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**FEMALE CHARACTERS FROM THE
MAHABHARATA**

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~ Dibyajyoti Mishra

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Female Characters:

1. Draupadi:

Draupadi, also referred as **Panchali** and **Yajnaseni**, is the tragic heroine, one of the central characters and the common wife of the Pandavas in the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. She is described to be the most beautiful woman of her time and was prophesied to bring a major change in the future.

Draupadi and her brother, Dhrishtadyumna, were born from a *yajna* organized by King Drupada of Panchala. Arjuna, one of the five Pandava, won her hand in marriage, but she married the five brothers because of her mother-in-law's misunderstanding. After facing problems created by her polyandry, she became the empress of Indraprastha. She had five sons, one from each Pandava, who were collectively addressed as the Upapandavas. After Yudhishtira, the emperor of Indraprastha, performed the Rajasuya, he was invited to play a gambling game in Hastinapura. After he lost Draupadi in the game, she was humiliated by the Kauravas, Shakuni and Karna. When Dushasana tried to disrobe her, Krishna saved her.

Later she and her husbands were sent on exile for 13 years with the last year being an incognito. While spending the exile, Jayadratha tried to kidnap and molest her. For incognito, Draupadi disguised herself as a maid and served Sudeshna, queen of Matsya. Kichaka, the general of the kingdom, tried to molest her, but was killed by Bhima. After the Kurukshetra War, the revenge for her humiliation was taken, but she lost her father, brothers and her five children. At the end of the epic, Pandavas and Draupadi retired to Himalayas and walked to heaven. Because of her partiality towards Arjuna, Draupadi was the first one to fall on the way.

Draupadi's story has been an inspiration for various arts and performances. In Literature, there are many books based on her life. In Hinduism, she is extolled as one of the *panchakanya* ("five virgins"), archetypes of female chastity whose names are believed to dispel sin when recited. In some parts of the sub-continent, Draupadi is not only regarded as a powerful lady, but a goddess too.

According to the epic Mahābhārata, Bareilly region (Panchala; in present – day Uttar Pradesh and nearby regions) is said to be the birthplace of Draupadi who was also referred to as 'Panchali'.

King Drupada of Panchala (Capital Kampilya) had been defeated by the Pandava prince Arjuna on behalf of Drona, who subsequently took half his kingdom. To gain revenge on Drona, he performed a *yajña* called Putrakameshti *yajna* to obtain a means of blessing him. Draupadi emerged as a beautiful full grown young woman from the sacrificial fire after her sibling Dhrishtadyumna. When she emerged from the fire, a heavenly voice said that she would bring about a big change in the future of dharma of Bharat varsha. Draupadi is described to be the most beautiful

woman of Dvapada Yuga with dark complexion, lotus eyes, beautiful convex nails, dark curly hair and an enchanting fragrance like that of a blue lotus.

Drupada intended to wed his daughter to Arjuna. Upon hearing of the Pandavas' supposed death at Varnavata, he set up a Swayamvara contest for Draupadi to choose her husband from the competitive contest. The test was to lift and string a bow, and fire arrows to pierce the eye of a golden fish only by looking at its reflection in the water. At the Swayamvara, almost all the assorted monarchs were unable to complete the challenge. There are some variations regarding Karna's participation. Some renditions show Draupadi refusing to marry Karna on account of being a Suta, while many other versions describe him failing to string the bow by the "breadth of a hair". Yet other versions state that he managed to string the bow but one side of the bow hit the side of his head. Injured and humiliated, he was forced to forfeit.

In the end, Arjuna succeeds in the task, dressed as a Brahmin. The other attendees, including the Kauravas and Karna protest at a Brahmin winning the competition and attack Draupadi and Arjuna. Arjuna and Bhima together protect Draupadi by defeating all attendees and are able to retreat. Arjuna, along with Draupadi and his brothers, runs home to tell Kunti of his success, shouting "look what we have found". Kunti thought he was referring to alms found in the forest or to some great prize unknown to her. She tells Arjuna that the find must be shared with his brothers, as they had always shared such things in the past. This misunderstanding, combined with a motherly command, leads to an agreement that all five brothers marry her. This is one of the rare examples of polyandry in Sanskrit literature. The brothers agreed that none should intrude if Draupadi was alone with one of the others, the penalty for doing so being a year to be spent in exile. A year was allotted to each Pandava and during that year only that Pandava could enter Draupadi's private chambers.

