigveda), **Vaisampayana** (Yajurveda), **Jaimini** (Samaveda), **Sumantu** (Atharvaveda). His son was **Shuka**. Tradition says **Ganesha** wrote the epic down as Vyasa dictated it.

**Kunti's mantra.** Sage **Durvasa** gave young Kunti a mantra to call any god. She tested it with **Surya** and Karna was born; she floated him in a box on the river. Later she used it for three sons and taught it to Madri, who called the Ashvini twins.

**Pandu's curse.** Pandu shot sage **Kindama**, who was in the form of a deer with his mate. The sage cursed him to die on embracing a wife. Pandu died this way with Madri, and Madri entered his funeral fire (*sahagamana*); Kunti raised all five.

**Gandhari's 100 sons.** She carried a lump of flesh for two years; on **Vyasa's** advice it was divided and kept in pots of ghee, giving 100 sons and Dusshala. Gandhari blindfolded herself to share her husband's blindness.

## The princes grow up.

- Duryodhana poisoned **Bhima** and threw him into the Ganga; he sank to **Nagaloka**, where snake bites cancelled the poison and the Nagas gave him more strength.
- Drona's test of aim: the others saw the tree and the bird; **Arjuna** saw only the **bird's eye**. When a **crocodile** seized Drona in the river, Arjuna shot it, and Drona gave him special divine weapons.
- **Bhima and Duryodhana** became masters of the mace (pupils of Balarama); **Arjuna** of the bow. Arjuna could shoot with either hand, so he is **Savyasachi**.
- At the tournament **Kripacharya** asked Karna his lineage before a duel with Arjuna; Duryodhana answered by crowning him king of **Anga**.

**Karna's life.** **Parashurama** taught him, thinking he was a Brahmin; when the truth came out, Parashurama cursed him to forget the **Brahmastra** when he most needed it. A Brahmin whose cow he killed by mistake

cursed that his **chariot wheel** would sink in battle. Indra, disguised as a Brahmin, took his kavacha-kundala and gave him the one-time weapon **Vasavi Shakti**. He is **Vaikartana** as son of the Sun (Vikartana), a name also read as "the one who cut off" his armour.

**Draupadi's swayamvara.** Drupada set a revolving target (*matsya yantra*) and a very stiff bow. Arjuna, disguised as a Brahmin, won. At Kunti's word ("share what you have brought") Draupadi married all five. Drupada had obtained Draupadi and Dhrishtadyumna from a fire sacrifice by the sages **Yaja and Upayaja**; a voice from the sky said Dhrishtadyumna was born to kill Drona.

**Drona and Drupada.** They studied together as boys. Drupada, once king, insulted Drona as a poor Brahmin. Drona asked his pupils for gurudakshina: the Kauravas failed, then **Arjuna** captured Drupada, and Drona kept **North Panchala** (Ahichchhatra), leaving **South Panchala** (Kampilya) to Drupada. This feud runs to the war.

**Shikhandi.** Amba blamed Bhishma, did penance and won Shiva's promise that she would cause his death. Reborn to Drupada as a girl (**Shikhandini**), she exchanged sex with the Yaksha **Sthunakarna**. Bhishma would not fight one born a woman, which decided the 10th day of the war.

**The year at Virata's court.** **Kichaka**, brother of Queen **Sudeshna** and commander of Matsya, harassed Sairandhri; **Bhima (Ballava)** killed him. **Susharma** of **Trigarta** raided Virata's cattle from the south; when the Kauravas raided from the north, **Brihannala** drove out with prince **Uttara** (Uttarakumara), who lost heart, so Arjuna fought and Uttarakumara drove the chariot.

**Parikshit and Janamejaya.** Parikshit hung a dead snake on the silent sage **Shamika**; Shamika's son **Shringi** cursed that **Takshaka** would kill the king in seven days, and so it happened. **Janamejaya** held the snake sacrifice to avenge him. **Astika**, son of the sage **Jaratkaru** and the snake-sister of **Vasuki**, stopped it.

**Krishna's family.** **Kamsa**, son of Ugrasena, ruled **Mathura**; Devaki was his cousin. Kamsa's wives were **Asti and Prapti**, daughters of **Jarasandha**. Krishna studied under **Sandipani** at Avanti (Ujjain). After Jarasandha attacked Mathura again and again, Krishna moved the Yadavas to **Dwaraka**. His chief queens include **Rukmini** (Vidarbha, sister of **Rukmi**), **Satyabhama** (daughter of **Satrajit**) and **Jambavati**. Balarama's wife was **Revati**. **Kritavarma** (a Yadava) fought for the Kauravas; **Satyaki** (Yuyudhana, a Vrishni and pupil of Arjuna) fought for the Pandavas.

**Shishupala.** He was Krishna's cousin and was promised to Rukmini before Krishna carried her off. Krishna had promised Shishupala's mother to forgive **100 offences**. At Yudhishtira's **Rajasuya**, Shishupala objected to Krishna receiving the first honour (*agra puja*) and insulted him past the limit; Krishna killed him with the **Sudarshana chakra**. In the Bhagavata, Shishupala and Dantavakra are the third birth of **Jaya and Vijaya**, the gatekeepers of Vaikuntha (after Hiranyaksha-Hiranyakashipu and Ravana-Kumbhakarna). His son **Dhrishtaketu** later fought for the Pandavas.

#### Born of a divine portion (Adi Parva).

| Character | Portion of | Character | Portion of    |
|-----------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Krishna   | Vishnu     | Balarama  | Adishesha     |
| Bhishma   | A Vasu     | Drona     | Brihaspati    |
| Karna     | Surya      | Vidura    | Yama (Dharma) |

#### Other kings.

| Kingdom      | King                     | Link to the story                                                                                             |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magadha      | Jarasandha; son Sahadeva | Bhima killed Jarasandha before the Rajasuya; his son <b>Sahadeva</b> was crowned                              |
| Gandhara     | Subala; Shakuni; Uluka   | Gandhari's father and brother; Shakuni's son <b>Uluka</b> was Duryodhana's envoy; <b>Sahadeva</b> killed both |
| Madra        | Shalya                   | Madri's brother; fought for the Kauravas                                                                      |
| Matsya       | Virata                   | Hosted the Pandavas in hiding; father of Uttara and Uttarakumara                                              |
| Sindhu       | Jayadratha               | Son of <b>Vridhakshatra</b> ; husband of Dusshala; tried to abduct Draupadi                                   |
| Pragjyotisha | Bhagadatta               | Son of <b>Naraka</b> ; elephant <b>Supratika</b> ; his son <b>Vajradatta</b> ruled after him                  |
| Trigarta     | Susharma                 | Raided Virata's cattle; led the Samshaptakas                                                                  |
| Haihaya      | Kartaviryarjuna          | Son of <b>Kritavirya</b> ; killed by Parashurama                                                              |

