



## INDIA'S INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT TO UNITE NATIONS

### STUDY GUIDE

#### COMMITTEE: CONTINUOUS CRISIS COMMITTEE

#### AGENDA: MAHABHARATA

*(Note: The committee is a crisis committee and hence will be dynamic in nature. The freeze date of the committee shall be announced in the council. The delegates are advised to go through the scripture. The events mentioned in the guide may not necessarily be followed in accordance with the crisis. The guide is for studying purposes only.)*

## MANDATE

The Mahabharata is an Indian epic which is set around the 8th and 9th centuries BCE. The Mahabharata is known to be the longest poem ever written in history with an average of 1.8 million words and over 200,000 individual verses. It is four times the size of the Ramayana, another Sanskrit-based ancient Indian epic. This committee is set in the Adi Parva which is the first Parva of the eighteen parvas. To be precise the committee is now in the plot of the epic just after the narrow escape of the Pandavas from the infamous burning of the lac palace, a scheme orchestrated by their cousin Duryodhana. However, this committee is set to an opportune moment where your portfolio can rework its way across the story of Mahabharata from this time on.

## INTRODUCTION

India is home to the oldest civilization in the world, a developing country which is a major stakeholder in areas such as health and information technology. What sets the country apart is its rich culture and heritage. Referred to as 'sone ki chidiyan' (Golden sparrow) in history, the country is also the land where great sages, philosophers, writers, warriors and scientists like Shankaracharya, MK Gandhi and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. Mahabharata and Ramayana are the



two epics which require no introduction as they are the most read, televised and popular among all literary and historic works in India.

The Mahabharata is one of the oldest epics. It was narrated by Veda Vyasa in Sanskrit. Vyasa is one of the most revered Hindu sages. This exceptional story took place when Sage Vyasa was born.

He composed this poem but he could not write it down as his thoughts ran faster than his pen, so he started looking for someone who could write it at the same speed while he narrated it but he could not find one. He invoked

the lord of Brahma and recommended Lord Ganesha for this job. Vyasa called Lord Ganesha, the Elephant headed god and asked him to write the poem while he recited it. Lord Ganesha agreed but on one condition, when he is writing Vyasa cannot hesitate, the pen should not stop while writing because if it stops then it will not start again. Vyasa thought for a while and agreed but he too had a counter condition that Lord Ganesha cannot write a single word or verse without understanding the meaning of it. Lord Ganesha agreed to it and they started but whenever Vyasa ran out of content he would add difficult words and complicated phrases in the middle to buy out some more time while Lord Ganesha thought and understood while he composed more in his mind. This is how the epic story of the Mahabharata took place with this beautiful collaboration between Vyasa and Lord Ganesha.

## **PLOT**

The original epic Mahabharata comprises 18 parvas (chapters) which are compiled in the form of books. Apart from the 18 books, there exists an addendum, 'Harivamsa', which provides additional information regarding the life event of Sri Krishna.

The eighteen Parvas are (in chronological order) -

1. **Adi Parva-** Adi means first, thus it is the first Parva of the Mahabharata epic. As a whole, the Adi Parva contains over 230 chapters divided into 19 sub-parvas. The Parva begins with how sage Sauti addresses the rishis gathered at Namisharaynya and educates them about Mahabharata, after which sage Vaisampayana narrates the epic to Janamejaya. The book involves the record of events, including the birth of early Kuru princes, Pandavas, their childhood, education, achievements and marriage.

2. **Sabha Parva-** The Parva involves the details of the palace built at Indraprastha and all the major events that followed. The Sabha Parva gets its name because of the meeting (sabha) which was called on, where Pandavas fall prey to the trap which was laid down in form of a dice game by Duryodhana and his maternal uncle Shakuni. The Parva ends with the narration of how Pandavas and Draupadi were humiliated in front of the entire court despite great warriors and intellectuals like Bheeshma and Dronacharya being present.

3. **Vana Parva-** the third book gives a detailed account of the time spent by Pandavas and Draupadi in exile (12 years). The Parva plays a significant role in the culture of the country as a lot of folk tales and archaeological evidence can be traced back to this time of their lives.

4. **Virata Parva** -The book unfolds the journey of Pandavas during the 13th and the most crucial year of exile, this final year of their exile came with an additional clause which said that if even one of them were recognised, they would have to spend an additional 12 years in exile. The Pandavas spent their period of incognito exile in the kingdom of King Virata doing jobs in the royal household.