Later Draupadi becomes a mother of five sons, one son each from the Pandava brothers. They were known as Upapandavas. Their names were Prativindhya (from Yudhishtira), Sutasoma (from Bheema), Shrutakarma (from Arjuna), Satanika (from Nakula) and Shrutasena (from Sahadeva). Ashwatthama killed the Upapandavas during his surprise raid on Pandava camp on the eighteenth day of the war to avenge the death of his father Drona.

Together with his maternal uncle Shakuni, Duryodhana conspired to call on the Pandavas to Hastinapur and win their kingdoms in a game of gambling. There is famous folklore that the plan's architect, Shakuni had magic dice that would never disobey his will, as they were made from the bones of Shakuni's father. This story, however, is non-existent in the Sanskrit epic. As the game proceeds, Yudhishtira loses everything at first. In the second round, Yudhishtira's brother Nakula is at stake, and Yudhishtira loses him. Yudhishtira subsequently gambles away Sahadeva, Arjuna and Bhima. Finally, Yudhishtira puts himself at stake, and loses again. For Duryodhana, the humiliation of the Pandavas was not complete. He prods Yudhishtira that he has not lost everything yet; Yudhishtira still has Draupadi with him and if he wishes he can win everything back by putting Draupadi at stake. Inebriated by the game, Yudhishtira, to the horror of everybody present, puts Draupadi up as a bet for the next round. Playing the next round, Shakuni wins. Draupadi was horrified after hearing that she was staked in the

game and now is a slave for Duryodhana. Draupadi questions Yudhishtira's right on her as he had lost himself first and she was still the queen. Duryodhana, angry with Draupadi's questions, commands his younger brother Dushasana to bring her into the court, forcefully if he must.

Dushasana drags Draupadi to the court by the hair. Seeing this, Bhima pledges to cut off Dushasana's hands, as they touched Draupadi's hair. Now in an emotional appeal to the elders present in the forum, Draupadi repeatedly questions the legality of the right of Yudhishtira to place her at stake.

In order to provoke the Pandavas further, Duryodhana bares and pats his thigh looking into Draupadi's eyes, implying that she should sit on his thigh. The enraged Bhima vows in front of the entire assembly that he would break Duryodhana's thighs, or else accept being Duryodhana's slave for seven lifetimes. At this time Vikarna, a brother of Duryodhana asks the kings assembled in the court to answer the question of Draupadi. He gives his opinion that Draupadi is not won rightfully as Yudhishtira lost himself first before staking her. Besides, no one has the right to put a woman on bet according to shastras; not a husband, father, or even the gods. Hearing these words, Karna gets angry and says that when Yudhishtira lost all his possession he also lost Draupadi, even specifically staking her. Karna calls Draupadi a "whore" for being the wedded wife of five men, adding that dragging her to court is not surprising act whether she be attired or naked. He orders Dushasana to remove the garments of Draupadi. After her husbands fail to assist her, Draupadi prays to Krishna to protect her. Dushasana attempts to disrobe her, but she is miraculously protected by Krishna, and Dushasana finds that as he continues to unwrap the layers of her sari, the amount of fabric covering her never lessens. Dushasana is eventually reduced to exhaustion, as the awed court observes that Draupadi is still chastely dressed. At this point, a furious Bhima vows to drink blood from Dushasana's chest, at the pain of not seeing his ancestors/entering heaven. This vow unsettles the entire court.

The only Kauravas who object to the disrobing of Draupadi in the court are Vikarna and Yuyutsu. Vidura openly calls Duryodhana a snake and demon after finding no support even from his own brother, Vidura is helpless. Karna further orders Dushasana to take Draupadi to the servants' quarters and derisively asks her to choose another husband who unlike Yudhistira would not gamble her away. Just then, jackals call out as a mark of evil omen. Queen Gandhari enters the scene and counsels Dhritarashtra to undo her sons' misdeeds. Fearing the ill-omens, Dhritarashtra intervenes and grants Draupadi a boon. Draupadi asks that her husband Yudisthir be freed from bondage so her son Prativindhya would not be called a slave. In order to pacify her further, Dhritarashtra offers a second boon. Calmly, she asks for the freedom of the Pandavas along with their weapons. When Dhritarashtra asks her for her third wish, she reminds him that a Kshatriya woman can seek only two wishes, three would be a sign of greed. Dhritarashtra gives them back their wealth and grants them permission to go home.