**Other names to know.** Yudhishtira: **Dharmaraja**, **Ajatashatru**. Bhima: **Vrikodara**. Arjuna's **ten names** (he recites them to Uttara in the Virata Parva): **Arjuna**, **Phalguna**, **Jishnu**, **Kiriti**, **Shvetavahana**, **Bibhatsu**, **Vijaya**, **Krishna**, **Savyasachi**, **Dhananjaya**; he is also **Partha** (son of Pritha). Duryodhana: **Suyodhana**; his son **Lakshmanakumara**. Kunti: **Pritha** (hence Partha for her sons). Karna: **Radheya**, **Vaikartana**, **Angaraja**. Bhishma: **Devavrata**, **Gangeya**, **Shantanava**.

## AP angle

- **Andhra Mahabharatamu** was written by the **Kavitraya**: **Nannaya** (Adi, Sabha and part of Aranya Parva, at the court of **Rajaraja Narendra**, Rajahmundry, 11th century), **Tikkana** (Virata to Svargarohana, 15 parvas, Nellore, 13th century) and **Errana** (rest of the Aranya Parva, 14th century).
- **Telugu forms of the disguise names** (from Tikkana's Virata Parva, widely staged): Yudhishtira **Kankubhattu**, Bhima **Valaludu**, Arjuna **Brihannala**, Nakula **Damagranthi**, Sahadeva **Tantripaludu**, Draupadi **Sairandhri**, and **Keechakudu**. The 2026 paper's Telugu version uses such forms.
- **Indrakeeladri, Vijayawada**. Local tradition places Arjuna's penance and the Kirata fight with Shiva on the **Indrakeeladri** hill, home of the **Kanaka Durga** temple; the city's name is linked to **Vijaya** (Arjuna). The Malleswara Swamy shrine on the same hill is linked to Arjuna by the same tradition.
- **Draupadi worship**. Draupadi is worshipped as a goddess, with fire-walking festivals, in the Tamil country and the bordering parts of Chittoor district.

## Common traps

✗ "Bhishma's real name was Gangeya." ✓ His birth name was **Devavrata**; **Gangeya** means son of Ganga.

✗ "Kripa was Drona's father-in-law." ✓ Drona married Kripa's sister **Kripi**, so Kripa is his **brother-in-law**.

✗ "Arjuna learned weapons from Parashurama." ✓ **Drona** taught Arjuna. Parashurama taught **Drona, Bhishma and Karna**.

✗ "Vyasa's parents were Shantanu and Satyawati." ✓ **Parashara and Satyawati**. Vichitravirya was his half-brother, not his son.

✗ "Dusshala was Draupadi's sister." ✓ **Dusshala** was the Kauravas' only sister, wife of Jayadratha.

✗ "Nakula was Tantipala." ✓ **Sahadeva** was Tantipala (cowherd); Nakula was **Granthika** (horses).

✗ "Turvasu was Sharmishtha's son." ✓ Devayani bore **Yadu and Turvasu**; Sharmishtha bore Druhyu, Anu and **Puru**.

✗ "Abhimanyu was one of the Upapandavas." ✓ The Upapandavas were Draupadi's five sons; Abhimanyu was **Subhadra's** son. Bhima's son by Draupadi is **Sutasoma** (the course book prints "Shrutasoma").

✗ "Vajra was Krishna's grandson" (as the course book says). ✓ Vajra was **Aniruddha's** son, Krishna's **great-grandson**.

✗ "Kritavarma fought for the Pandavas." ✓ **Satyaki** did; **Kritavarma** joined the Kauravas.

✗ "Kunti was Krishna's sister." ✓ Kunti was the sister of Krishna's father **Vasudeva**; **Subhadra** was Krishna's sister.

## Quick revision

- Lunar dynasty: Pururava → Nahusha → Yayati → Puru (Kurus) and Yadu (Yadavas); Pratipa → Devapi, Bahlika, Shantanu.
- Shantanu + Ganga → Bhishma (Devavrata, Gangeya); + Satyawati (Matsyagandhi, Yojanagandhi) → Chitrangada, Vichitravirya.
- Parashara + Satyawati → Vyasa; Vyasa → Dhritarashtra (blind), Pandu (pale), Vidura.
- Pandavas: Dharma, Vayu, Indra (Kunti); Ashvini twins (Madri). Karna: Surya, king of Anga; son Vrishasena.
- Draupadi (Ayonija, Krishnaa) and Dhritadyumna born of Drupada's fire; Shikhandi = Amba reborn (Sthunakarna).
- Upapandavas: Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Shrutakirti, Shatanika, Shrutasena.
- Gurus: Kripa (Gautama line), then Drona (Brihaspati's portion); Ekalavya's seven arrows and thumb.
- Kacha–Devayani (Mritasanjivani); Yayati pulled Devayani from the well; Shakuntala = Vishwamitra + Menaka.
- Rukmini → Pradyumna → Aniruddha (Usha) → Vajra; Jambavati → Samba.
- Parikshit cursed by Shringi, killed by Takshaka; Janamejaya's Sarpa Yaga stopped by Astika.

### 3 The Kurukshetra war and the epic's places

The Kurukshetra war lasted 18 days between 7 Pandava and 11 Kaurava akshauhinis; the Kauravas were led in turn by Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Shalya, and only a handful of warriors on each side survived.

