

INDIAN MYTHOLOGY & HISTORY

MAHABHARATA

IS IT HISTORICAL?

- Most likely YES.
- Not necessarily in all its details, but, very likely in its substance. There likely was a major war in North India that contained armies from various parts of North India, fighting on one of the two sides.
- Some say that there is archaeological evidence for Hastinapur city in about 900 BC (i.e. 400 years before Buddha & Mahavira).
- But, Puranas attribute longer rulership periods for dynasties before Buddha/Mahavira and Aryabhatta (an accomplished astronomer), who was born about 1500 years back, estimated it to be 3600 years before his time.

TIMELINE

	-3000 BCE	-2500 BCE	-2000 BCE	-1500 BCE	-1000 BCE	-500 BCE	0 CE	500 CE	1000 CE	1500 CE	2000 CE
	5000 ya	4500 ya	4000 ya	3500 ya	3000 ya	2500 ya	2000 ya	1500 ya	1000 ya	500 ya	now
India	★ Indus Valley Civilization		★ Gangetic Valley Vedic Civilization				Jainism/ Buddhism Mouryas	Satavahans/ Sakas/ Hunas	Guptas/ Adi Sankara	Muslim Invasion	Mughals/ Marathas/ British/ Independent India
Mesopotamia	Mesopotamian						Parthian	Romans	Islamic		
Egypt	Egyptian					Greek	Byzantine		Islamic		
Europe		Greek				Greeks / Romans	Romans	Byzantine / Romans / Dark Ages		Renaissance / Colonization / Industrial Revolution / World Wars	
Persia		Ancient Persian				Persian			Islamic		
China			Ancient China			Imperial China					Ming, Qing, Communists
Americas		Mayan				Aztecs & Incas					Europeans

BRONZE AGE

IRON AGE

INTRODUCTION

- The Mahabharata is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India.
- The authorship of the Mahabharata is attributed to the great sage Veda Vyasa (Krishna Dvaipayana)
- Longest epic of the world
- One hundred thousand verses, long prose passages, or about 1.8 million words in total
- Roughly ten times the length of the Iliad and Odyssey combined or about four times the length of the Ramayana.
- Called Mahabharata due to the immense size and its dealing with the story of the people of the race descended from the ancient emperor Bharata.

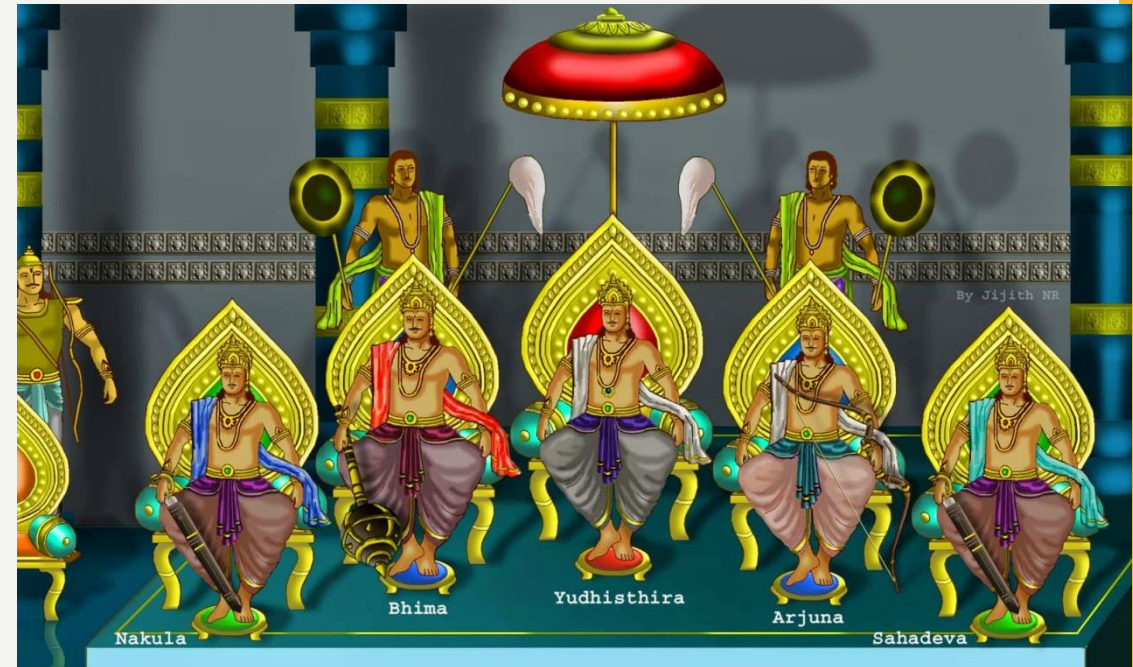
SHANTANU AND HIS DESCENDANTS

- Shantanu, king of Hastinapura, was married to the beautiful Ganga, who was the river goddess in disguise.
- Bhishma - 8th son left
- Shantanu married again with Satyawati and Bhishma took a vow to be subservient to descendants of Satyawati.
- First grand child was born blind, Dhritarashtra.
- 2nd grand child was pale-skinned, Pandu.