Amused by the sudden turn of events, Karna remarks that they "have never heard of such an act, performed by any of the women noted in this world for their beauty." He taunts the Pandavas by praising their wife, as she had rescued them "like a boat from their ocean of distress".

Having restored their pride and wealth, the Pandavas and Draupadi leave for Indraprastha, only to receive another invitation for a game of dice, in which the loser would be given an exile of 12 years followed by a year of Agnathavas, meaning "living in incognito". Yudhishtira yet again accepts the invitation and loses, and goes on an exile with his brothers and wife Draupadi.



2. Kunti:

Kunti is one of the most important female protagonists of the epic, *Mahabharata*. She is best known as the mother of the Pandavas, the main protagonists of the epic, and the warrior Karna, who was abandoned by her. She is also mentioned in the *Bhagavata Purana* because of her connection with Krishna, the main figure of the text. It is described that she was very beautiful and intelligent.

The *Adi Parva* of *Mahabharata* is one of the first texts to mention her. Pritha, daughter of Shurasena, was adopted by her childless uncle, Kuntibhoja and was renamed as '*Kunti*'. During her teenage years, she impressed sage Durvasa and was blessed with a divine *mantra*. Out of curiosity, the young lady used the mantra to invoke Surya and was blessed with a son named Karna. As he was born out of wedlock, Kunti had to abandon him to save herself from society.

After reaching maturity, she chose Pandu, the king of Kuru, as her husband, but her married life was disturbed when Madri, princess of Madra, became Pandu's second wife.[3] One day, Pandu was cursed to die if he tried to embrace any woman. This made him abandon his kingdom and live in a forest with his two wives. Kunti, upon her husband's request, used her mantra and was blessed with three children -

Yudhishtira, Bhima and Arjuna. Later she shared her mantra with Madri, who was blessed with Nakula and Sahadeva. Pandu and Madri died early, so Kunti adopted her stepsons and took her children to Hastinapura, the capital of Kuru.

Along with the Pandavas, Kunti survived the Lakshagriha and during their hiding, she ordered Bhima to marry Hidimbi, a *Rakshasi*. Because of Kunti's misunderstanding, Draupadi, princess of Panchala, was married to the five Pandavas. After *Indraprastha* was established, Kunti stayed in Hastinapura and had an affectionate relationship with her sister in law, Gandhari. Before the Kurukshetra War, Kunti met Karna and asked him to join the Pandava side, but upon his refusal, she convinced him to spare five out of her six children. After the Yudhishtira became the emperor of the Kuru, she retired to the forest and died.

In Hinduism, she is extolled as one of the *panchakanya* ("five virgins"), archetypes of female chastity whose names are believed to dispel sin when recited. While many praise her as a mature, foresighted and affectionate lady, some believe her to be calculative and shrewd.

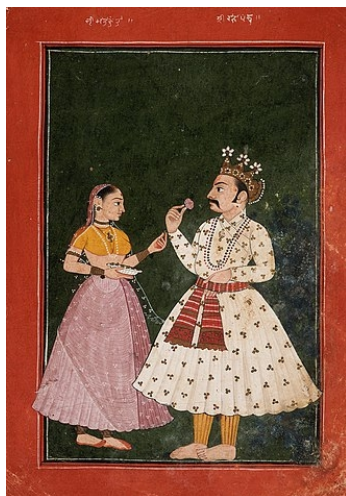
Kunti was the biological daughter of Shurasena, a Yadava chief. Her birth name was *Pritha*. She is also said as the reincarnation of the goddess Siddhi. She was the sister of Vasudeva, the father of Krishna and shared a close relationship with Krishna. Her father gave **Kunti** to his childless cousin Kuntibhoja.[4] Once Rishi Durvasa visited Kuntibhoja. Being extremely pleased by the all comforts, patience, and devotion offered by Kunti, he offered her a mantra that would invoke any god of her choice and he would bless her with children. Out of impetuous curiosity, Kunti invoked the god Surya. Bound by the power of the mantra, Surya blessed her with a child. To her surprise, the child was born with his sacred armour on. Out of fear of the public and with no choice, Kunti put the child in a basket and set him afloat the Ganga river. He later became famous as Karna.