#### Core facts

- **Field: Kurukshetra** (called **Dharmakshetra** in the Gita's first verse), in today's **Haryana**. Its holy core is **Samantapanchaka**, where Parashurama filled five lakes with the blood of kshatriyas.
- **Length: 18 days**. The epic has 18 parvas, the Gita 18 chapters, and 18 akshauhinis fought.
- **Armies: Pandavas 7 akshauhinis**, Kauravas **11**. One akshauhini = 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 65,610 horsemen, 1,09,350 foot soldiers.
- **Peace envoy: Krishna** went to **Hastinapura** for the Pandavas (Udyoga Parva). The Pandavas' lowest demand, first sent by Yudhishtira through Sanjaya and pressed by Krishna, was just **five villages: Avisthala** (Avikasthala), **Vrikasthala**, **Makandi**, **Varanavata** and any one more. Duryodhana refused even land the size of a needle's point.
- **Choice at Dwaraka:** Arjuna chose **Krishna unarmed** as charioteer; Duryodhana chose Krishna's army, the **Narayani sena**. **Balarama** stayed neutral and went on pilgrimage along the **Saraswati**.
- **Pandava commander-in-chief: Dhrishtadyumna**, all 18 days. Pandava camp before the war: **Upaplavya** in Matsya.
- **Kaurava commanders:**

| Commander | Days  | How the command ended                            |
|-----------|-------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Bhishma   | 1-10  | Fell to Arjuna's arrows, with Shikhandi in front |
| Drona     | 11-15 | Beheaded by Dhrishtadyumna                       |
| Karna     | 16-17 | Killed by Arjuna                                 |
| Shalya    | 18    | Killed by Yudhishtira                            |

- **Bhagavad Gita:** taught by Krishna to Arjuna just before the first day, in the **Bhishma Parva**; reported to Dhritarashtra by **Sanjaya**. **Bhishma** blew his conch first.
- **Day 10: Bhishma** fell and lay on a **bed of arrows** (*sharashayya*, Telugu *ampashayya*), waiting for **Uttarayana** to die.
- **Day 13: Abhimanyu** entered Drona's **Chakravyuha** (Padmavyuha) and was killed; **Jayadratha** blocked the other Pandavas at its mouth.
- **Day 14:** Arjuna killed **Jayadratha** before sunset. That night **Karna** killed **Ghatotkacha** with the **Vasavi Shakti**.
- **Day 15: Drona** was killed by **Dhrishtadyumna** after hearing "Ashwatthama is dead". Drona had killed **Drupada** and **Virata** that day.
- **Karna made commander after Drona's death.** On day 17 **Arjuna** killed **Karna** while he freed his sunken chariot wheel. **Shalya** was Karna's charioteer.

- **Bhima** killed **Dushasana** on **day 17** (drank his blood, as vowed) and all the hundred sons of Gandhari, ending with **Duryodhana**, whose **thigh** he broke with the mace on day 18. (Yuyutsu, the son by a Vaishya woman, had crossed over and survived.)
- **Day 18: Shalya** killed by **Yudhishtira**; **Shakuni** and his son **Uluka** killed by **Sahadeva**; **Susharma** by **Arjuna**. Duryodhana hid in the **Dvaipayana lake** before the final duel at **Samantapanchaka**.
- **Night raid** (Sauptika Parva): **Ashwatthama**, with **Kripa** and **Kritavarma**, killed the sleeping **Dhrishtadyumna**, **Shikhandi** and the **five Upapandavas**.
- **Conches** (Gita, chapter 1):

| Warrior     | Conch               |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Krishna     | <b>Panchajanya</b>  |
| Arjuna      | <b>Devadatta</b>    |
| Bhima       | <b>Paundra</b>      |
| Yudhishtira | <b>Anantavijaya</b> |
| Nakula      | <b>Sughosha</b>     |
| Sahadeva    | <b>Manipushpaka</b> |

- **Survivors:** Pandava side: the **five Pandavas**, **Krishna** and **Satyaki** (and **Yuyutsu**, who had crossed over). Kaurava side: **Ashwatthama**, **Kripa** and **Kritavarma**. Where a key wants one Kaurava survivor, it is **Ashwatthama**.

## Explained

**Before the war.** After the 13 years of exile, the Pandavas gathered at **Upaplavya**. Drupada's priest went as their first envoy, then **Sanjaya** came for Dhritarashtra, then **Krishna** himself. In the Kaurava hall Krishna showed his **Vishvarupa** when Duryodhana tried to seize him. Krishna also met **Karna** and told him he was Kunti's son; Karna stayed loyal to Duryodhana. Kunti then met Karna and got his promise to spare her sons except Arjuna, so that she would still have five sons (popular tellings add a second promise, to fire the **Nagastra** only once). **Shalya**, Madri's brother, set out to join the Pandavas but was won over by Duryodhana's hospitality on the way. Asked how long each would take to destroy the Pandava army, Bhishma and Drona said a month, Kripa two months and **Karna five days**. Rules were agreed: fighting stops at **sunset**, equals fight equals, and those who surrender, flee or are unarmed, and charioteers and musicians, are spared.

### The war, day by day.

| Day | Arrays (Kaurava / Pandava) | Key events                                                                        |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | —                          | Arjuna's despair and the Gita; Virata's son <b>Uttara</b> killed by <b>Shalya</b> |
| 2   | — / <b>Krauncha</b>        | Arjuna faced Bhishma; Bhima routed the Kalinga army                               |

| Day | Arrays (Kaurava / Pandava)               | Key events                                                                                |
|-----|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3   | <b>Garuda / Ardhashandra</b>             | Duryodhana fainted from Bhima's attack; <b>Krishna</b> rushed at Bhishma (again on day 9) |
| 5   | Makara / Shyena                          | Bhishma and Drona pressed the Pandavas                                                    |
| 6   | — / Makara                               | <b>Dhrishtadyumna</b> used the <b>Pramohanastra</b> to save Bhima                         |
| 7   | Mandala / Vajra                          | Virata's son <b>Shankha</b> killed by <b>Drona</b>                                        |
| 8   | Kurma / Shringataka                      | Arjuna's son <b>Iraavan</b> killed by the Rakshasa <b>Alambusa</b>                        |
| 9   | <b>Sarvatobhadra</b> / —                 | <b>Abhimanyu</b> cleared Alambusa's darkness with the <b>Bhaskarastra</b>                 |
| 10  | —                                        | Bhishma falls                                                                             |
| 11  | Shakata / Krauncha                       | Drona takes command                                                                       |
| 12  | —                                        | <b>Satyajit</b> , left to guard Yudhishtira, killed by Drona; <b>Bhagadatta</b> killed    |
| 13  | <b>Chakra (Padma)</b>                    | Abhimanyu killed                                                                          |
| 14  | Shakata, Padma, <b>Suchi</b> (innermost) | Jayadratha, <b>Bhurishravas</b> ; night: Ghatotkacha                                      |
| 15  | —                                        | Drupada, Virata, then Drona killed; Narayanastra                                          |
| 16  | <b>Makara</b> (Karna) / Ardhashandra     | Karna commands                                                                            |
| 17  | —                                        | Dushasana, <b>Vrishasena</b> , then Karna killed                                          |
| 18  | <b>Sarvatobhadra</b> (Shalya) / Trimukha | Shalya, Shakuni, Susharma killed; the mace duel                                           |