5. **Udyoga Parva** - The Parva narrates the incidents just after the period of exile when the Pandavas demand half of their kingdom back but Duryodhana refuses to do so. Sri Krishna is found holding peace talks with Kauravas on behalf of Pandavas which fail and thus preparations for the great war of Kurukshetra begin. The ruler of Gandhar and maternal uncle of Duryodhana, Shakuni dictates the rules of the wars before the war begins as the war is 'Dharma Yudha' or the war of righteousness and therefore it was important that everyone obeys the laws of war as in the scriptures.

6. **Bheeshma Parva** - The Parva is one of the most important Parvas in the epic during this period Arjuna is seen doubting his capabilities as tears roll down his cheeks as he questions whether they (Pandavas) would ever be happy by enjoying the worldly pleasures soaked in the blood of their own loved ones. To put his mind to rest Sri Krishna gives him the divvy gyan (divine knowledge) in form of the Bhagavad Gita which literally means the song of God. After listening to the divine knowledge Arjuna decides to fight the war for it is Dharma to do so. The war is declared and the greatest warrior Bheeshma leads the Kuru army but gets defeated by Arjuna after a fierce battle. Bheeshma falls on the bed of arrows on the battlefield and decides to invoke the blessings of his mother Ganga, warriors from both camps are upset as a legendary warrior had fallen down and this was just the beginning. Bheeshma tries to negotiate and restore peace but Duryodhana refuses.

7. **Drona Parva** - After the defeat of Bheeshma, Guru Dronacharya is appointed as army chief by Duryodhana. The Parva accounts for four days of war and how mighty warriors like Abhimanyu, Ghatotkacha, Jayadartaha and eventually Guru Dronacharya are defeated and killed in the war.

8. **Karna Parva** - After the defeat of Dronacharya, Karna, the King of Anga and unknown sibling of the Pandavas is appointed as the chief of the Kuru army. The book narrates the downfall of Dushasana, Karna and other warriors.

9. **Shalya Parva-** The Parva concludes the war, with Bheema killing Duryodhana on the battlefield, only three elders/leaders of the Kuru army survive which included Ashvathamma, Kripacharya and Kritaverma.

10. **Sauptika Parva-** The Sauptika Parva unfolds the revenge that Kripacharya, Ashvathamma and Kritaverma take by killing the army of Pandavas in sleep. The only people who survived after the attack include 5 Pandavs, Sri Krishna, Asvathama, Kripacharya, Kritaverma, Yuyutsu, Vrishaketu and Satyaki.

11. **Stree Parva-** The Stree Parva describes the grief and trauma of the family members of the warriors who laid down their lives, especially women who lost their children, husbands and other near and dear ones in the war.

12. **Shanti Parva-** The Parva gets its name from the peace which prevailed during the period after Yudhishtira became the king of the kingdom. Yudhishtira is reminded of his duties by great sages and Bheeshma, who is still resting on the bed of arrows.

13. **Anushasana Parva-** The Parva can be considered as a follow-up to the Shanti Parva as the instructions being delivered to Yudhishtir continue and the Parva also accounts for the death of Bhishma and how Vyasa and Krishna console Ganga and explain Kshatriya-dharma to her.

14. **Ahwamedhika Parva** - After the coronation of King Yudhishtira in the Anushasana Parva Yudhishtira along with his brother performs the supreme *Ashwamedha Yagna*<sup>1</sup> and following the yagna Arjuna is believed to have conquered the whole world, the Parva holds great significance as it is embedded with Anugita (continuation of Bhagavad Gita) which delivered by Sri Krishna to Arjuna.

15. **Ahramvasika Parva-** Nothing in this world is permanent and the 15th Parva is testimony to that. The demise of Vidura was followed by the demise of other Royal family members like Dhritrashtra, Gandhari and Kunti in a forest fire. The wise Sanjaya seeks hermitage in the greater Himalayas, thus ending the presence and influence of an entire generation in the epic.

16. **Mausala Parva-** The Parva can be considered more of geographical aftermath in which the Yadava clan is eradicated forever after the infight of the clan using Mausala (maces). The Parva is significant as the sorrowful demise of Balram and Sri Krishna is mentioned along with the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ashwamedha Yagna* - An ashwamedha yagna was a ceremony conducted by powerful kings to further acquire new territories. A horse was sent with the armies of the kingdom and wherever the horse would go, the area would come under the king. If there was any opposition, then the army would win the land over.

drowning of Dwaraka. The events in the Parva leave a major impact on Arjuna as he not only loses his friend, but also a mentor.