Kuntibhoja organized Kunti's swayamvara. Kunti chose King Pandu of Hastinapur, making her the Queen of Hastinapur. Soon after, during his mission to expand his empire, Pandu, on Bhishma's proposal, married Madri, a princess of Madra in order to secure the vassalage of Madra. Madri was of the view that Kunti was inferior by birth to her because Yadavas were cattle herders while she was a princess. Kunti was disturbed by her husband's actions, but eventually reconciled with him. Pandu, while hunting in a forest, mistakenly shot and killed Rishi Kindama and his wife as they had taken the form of deer to mate. The dying sage then cursed him to die if he tries to make love with his wife. Pandu renounced the kingdom and went into exile with Kunti and Madri.

Pandu could not make love with his wives due to the curse by sage Kindama. A remorseful Pandu renounced the kingdom and went into exile with Kunti and Madri. He met some sages and asked them away for heaven and salvation. They said, without children, one can never aspire for heaven. When Pandu expressed to Kunti his despair at the prospect of dying childless, she mentioned the boon granted to her. He happily advised her to beget children by suitable, illustrious men. Thus, Kunti used the boon granted to her by Sage Durvasa (which she had used to bear Karna) to bear three sons—Yudhishtira by Dharmaraja - god of Justice; Bhima by Vayu - god of wind, and Arjuna by Indra - the king of Svarga (Heaven). She also invoked Ashvins for Madri on her behest and Madri gave birth to twin sons, Nakula and Sahadeva.

One day, Pandu, forgetting his curse, attempted to make love with his wife Madri. But, as a result of Kindama's curse, he died. Madri committed suicide out of remorse that caused her husband's death. Kunti was left helpless in the forest with her children.

After the death of Pandu and Madri, Kunti took care of all five Pandava children taking them back to Hastinapur. Dhritrashtra's sons never liked them. During their childhood, Duryodhana poisoned and tried to kill Bhima but he was saved. Kunti was hurt by this but was consoled by Vidura. Later the Kuru Princes were sent for training to Drona.



3. Gandhari:

Gandhari is a prominent character in the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. She was a princess of Gandhara and the wife of Dhritrashtra, the blind king of Hastinapura, and the mother of a hundred sons and a daughter, the Kauravas.

Gandhari was born on to Subala, the king of Gandhara. As a maiden, Gandhari is noted for her piety and virtuous nature. Gandhari is regarded as an incarnation of Mati. She was sister of Shakuni.

During her maiden days, she is said to have impressed Lord Shiva through penance and received a boon to bear 100 children. However, the reason for her penance and her receiving such boon is unknown. One of the main reasons of Bhishma choosing Gandhari to be the elder daughter-in-law of the Kuru kingdom is said to be this boon, which would put an end to his worry of the throne remaining vacant.

Gandhari's marriage was arranged to Dhritrashtra, the eldest prince of the Kuru kingdom, a region in Delhi and Haryana region.

The *Mahabharata* depicted her as a beautiful and virtuous woman and a very dedicated wife. Their marriage was arranged by Bhishma. When she found out that her would-be husband was born blind, she decided to blindfold herself in order to be like her husband. What went through the young girl's mind when she found out that she was to marry a blind man is not depicted in the epic. Popular narration said that the act of blindfolding herself was a sign of dedication and love. On the contrary, Irawati Karve and many modern scholars debated that the act of blindfolding was an act of protest against Bhishma, as he intimidated her father into giving away her hand in marriage to the blind prince of Hastinapur.

The Mahabharata depicts her marriage as a major reason for the story's central conflict. Her brother, Shakuni, was enraged that Hastinapur, already having humiliated Gandhar in a war of conquest where all of Shakuni's brothers were killed, would offer for his prized sister a blind man. Shakuni swore to destroy the Kuru dynasty and played an instrumental role in fueling the flames of conflict between the cousins.

Her husband Dhritrashtra was denied throne because of his blindness despite being eldest son, the throne goes to Pandu, younger brother of Dhritrashtra. After being cursed by Sage Kindama, Pandu renounced kingdom in order to repent. After that her husband become uncrowned King of Hastinapur and she become de facto Queen.