**Bhishma's ten days.** Karna refused to fight while Bhishma led, because Bhishma had slighted him. Bhishma could not be defeated in fair fight, so on the Pandavas' asking he told them how he could be brought down: he would not fight **Shikhandi**, who was born a woman. On **day 10** Arjuna shot him from behind Shikhandi. Bhishma lay on the arrows; refusing soft pillows, he was given **three arrows** shot into the ground by Arjuna as a pillow, and Arjuna brought up water from the earth with an arrow. He waited **58 nights** for **Uttarayana**, taught Yudhishtira (Shanti and Anushasana parvas, including the **Vishnu Sahasranama**) and died on **Magha Shukla Ashtami (Bhishma Ashtami)**.

**Drona's five days.** Duryodhana wanted Yudhishtira captured alive.

- **Day 12:** the **Samshaptakas** (Trigarta warriors under **Susharma**, sworn to win or die) drew Arjuna away. Arjuna killed **Bhagadatta** of Pragjyotisha and his elephant **Supratika**; Bhagadatta's **Vaishnavastra** Krishna took on his own chest, where it became a garland.
- **Day 13:** Abhimanyu knew how to enter the Chakravyuha but not how to leave it. **Jayadratha**, by Shiva's boon, held back the other Pandavas. Inside, Abhimanyu killed Duryodhana's son **Lakshmanakumara**. To disarm him, **Karna cut his bow from behind**, Kritavarma killed his horses and Kripa his charioteers; the **son of Dushasana** struck the final blow with a mace. Arjuna vowed to kill Jayadratha by next sunset or **enter fire**.

- **Day 14:** Drona hid Jayadratha behind a Shakata, a Padma and an innermost **Suchi** array. **Bhurishravas** (son of **Somadatta**) seized the tired Satyaki by the hair; Arjuna cut off his arm from afar and Satyaki beheaded him. Krishna, by his yoga-maya, made a false sunset, so that Jayadratha came out; Arjuna cut off his head and sent it into the lap of his father **Vridhakshatra**, who had cursed that whoever dropped his son's head to the ground would have his own head burst. That night Ghatotkacha killed the Rakshasas **Alambusa** and **Alayudha**; Karna then had to spend the **Vasavi Shakti**, saved for Arjuna, on **Ghatotkacha**, and **Krishna rejoiced** because Arjuna was now safe.
- **Day 15:** Bhima killed an elephant named **Ashwatthama** and shouted that Ashwatthama was dead. Drona asked **Yudhishtira**, who said "Ashwatthama is dead" aloud and "the elephant" (*kunjarah*) softly. Yudhishtira's chariot, which had always run above the ground, touched the earth. Drona laid down his arms and **Dhrishtadyumna** beheaded him. Enraged, **Ashwatthama** released the **Narayanastra**; Krishna told everyone to drop their weapons and bow, and it passed once **Bhima**, who at first refused, was pulled down too.
- **Killed in Drona's command:** Abhimanyu, Jayadratha, Bhurishravas, Ghatotkacha, Drupada, Virata and Drona himself.

**Karna's two days.** On **Ashwatthama's** suggestion Karna was made commander. His bow **Vijaya**, made by **Vishwakarma**, came from Parashurama. He chose **Shalya**, master of horse-lore, as charioteer to match Krishna; Shalya mocked him throughout. Karna wounded Yudhishtira, who then taunted Arjuna to give his Gandiva to another; Arjuna drew his sword, and Krishna taught that insulting an elder harshly is the same as killing him. Karna fired the **Nagastra** (the serpent **Ashvasena**, Arjuna's enemy since Khandava, in the arrow) at Arjuna's throat; Krishna pressed the chariot into the earth and it took only Arjuna's **crown**. Arjuna killed Karna's son **Vrishasena**. When Karna's wheel sank, he forgot the Brahmastra (Parashurama's curse); Arjuna killed him with the **Anjalika** arrow as he worked at the wheel, and a light from Karna's body merged into the **Sun**.

**The last day.** On Ashwatthama's word Shalya was anointed with **Saraswati** water. Shalya fell to **Yudhishtira's** spear (*Shakti*); **Duryodhana** killed **Chekitana**; **Sahadeva** killed **Shakuni** and **Uluka**; **Arjuna** killed **Susharma**. Duryodhana hid inside the **Dvaipayana lake** by holding the waters still (**jalastambhana**). Called out, he fought **Bhima** with the mace at **Samantapanchaka**; on Krishna's signal Bhima struck his **thigh**, fulfilling his vow and the curse of sage **Maitreya**. **Balarama**, back from his Saraswati pilgrimage and the teacher of both, was angry at the foul blow. When Krishna stepped down from Arjuna's chariot, it **burst into flames**: the weapons of Bhishma, Drona and Karna had already burnt it.

**The night raid and after.** Watching an owl kill sleeping crows, Ashwatthama planned a night attack. Dying Duryodhana made him **commander**. With Kripa and Kritavarma at the gate, he killed Dhrishtadyumna, Shikhandi and the Upapandavas. Chased by the Pandavas, he released the **Brahmashira**; Arjuna answered with his own and then withdrew it, but Ashwatthama turned his at the womb of **Uttara**. Krishna revived the stillborn child, **Parikshit**, and cursed Ashwatthama to wander for **3,000 years**. Ashwatthama gave up the **gem** on his forehead, which went to Draupadi.