17. **Mahaprasthanika Parva** - After ruling for 36 years, Yudhistira and his brother decide to follow Dharma and proceed to the Vanaprastha stage of life as Vedas. Yudhistira after crowning his grandson Parikshit as the new king under the care of Yuyutsu leaves the palace. The Pandavas after touring the entire kingdom go to the Himalayas where one after another all fall except Yudhishtira.

18. **Svargarohana Parva**- In this final Parva of the great epic, Yudhistira on reaching *Swargaloka* (heaven) is tested by Lord Indra (regarded as the King of the *devas* or gods). Yudhistira is deeply affected by seeing his loved ones serving sentence in hell while the Kaurav and other sinners enjoy in heaven, after which he requests Indra to send him to hell. Seeing this Indra informs Yudhishtir that the entire act was a test for testing his righteousness and that he had passed it and his loved ones were enjoying in Indraloka and were not in hell.

**Harivamsa**- The Harivamsa is a supplement to Mahabharata and is further divided into Parvas. The scripture deals with aspects before Mahabharata including how the cosmos was formed, discussions involving the lineages of the solar and Lunar dynasty kings till the time of Sri Krishna's birth and also covers certain future aspects like the Kaliyuga.

## **Dharma**

Dharma is the central theme of Mahabharata. Dharma has not been a very clear concept in most of the holy scriptures but as one goes through multiple manuscripts, the mythological tales try to explain Dharma with examples where it is the duty of the mighty to protect the weak or instances where empathy takes over the acts of violence. Many confuse dharma with justice which is entirely true. Dharma can be considered to be moral codes and laws that one must abide by in order to ensure there peace, harmony and justice in their personal life as well as in the society they are a part of.

## **RESEARCH LINKS**

*(Note: Delegates, some of the links are only meant for light reading and thus are not highlighted, only refer to the highlighted sources as valid proof as others may or may not be accepted as a source of proof in the Council. The decision of the Presiding Officer in regard to the acceptable sources is Final and Binding. )*

1. <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/veda-vyasa-the-sage-who-compiled-the-vedas>
2. <https://iskconeducationalervices.org/HoH/tradition/doctrine-and-scripture/smriti-the-mahabharata/>
3. <https://www.indiaforums.com/forum/topic/988922#:~:text=Ambalika%20%>
4. <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/mahabharat-dice-game>
5. <https://www.exoticindiaart.com/article/ganges/>
6. <https://www.worldhistory.org/Pandavas/>
7. <https://glorioushinduism.com/2018/01/29/matsya-kingdom/>
8. <https://glorioushinduism.com/2016/05/11/kuru-kingdom/>
9. <https://vedicfeed.com/draupadi-facts/>
10. [https://books.google.co.in/books?id=56QvEAAAQBAJ&dq=dasharaja+mahabharata&pg=PA33&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=dasharaja%20mahabharata&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=56QvEAAAQBAJ&dq=dasharaja+mahabharata&pg=PA33&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=dasharaja%20mahabharata&f=false)
11. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/2020/08/01/sanskrit-shlokas/mahabharata/>
12. <https://vedicfeed.com/virata-parva-mahabharata/>
13. <https://www.amarchitrakatha.com/mythologies/arjuna-gandiva/>
14. <http://mahabharatm.blogspot.com/2010/05/18-parvas.html>
15. <https://indusscrolls.com/was-duryodhana-a-hero>
16. <https://navbharattimes.indiatimes.com/astro/spirituality/motivational-stories/what-draupadi-s-aid-during-banwas/articleshow/91120055.cms>
17. <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/mahabharat-ep40-pandavas-go-incognito>
18. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/2020/08/02/mahabharata-resources/mahabharata/>
19. <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/karna>
20. <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/compilation/puranic-encyclopaedia/d/doc241570.html>

21. <https://glorioushinduism.com/2016/05/16/hastinapura/>
22. <https://www.speakingtree.in/allslides/draupti-s-molestation-and-insult-stories-in-mahabharat>
23. <https://www.hindu-blog.com/2014/08/story-of-brihannala-eunuch-form-arjuna.html>
24. <https://www.hindutsav.com/dronacharya/>
25. <https://www.hindu-blog.com/2013/05/kichaka-vadham-story-of-kichaka-in.html>
26. <https://www.speakingtree.in/allslides/what-happened-with-pandava-in-agyaat-vaas>
27. <https://www.timesnownews.com/spiritual/religion/article/>
28. <https://www.iskconbangalore.org/bhagavad-gita/>
29. <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/mahabharat-ep39-yudhishtira-answers-yaksh-as-questions>
30. <https://www.timesnownews.com/spiritual/religion/article/interested-in-the-mahabharata-know-how-the-pandavas-died/575675>

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