Once Veda Vyasa came to Gandhari's palace with exhaust. After receiving her service. Impressed with Gandhari's hospitality and Vyasa gives her a boon which she desired that "she should have century of sons each equal unto her lord in strength and accomplishments". She becomes pregnant but carries the child for an unusually long period of two years. Later, when she hears that Kunti (queen of king Pandu, younger brother of Dhritrashtra) has given birth to the eldest of the Pandavas, she stuck on her stomach in frustration only to result in the birth of a "hard mass of flesh" like "iron ball" and not her sons.

When she was going to throw away the mass of flesh, Veda Vyasa arrived knowing every occurrence with his spiritual power. Before Vyasa, she admits her jealousy of Kunti and complains about the boon he has given to her. Veda Vyasa assures her that he has never spoken "untruth" and ordered asked to "hundred pots full of clarified butter be brought instantly, and let them be placed at a concealed spot. In the meantime, let cool water be sprinkled over this ball of flesh". During this process, Gandhari professed her wish of having a daughter to the ascetic; the daughter who would be youngest of her all children. Then Vyasa" brought another pot full of clarified butter, and put the part intended for a daughter into it." These flash "sprinkled over with water" developed and divided into a hundred and one parts; from which after two years, her hundred sons and only daughter were born in a month.

After the birth of her first son Duryodhana, many ill omen occur including, the child "began to cry and bray like an ass." caused "violent winds" and "fires in various directions". A frightened Dhritarashtra summoned Vidura, Bhishma and all other Kurus and countless Brahmanas regarding his first born's possibility of succession to the throne. Observing ill omens Vidura and other Brahmanas suggested the king to forsake his first born as the child might cause destruction to the Kuru clan, but out of paternal love for his first child he ignored the advice.



4. Hidimbī:

Hiḍimbī is the wife of the Pandava Bhīma and mother of great warrior Veer Ghatotkacha in the *Mahābhārata*. She meets Bhīma in the 9th sub-parva (Hidimva-vadha Parva) of the Adi Parva. She is also referred to as **Bhuṭanadevī** or **Pallavī**.

The story begins in the Lākṣāgrha of the Mahābhārata after the Pāṇḍavās reached a dense forest. Exhausted from their travels, they all fell asleep at night, except for Bhīma who kept watch.

In the same forest lived Hiḍimbī and her brother Hiḍimbā, a very powerful rakshasa. He smelled the Pāṇḍavās at a distance and as usual asked the goddess Hiḍimbī to lure the well-built Bhīma into a trap so he could eat him. Hiḍimbī confronted Bhīma and instead fell in love with him. She assumed the form of a very beautiful lady and approached Bhīma, expressing her desire to marry him by revealing her true identity, as well as her brother's intentions. Bhīma confronted Hiḍimbā but was soon overpowered. It was only with the supernatural powers of Hiḍimbī, supporting Bhīma from a distance, that he could overcome and slay Hiḍimbā. Kuntī and other Pāṇḍavās all watched the duel from a distance.

After killing Hiḍimba, Bhīma married Hiḍimbī. Bhīma decided to live with her till a child was born. Hiḍimbī agreed and they married. Within a year, Hiḍimbī gave birth to a son. They named him Ghaṭotkaca as his head resembled a pot. Ghaṭotkaca went on to become a great warrior and an important figure in the Mahābhārata war.



5. *Shikandi*:

Shikhandi is a character in the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. He was born a baby girl, named Shikandini, to Drupada, the king of Panchala. Shikhandi fought in the Kurukshetra war for the Pandavas along with his father Drupada and brother Dhristadyumna.

Shikhandi had been born in a previous life as a woman named Amba. Amba was the eldest daughter of the King of Kashi. Along with her sisters Ambika and Ambalika, she was taken from their Swayamvara by force by Bhishma, as punishment to the Kingdom of Kashi for not inviting Hastinapur nobility to the event. After defeating several kings, including Salwa, the King of Saubala, Bhishma absconded with the princesses and presented them for marriage to Vichitravirya, the crown prince of Hastinapur.