#### Weapons and banners.

| Owner  | Weapon or emblem                                        | Source                                       |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Arjuna | Bow <b>Gandiva</b> ; banner <b>Hanuman</b> (Kapidhvaja) | Agni at Khandava; Hanuman's promise to Bhima |

| Owner       | Weapon or emblem                                                    | Source                                                                |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arjuna      | <b>Pashupatastra</b> (never used in the war)                        | Shiva as Kirata                                                       |
| Karna       | <b>Vasavi Shakti</b> ; bow <b>Vijaya</b>                            | Indra, for his armour and earrings; Parashurama (made by Vishwakarma) |
| Krishna     | <b>Sudarshana</b> discus, <b>Kaumodaki</b> mace, <b>Sharnga</b> bow | Given at Khandava (discus, mace)                                      |
| Ashwatthama | <b>Narayanastra</b> , <b>Brahmashira</b>                            | Drona                                                                 |
| Bhagadatta  | <b>Vaishnavastra</b> ; elephant <b>Supratika</b>                    | His father Naraka's line                                              |
| Duryodhana  | Serpent banner (Naga dhvaja)                                        |                                                                       |

### The epic's places.

| Place                       | What happened                                                                                      | Today                                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Hastinapura                 | Kuru capital                                                                                       | Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh                   |
| Indraprastha                | Pandava capital, built on <b>Khandavaprastha</b> , the half-kingdom <b>Dhritarashtra</b> gave them | Delhi                                            |
| Varanavata                  | House of lac                                                                                       | Near Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh                      |
| Ekachakrapura               | Pandavas hid as Brahmins; Bhima killed Bakasura                                                    | Traditional sites vary                           |
| Kampilya                    | Drupada's capital (South Panchala); Draupadi's swayamvara                                          | Farrukhabad district, Uttar Pradesh              |
| Ahichchhatra                | North Panchala, taken by Drona                                                                     | Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh                 |
| Viratanagara                | Matsya capital; year of hiding                                                                     | Bairat (Viratnagar), north-east Rajasthan        |
| Upaplavya                   | Pandava base after the year of hiding (not an exile halt)                                          | Matsya country                                   |
| Kurukshetra                 | The war; the Gita (at <b>Jyotisar</b> , by tradition)                                              | Haryana                                          |
| Samantapanchaka             | Bhima–Duryodhana mace duel                                                                         | Kurukshetra                                      |
| Anga (capital Champa)       | Karna's kingdom                                                                                    | Bhagalpur area, Bihar                            |
| Magadha (capital Girivraja) | Jarasandha's kingdom                                                                               | Bihar (Rajgir)                                   |
| Chedi                       | Shishupala's kingdom                                                                               | Bundelkhand region                               |
| Pragjyotisha                | Bhagadatta's kingdom                                                                               | Assam (Guwahati area)                            |
| Gandhara (Takshashila)      | Shakuni's kingdom; Janamejaya's snake sacrifice, by tradition                                      | North-west: Peshawar and Taxila region, Pakistan |
| Madra                       | Shalya's kingdom                                                                                   | Punjab                                           |

| Place               | What happened                          | Today                                        |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Manipura            | Chitrangada and Babhruvahana           | Traditionally Manipur (other sites proposed) |
| Dwaraka             | Krishna's city                         | Gujarat coast                                |
| Prabhava            | End of the Yadavas and of Krishna      | Near Somnath, Gujarat                        |
| Naimisharanya       | Sauti told the epic to Shaunaka        | Sitapur district, Uttar Pradesh              |
| Kamyaka, Dvaitavana | Forests of the exile                   | Kuru country                                 |
| Gandhamadana        | Bhima met Hanuman (Saugandhika flower) | Himalaya                                     |

## AP angle

- **Tikkana Somayaji** of Nellore (13th century) wrote the Telugu Mahabharatam from the **Virata Parva to the end**, so every war parva most Telugu readers know is his. His **Udyoga Parva** scenes of Krishna's embassy (*Rayabaram*) are the basis of popular Telugu stage plays.
- **Bhishma Ekadashi** (Magha Shukla Ekadashi), linked to Bhishma's teaching of the **Vishnu Sahasranama**, is kept in Vishnu temples of Andhra Pradesh with Sahasranama recitation; **Gita Jayanti** falls on **Margashira Shukla Ekadashi**.

## Common traps

✗ "The Pandavas had 11 akshauhinis." ✓ Pandavas **7**, Kauravas **11**.

✗ "Bhishma died on the 10th day." ✓ He **fell** on day 10 and died later, at **Uttarayana**, after 58 nights on the arrow bed.

✗ "Arjuna killed Drona." ✓ **Dhrishtadyumna** killed Drona (day 15).

✗ "Karna became commander after Bhishma." ✓ **Drona** followed Bhishma; Karna came **after Drona**, for **two days**.

✗ "Shalya was killed by Bhima" or "by Arjuna". ✓ By **Yudhishtira**. **Sahadeva** killed **Shakuni**.

✗ "Dushasana died during Drona's command." ✓ On **day 17**, under Karna.

✗ "Arjuna's conch was Panchajanya." ✓ Arjuna **Devadatta**; Krishna **Panchajanya**; Bhima **Paundra**.

✗ "Arjuna used the Pashupatastra in the war." ✓ He had it but **never used** it at Kurukshetra.

✗ "Ghatotkacha was killed by Drona." ✓ By **Karna**, with the **Vasavi Shakti** (day 14 night).

✗ "Abhimanyu was killed by Jayadratha." ✓ Jayadratha **blocked** the Pandavas; the last blow came from **Dushasana's son**.

✗ "Ashwatthama said he would need one month to destroy the Pandava army" (as the course book says). ✓ In the standard text he says **ten days**; Bhishma and Drona a month, Kripa two months, Karna five days.

✗ "Upaplavya was a halt of the forest exile." ✓ It was the base **after** the year of hiding; the exile halts were Kamyaka, Dvaitavana, Gandhamadana.

✗ "The Gita is in the Udyoga Parva." ✓ It is in the **Bhishma Parva**; the peace mission is in the Udyoga Parva.

## Quick revision

- 18 days; Pandavas 7 + Kauravas 11 akshauhinis; field Kurukshetra (Dharmakshetra), Haryana.
- Kaurava chiefs: Bhishma 1-10, Drona 11-15, Karna 16-17, Shalya 18. Pandava chief: Dhrishtadyumna.
- Day 1 Uttara (Shalya); 7 Shankha (Drona); 8 Iravan (Alambusa); 10 Bhishma falls (Shikhandi).
- Day 13 Abhimanyu (Chakravyuha); 14 Jayadratha, Bhurishravas, Ghatotkacha; 15 Drona.
- Day 17 Dushasana, Vrishasena, Karna; Shalya his charioteer; day 18 Shalya, Shakuni, Susharma, the mace duel.
- Arrays: Krauncha (day 2), Garuda–Ardhachandra (3), Suchi (14), Makara (Karna), Sarvatobhadra (Shalya).
- Conches: Panchajanya, Devadatta, Paundra, Anantavijaya, Sughosha, Manipushpaka; Bhishma blew first.
- Night raid: Ashwatthama, Kripa, Kritavarma; Brahmashira at Uttara's womb; Parikshit saved.
- Five villages: Avisthala, Vrikasthala, Makandi, Varanavata + one.
- Places: Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Varanavata, Viratanagara, Upaplavya, Samantapanchaka, Prabhasa.