BIRTH OF PANDAVAS & KAURAVAS

- Pandu, even though younger, is made the king, as Dhritarashtra is blind
- Pandu shot a gazelle of a brahmin, so he cursed him
- Kunti - Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna
- Madri - Nakula and Sahadeva (Pandavas)
- After Pandu died, Dhritarashtra became king, despite his blindness.
- Gave birth to a ball of flesh, became a parent of 100 sons. (Kauravas)
- Duryodhana first son of Kauravas brought hate



MARRIAGE WITH DRAUPADI

- Because of jealousy, Duryodhana planned to kill the Pandavas by sending them to a wax palace and burning it down.
- Pandavas escaped then lived in forest.
- Pandavas attended swayamvara of Draupadi. Arjuna won Draupadi as “prize”.
- Kunti told Arjuna to share his prize to his brothers without seeing first Draupadi. Then, five brothers married Draupadi.
- Now, with a Drupad’s support, Pandava asked for a partition of the kingdom from Dhritarashtra.
- As tension between families mounts, Krishna made his appearance to intervene.



INDRAPRASTHA & DICE GAME

- To avert war, Krishna advised King Dhritarashtra to give the half of the kingdom to Pandavas
- Yudhisthira accepted.
- Indraprastha new kingdom led by Yudhisthira. Duryodhana felt jealous.
- Pandavas lost a dice game in which they lost everything, including Draupadi.
- Duryodhana tries to misbehave with Draupadi, but Krishna rescued her.
- She swore that one day, her insult would be avenged.
- Pandavas were condemned to spend 12 years of exile in forest and a 13th year in an unknown place to disguise.



WAR SIGNS

- Arjuna aimed to the highest mountains to look for celestial weapons, and Shiva gave him weapons.
- Meanwhile Duryodhana launched an attack on Virata's kingdom. Then lost to Arjuna.
- Duryodhana refused to give his cousins back their kingdom
- War was imminent
- Krishna offered Arjuna first choice: either he can have all of Krishna's armies, or he can have Krishna alone.
- Arjuna chose Krishna.
- When Arjuna asked him to drive his chariot, Krishna accepted.



WAR PREPARATIONS

- Krishna pleaded with Dhritarashtra one last time to restore to the Pandavas their rightful kingdom.
- Convinced by Duryodhana, not to. “I can sacrifice my life, my wealth, my kingdom, my everything, but I can never live in peace with the Pandavas.”
- Then began the war at Kurukshetra (in Haryana), when Duryodhana refused to give back the Pandavas Kingdom.
- They set some rules but were eventually broken.
- Arjuna got cold feet just before the war. Arjuna was worried about killing his own cousins and grand father for just power & wealth. He informed Krishna of his intention to retreat from war.



BHAGWAD-GEETA

Krishna advised Arjuna that:

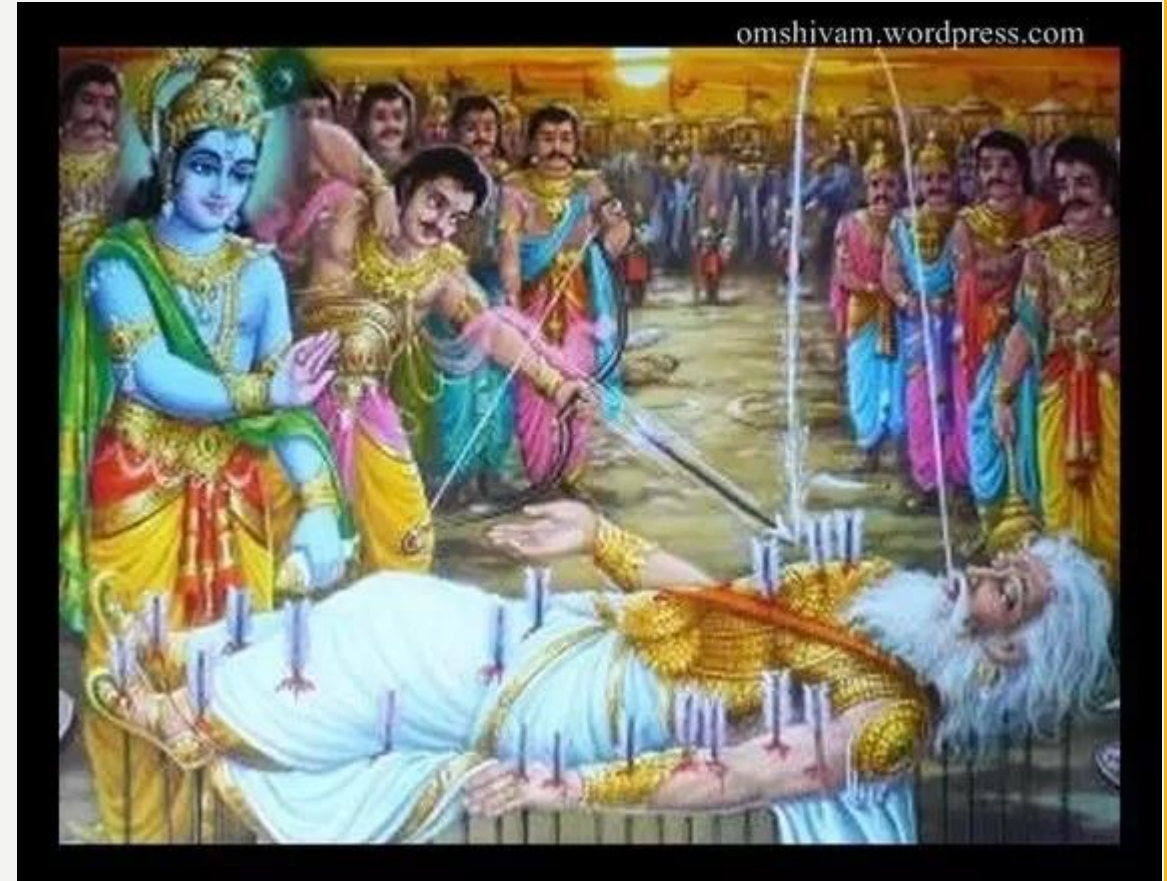
- Human's have a Soul (Atma) which is indestructible. When a human dies, the body perishes, but, the Atma does not perish. Just as you change clothes, the Atma moves to another body.
- It is a human's duty to do karma. You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work.
- Whatever happened, happened for the good. Whatever is happening, is happening for the good. Whatever will happen, will also happen for the good.
- Believe in God - There is a Supreme Power keeping a watch on everyone and anyone who misbehaves will be punished by the Supreme Power above.

Finally, Krishna then reveals his divine, universal nature to Arjuna in a magnificent vision of a multitude of gods, stretching out to infinity.



WAR STARTS – BHISHMA'S GLORY

- Having resolved now to perform his duty to his lord, Arjuna led his troops into battle.
- On the first day, Bhishma led the Kauravas army to enter the battle and he won the battle for first 9 days as no one could fight with Bhishma, because he was blessed with the power to choose his time of death.
- Shikhandi was put into war by Krishna. Bhishma refused to fight a woman, as Shikhandi was a transsexual and was the reincarnation of Amba, who had cursed Bhishma.
- Arjuna shot many arrows that went through Bhishma's limbs making him immobile.



WAR CONTINUES - DRONA

- Drona, the teacher of all royal cousins, fought as the next general of the Kaurava army. He was able to keep Pandava army at bay for 4 days. Krishna came up with a way to defeat him.
- Bheema killed Ashvatthama, an elephant, but, spreaded a rumor that Ashvatthama (the son of Drona) was dead. When Drona heard it, he couldn't believe it.
- He asked Yudhishtir, the eldest Pandava with a reputation of being always truthful., to tell him if Ashvatthama is dead.
- As soon the Yudhisthir finished speaking the first part of the sentence – “Yes, Ashvatthama is dead”, on Krishna's instructions, many musical instruments created noise, in which the second part of the sentence “not the human, but, the animal” was drowned in the noise.
- Drona did not hear it and gave up his arms. A soldier kills him.



WAR CONTINUES - KARNA

- Karna was a son of Kunti, with Sun (as father), and was born before her marriage to Pandu .Thus he was the eldest brother of all Pandava.
- Since Karna was raised by lower caste parents, he was rejected by many, in spite of his archery skills. Duryodhana took him under his wings and gave him the respect.
- Before the war, Krishna and Kunti tried to lure Karna to defect and join Pandavas, but, he refused.
- He became the 3rd commander of Kaurava army. He matched Arjuna in valor but lost his life at the end as the wheel of his chariot got stuck in the mud, and Arjuna shot him dead, even though it was against the rules, on advice of Krishna.



WAR ENDS – DURYODHAN IS DEFEATED

- Finally Duryodhan was only one of the few Kauravas left and was ready to surrender, but, Yudhisthir asked him to pick a Pandava to fight with and a mace fight ensued with Bheema. Krishna told Bheema to attack his thighs and Bheema was able to injure Duryodhana.
- This was against the rules of the War and Duryodhan bemoaned that he was slain by unfair means.
- The war was over.



BHEESHMA'S DEATH

- Bhishma gave a lot of knowledge to Yudhishtira on how to rule on his death bed and expired once Sun started it's journey northward.