## 4 Bhagavad Gita: chapters and teachings

The Bhagavad Gita is Krishna's teaching to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, set in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata: 18 chapters and 700 verses that join karma, jnana, dhyana and bhakti into one path to freedom.

### Core facts

- **Place in the epic: Bhishma Parva**, the 6th of the 18 Parvas of the Mahabharata (Bhagavad Gita Upa-parva).
- **Setting: Kurukshetra**, called *dharmakshetra* in the first verse, on the **first day** of the 18-day war, before the fighting began. Tradition places the teaching at **Jyotisar** near Kurukshetra (Haryana).
- **Teacher and listener: Krishna** teaches; **Arjuna** is the main listener.
- **Size: 18 chapters** (adhyayas), **700 verses** (shlokas). Each chapter's colophon calls it a "Yoga".
- **Frame dialogue:** blind king **Dhritarashtra** asks, **Sanjaya** reports. Sanjaya saw the war through the **divine sight** given by **Vyasa**.
- **Longest chapter:** 18 (78 verses). **Shortest:** 12 and 15 (20 verses each).
- **Speakers (usual count):** Krishna 574 verses, Arjuna 84, Sanjaya 41, Dhritarashtra 1. Dhritarashtra speaks only the first verse.
- **Author tradition: Vyasa**, composer of the Mahabharata.
- **Other names:** *Gitopanishad*; the colophon calls it *Brahma-vidya* and *Yoga-shastra*.
- **Prasthanatraya** (three basic texts of Vedanta): the **Upanishads**, the **Brahma Sutras** and the **Bhagavad Gita**.
- **Gita Jayanti: Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi** (also called **Mokshada Ekadashi**).
- **Three gunas** (Ch. 14): **Sattva, Rajas, Tamas**. The **Atma** is not a guna.
- **Key teaching (2.47):** you have a right to your duty (action) alone, **never to its fruits**. This is *nishkama karma*.
- **Knowledge burns karma (4.37):** the fire of **jnana** (true knowledge) reduces all actions (karma) to ashes and frees one from the **bondage of karma**.
- **Avatara verses (4.7–4.8):** whenever dharma declines, Krishna takes birth, to protect the good, destroy the wicked and re-establish dharma, **age after age** (*sambhavami yuge yuge*).
- **Kshetra and Kshetrajna: Chapter 13.** The body is the field (*kshetra*); the one who knows it is the knower of the field (*kshetrajna*).
- **Vishwarupa (cosmic form): Chapter 11;** Arjuna is given a **divine eye** (*divya chakshu*) to see it.
- **Conches (Ch. 1):** Krishna **Panchajanya**, Arjuna **Devadatta**, Bhima **Paundra**, Yudhishtira **Anantavijaya**, Nakula **Sughosha**, Sahadeva **Manipushpaka**. **Bhishma** blew his conch first.
- Arjuna's bow: **Gandiva**. Krishna is Arjuna's **charioteer** (Partha-sarathi).

### The 18 chapters

| Ch. | Name (Yoga)                     | Verses | Remember it by                                                                        |
|-----|---------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Arjuna Vishada Yoga             | 47     | Armies, conches, Arjuna's grief, drops his bow                                        |
| 2   | Sankhya Yoga                    | 72     | Atma is eternal; right to action not fruits (2.47); Sthitaprajna                      |
| 3   | Karma Yoga                      | 43     | Act without attachment; yajna; lokasangraha; own dharma (svadharma) better            |
| 4   | Jnana Karma Sanyasa Yoga        | 42     | Avatara verses (4.7–8); knowledge burns karma (4.37); line Vivasvan → Manu → Ikshvaku |
| 5   | Karma Sanyasa Yoga              | 29     | Renouncing vs doing action; lotus leaf untouched by water                             |
| 6   | Atma Samyama Yoga (Dhyana Yoga) | 47     | Meditation posture; mind is one's friend and enemy                                    |
| 7   | Jnana Vijnana Yoga              | 30     | Eightfold prakriti; four kinds of devotees                                            |
| 8   | Akshara Brahma Yoga             | 28     | Thought at death; bright and dark paths of departure                                  |
| 9   | Raja Vidya Raja Guhya Yoga      | 34     | Royal secret; a leaf, flower, fruit or water offered with love (9.26)                 |
| 10  | Vibhuti Yoga                    | 42     | "Among X, I am Y": Krishna's glories                                                  |
| 11  | Vishwarupa Darshana Yoga        | 55     | Cosmic form; "I am Time (Kala), destroyer of worlds"                                  |
| 12  | Bhakti Yoga                     | 20     | Qualities of the devotee dear to Krishna                                              |
| 13  | Kshetra Kshetrajna Vibhaga Yoga | 34     | Field and knower of the field; prakriti and purusha                                   |
| 14  | Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga          | 27     | Sattva, rajas, tamas; one beyond the gunas (gunatita)                                 |
| 15  | Purushottama Yoga               | 20     | Ashvattha tree with roots above; Purushottama                                         |
| 16  | Daivasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga   | 24     | Divine and demonic traits; three gates of hell                                        |
| 17  | Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga      | 28     | Threefold faith, food, yajna, tapas, dana; Om Tat Sat                                 |
| 18  | Moksha Sanyasa Yoga             | 78     | Tyaga vs sanyasa; "give up all dharmas, take refuge in Me" (18.66)                    |

Some editions add Arjuna's opening question to Chapter 13 (35 verses, 701 in all); the traditional total stays 700.

## Explained

**Why the Gita is spoken.** Arjuna asks Krishna to place the chariot **between the two armies**. He sees teachers, grandfathers and cousins in the enemy ranks. He fears that the ruin of families (*kulakshaya*) will

destroy **dharma**, puts down Gandiva and refuses to fight (Ch. 1). Unsure of his duty, he says "I am your **disciple**; teach me" (2.7). Krishna answers him over the next 17 chapters. At the end Arjuna says *nashto mohah smritir labdha*: his **delusion is gone and his memory regained**, and he will act as told (18.73).

**The three gunas (Ch. 14).** All of nature (*prakriti*) is made of three qualities.

| Guna   | Nature                        | Binds by                              | Leads to                 |
|--------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sattva | Light, purity, calm           | Attachment to happiness and knowledge | Knowledge; higher worlds |
| Rajas  | Passion, desire, restlessness | Attachment to action                  | Greed, toil, sorrow      |
| Tamas  | Darkness, inertia             | Heedlessness, laziness, sleep         | Delusion; lower births   |

A person who goes beyond all three is **gunatita**: the same in praise and blame, honour and insult, friend and foe. Chapters 17 and 18 classify faith, food, sacrifice, austerity, charity, knowledge, action, doer, intellect, firmness and happiness by the three gunas.

| Food (Ch. 17)   | Marks                                                                        |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sattvic (17.8)  | Gives life, strength, health and joy; juicy, wholesome                       |
| Rajasic (17.9)  | Too bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry, burning; brings pain and disease |
| Tamasic (17.10) | Stale, tasteless, putrid, left over, impure                                  |

### Three (four) paths.

- **Karma yoga** (Ch. 2, 3, 5): do your duty, give up attachment to the result, offer action to God. Inaction is not freedom; even the body cannot be kept alive without action.
- **Jnana yoga** (Ch. 4, 13): know the self as distinct from the body and the field of nature. Knowledge is the greatest purifier.
- **Dhyana yoga** (Ch. 6): meditation with a steady seat, controlled mind and moderate food and sleep.
- **Bhakti yoga** (Ch. 7-12): loving, single-minded devotion. Krishna promises to carry what his devotees lack and to keep what they have (9.22).

A common way to read the Gita: Chapters 1-6 stress **karma**, 7-12 **bhakti**, 13-18 **jnana**. The three paths are not rivals; each school puts a different one first (see Deeper).

**Sthitaprajna (2.54-72).** Arjuna asks how a person of steady wisdom speaks, sits and walks. Krishna's answer: he gives up all desires of the mind, is content in the self, is unshaken by sorrow and pleasure, and draws in his senses as a **tortoise** draws in its limbs. The chain of ruin (2.62-63): brooding on objects → attachment → desire → anger → delusion → loss of memory → loss of reason → ruin.

### Key ideas by verse.

- 2.13: as the body passes through **childhood, youth and old age**, so the soul passes into another body.
- 2.20, 2.22, 2.23: the Atma is never born and never dies; it changes bodies as a person changes worn-out clothes; **weapons do not cut it, fire does not burn it, water does not wet it, wind does not dry it.**
- 2.48, 2.50: *samatvam yoga uchyate* (evenness of mind is yoga); *yogah karmasu kaushalam* (yoga is skill in action).
- 3.20: act for **lokasangraha** (the welfare and holding together of the world), as **Janaka** did.

- 3.35 (and 18.47): one's own dharma (**svadharma**), even done imperfectly, is better than another's dharma done well. For Arjuna, a Kshatriya, svadharma is to fight a righteous war.
- 4.34: learn from a teacher by **humility, questions and service**.
- 5.10: one who acts without attachment is untouched by sin, like a **lotus leaf** by water.
- 4.13: the four varnas were made by Krishna according to **guna and karma**.
- 6.5–6: lift yourself by yourself; the controlled mind is one's friend, the uncontrolled mind one's **own enemy**.
- 6.16–17: yoga is not for one who eats or sleeps too much or too little: **moderate** food and sleep.
- 6.19: the steady mind of a yogi is like **a lamp in a windless place**.
- 6.34–35: Arjuna says the mind is as hard to hold as **the wind**; Krishna: it is held by **practice (abhyasa) and detachment (vairagya)**.
- 6.40: one who falls away from yoga midway is never lost; **no good effort is wasted**.
- 7.16: four kinds of people worship Krishna: the distressed (*arta*), the seeker of knowledge (*jijnasu*), the seeker of wealth (*artharthi*) and the wise (*jnani*); the *jnani* is the dearest.
- 7.4: the eightfold lower nature: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego.
- 9.22: Krishna himself carries the welfare (**yogakshema**) of those who worship him with **exclusive devotion** (*ananya bhakti*).
- 12.8–11: the graded advice: fix the mind on God; if not, practise; if not, work for him; if not even that, **give up the fruit of action**.
- 12.13–19: the devotee dear to Krishna hates no one, is compassionate, free of ego and pride, and the same in joy and sorrow.
- 13.22: the Self is the **witness** (*sakshi*) of body, senses, mind and intellect, which belong to prakriti.
- 15.16–18: the perishable (*kshara*), the imperishable (*akshara*) and, above both, **Purushottama**, the Supreme Person.
- 16.1–3: the divine qualities (*daivi sampat*) begin with **fearlessness** (*abhayam*), then purity, charity, self-control, non-violence, truth, forgiveness; pride, arrogance, anger and cruelty are demonic (*asuri*).
- 16.21: **three gates of hell**: desire (*kama*), anger (*krodha*) and greed (*lobha*).
- 17.23: **Om Tat Sat** is the threefold name of Brahman.
- 18.66: *sarva dharman parityajya*: give up all dharmas and take refuge in Krishna alone (**complete surrender**); he will free Arjuna from all sins. Sri Vaishnavas call it the **charama shloka**, one of their three secrets (*rahasyas*) with the **Ashtakshari** (Tirumantra) and the **Dvaya**.
- 18.78: Sanjaya's last verse: where Krishna, lord of yoga, and Arjuna the archer are, there are fortune, victory and justice.

### Vibhuti Yoga (Ch. 10): favourite pairs.

| Among  | Krishna is            | Among   | Krishna is          |
|--------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Vedas  | Sama Veda             | Rivers  | Ganga (Jahnavi)     |
| Months | Margashirsha          | Seasons | Spring (Kusumakara) |
| Words  | Om (the one syllable) | Yajnas  | Japa yajna          |

| Among      | Krishna is                 | Among     | Krishna is                             |
|------------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| Mountains  | Meru; immovables: Himalaya | Trees     | Ashvattha                              |
| Devarishis | Narada                     | Maharshis | Bhrigu                                 |
| Munis      | Vyasa                      | Poets     | Ushana (Shukracharya)                  |
| Pandavas   | Dhananjaya (Arjuna)        | Vrishnis  | Vasudeva                               |
| Daityas    | Prahlada                   | Birds     | Garuda (Vainateya)                     |
| Rudras     | Shankara                   | Adityas   | Vishnu                                 |
| Letters    | "A"                        | Metres    | Gayatri                                |
| Horses     | Uchchaisravas              | Elephants | Airavata                               |
| Serpents   | Vasuki; Nagas: Ananta      | Weapons   | Vajra; armed warriors: Rama            |
| Generals   | Skanda                     | Priests   | Brihaspati                             |
| Siddhas    | Kapila                     | Sciences  | Knowledge of the self (adhyatma vidya) |

**Vishwarupa (Ch. 11).** Arjuna asks to see the universal form. Krishna gives him a divine eye. Arjuna sees all worlds and gods within one body and the Kaurava warriors rushing into its mouths. Krishna says *kalo'smi lokakshayakrit*: he is **Time (Kala)**, the destroyer of the worlds, and the warriors are already slain; Arjuna is only the **instrument** (*nimitta-matra*). Krishna had shown the cosmic form once before, in the **Kuru assembly** during his peace mission (Udyoga Parva), when Duryodhana tried to seize him. Frightened, Arjuna asks to see the gentle four-armed form again, and then the two-armed human form.

**Ch. 8 and Ch. 15 images.** Ch. 8: whatever one thinks of at the moment of death, one reaches; the bright path (fire, day, bright fortnight, Uttarayana) leads to no return, the dark path (smoke, night, dark fortnight, Dakshinayana) leads back. Ch. 15: the world is an **Ashvattha** (peepal) tree with roots above and branches below; its leaves are the Vedas; it is cut with the axe of detachment.

### Commentaries and other Gitas.

- **Later readings.** Jnaneshwar's *Jnaneshwari* or *Bhavartha Dipika* (Marathi, 13th century); **Bal Gangadhar Tilak's** *Gita Rahasya* (written in Mandalay jail; stresses karma yoga); **Gandhi's** *Anasakti Yoga* (Gujarati; the gospel of selfless action); **Sri Aurobindo's** *Essays on the Gita*; **Vinoba Bhave's** *Gita Pravachan*.
- **Other "Gitas".** Do not confuse: **Anu Gita** (Ashvamedhika Parva, Krishna to Arjuna after the war), **Uddhava Gita** (Bhagavatam, Skandha 11), **Ashtavakra Gita**, **Vyadha Gita** (Vana Parva: the righteous hunter, Dharmavyadha of Mithila, teaches the Brahmin Kaushika).

**Names used in the dialogue.** Arjuna: Partha, Kaunteya, Dhananjaya, **Gudakesha** (conqueror of sleep, 1.24), Savyasachi (ambidextrous archer), Bharata. Krishna: Keshava, Madhava, Madhusudana, Hrishikesha, Janardana, Achyuta, Govinda, Vasudeva, Yogeshwara.

### AP angle

- **Ghantasala's Gita.** The singer **Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao** recorded selected Gita verses with Telugu explanation in the early 1970s; it is still played in Andhra temples and homes and at funerals.

- **Gita Jayanti** (Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi) is marked with Gita parayana in Andhra temples, and the same day is **Mokshada Ekadashi** in the temple calendar.
- In Telugu the chapters are called *adhyayamu* and the Gita is often called *Bhagavadgita* or *Gitopanishattu*; questions may give the Telugu forms of chapter names.

## Common traps

✗ "The Gita is in the Drona Parva." ✓ It is in the **Bhishma Parva** (6th Parva).

✗ "Kshetra–Kshetrajna is Chapter 15." ✓ It is **Chapter 13**. Chapter 15 is Purushottama Yoga.

✗ "The Atma is one of the three gunas." ✓ The gunas are **sattva, rajas and tamas**; the Atma is beyond them.

✗ "Sanjaya was given divine sight by Krishna." ✓ **Vyasa** gave it to Sanjaya. Krishna gave Arjuna the divine eye to see the Vishwarupa.

✗ "Arjuna's conch was Panchajanya." ✓ Arjuna's was **Devadatta**; Panchajanya was Krishna's.

✗ "Meditation burns karma to ashes (4.37)." ✓ It is the fire of **knowledge (jnana)**.

✗ "The Gita has 18 chapters and 1,800 verses." ✓ **700** verses.

✗ "Gita Jayanti falls in Kartika." ✓ **Margashirsha** Shukla Ekadashi.

✗ "Uddhava Gita is part of the Bhagavad Gita." ✓ It is in the **Bhagavatam, Skandha 11**.

✗ "The Gita was taught after the war." ✓ **Before** the fighting began, on the first day; the **Anugita** came after the war.

✗ "The chain of ruin begins with desire, then attachment" (as the course book puts it). ✓ In 2.62–63 it begins with **dwelling on objects** → **attachment** → **desire** → **anger** → **delusion**; anger leads directly to **delusion (moha)**.

✗ "Lord of the senses (Hrishikesha) is Arjuna." ✓ **Hrishikesha** and Keshava are Krishna; **Gudakesha** and Partha are Arjuna.

## Quick revision

- Bhishma Parva, Kurukshetra, first day of war; Sanjaya reports to Dhritarashtra.
- 18 chapters, 700 verses; Krishna 574, Arjuna 84, Sanjaya 41, Dhritarashtra 1.
- Ch. 2 Sankhya: Atma eternal, 2.47 right to action not fruits, Sthitaprajna.
- Ch. 3 Karma, Ch. 4 avatara verses and jnana burns karma, Ch. 6 Dhyana.
- Ch. 10 Vibhuti, Ch. 11 Vishwarupa (divine eye), Ch. 12 Bhakti.

- Ch. 13 Kshetra–Kshetrajna, Ch. 14 three gunas, Ch. 15 Purushottama.
- Ch. 16 three gates of hell: kama, krodha, lobha; Ch. 17 Om Tat Sat.
- Ch. 18 Moksha Sanyasa; 18.66 "take refuge in Me alone".
- Conches: Panchajanya (Krishna), Devadatta (Arjuna), Paundra (Bhima).
- Prasthanatraya: Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Gita; Gita Jayanti on Margashirsha Shukla Ekadashi.