Vichitravirya married only two sisters because Amba told Bhishma that she had fallen in love with the king of Salwa, and was not ready to marry anyone else. Hearing this from her, Bhishma sent Amba with grandeur to Saubala. But Salwa rejected her as well, in shame of losing the combat against Bhishma. Amba then returned to Bhishma and demanded that he marry her according to Kshatriya dharma, but Bhishma declined due to his vow of celibacy. Enraged at her humiliation, she tried to persuade other kings to wage a war with Bhishma and compel him to wed her. None agreed for they were afraid of incurring the wrath of the great warrior. Amba got Parashurama, Bhishma's guru, to champion her cause. However, not even Parashurama could defeat Bhishma.

According to the summary by C. Rajagopalachari, she resorted to penance and received a garland of blue lotuses from Lord Kartikeya and it was foretold that anyone wearing the garland would become the cause of Bhishma's death. She went to the Panchal, as they were a mighty empire known for its military prowess. However, no one was willing to champion her cause, fearful of antagonizing Bhishma. Amba, in anger, hung the garland on the gates of King Drupada and left in agony.

Amba did severe penance to Lord Shiva for a boon to cause Bhishma's death. Eventually, her prayers were answered. But, being a woman with no military training, she asked Shiva how she would accomplish her task, and he responded that her future incarnation would be the one to actually bring about Bhishma's demise. Eager to bring this about, Amba killed herself; in some versions of the story to explain the time gap between the abduction at Kashi and the Kurukshetra war, Amba keeps on killing herself until she is incarnated into a satisfactory situation. Amba was reborn as Shikhandini, the daughter of Drupada.

In early versions of the Mahabharata, Shikhandi is still Amba-reborn, but a straight female. Because Panchala doesn't practice gender discrimination, she is trained to become a warrior and fights in the Kurukshetra War (this being the original reason why Amba kills herself, again and again, wanting to be born to a culture that will allow her to fight Bhishma). In most versions of the story, Shikhandi is male but born female. When Shikhandini changes her sex, she becomes Shikhandi, but is a eunuch.[2] According to C. Rajagopalachari's Mahabharata, when Shikhandini was still living as a young woman she discovered the garland of ever-blooming blue

lotuses hung on the palace gate. Shikhandini put it around her neck. When Drupada saw his child wearing the garland, he became fearful of becoming Bhishma's enemy, and Shikhandini was banished from the kingdom. She performed austerities in the forest and was transformed into a male named Shikhandi.

In another version of the story, Drupada desires an heir and wanders the forest to settle his disquieted mind. He comes upon the toddler Shikhandini. When Drupada picks her up, a heavenly voice tells Drupada to raise her as a man. Drupada raised his daughter as a son and had Shikhandini married to a princess of Dasharna. She complained to her father, Hiranyavarna, that her husband was a woman. When the king sent people to check this fact, Shikhandini panicked and escaped into a forest, where she met a Yaksha who exchanged his sex with her. The Yaksha King sees the Yaksha as a girl and curses him that he will remain in the form till Shikhandi dies, keeping the sex-swap in place. In many versions of the story, the change results in Shikhandi being a eunuch; in others, it doesn't.

In some versions of the story, Amba is simply reborn as a male Shikhandi, sometimes whole and sometimes a eunuch. In even other versions, Shikhandi is a male but transgender, due to Shiva's boon that Amba will remember all the details of her past life. In the Ganguly translation of the Chatahurdī compilation, Shikhandi has a son whose name was Kshatradeva.

In the battle of Kurukshetra, Bhishma recognized him as Amba reborn, and not wanting to fight a "woman" (or an actual woman, depending on the version), avoided battling Shikhandi. On the tenth day, many warriors of Kaurava Army attacked and wounded Shikhandi and some stopped the Pandavas. Drona stopped Arjuna, Duryodhana stopped Bhima, Shalya stopped Yudhishtira, Vrikaasur stopped Nakula and Uluka stopped Sahadeva. Firstly, Ashwatthama attacked Shikhandi but Drupada took him, then Dussasana attacked Shikhandi but Dhrishtadyumna took him and at last Shakuni attacked and stabbed Shikhandi but Virata stopped him. Later, wounded Shikhandi rides in Arjuna's a chariot, and together, they face Bhishma, forcing him to lower his weapons. Knowing that this would happen, Arjuna hid behind Shikhandi and attacked Bhishma with a devastating volley of arrows. Thus, Shikhandi was instrumental in Bhishma's death.

Shikhandi was finally killed by Ashwatthama on the 18th day of battle, killed dazed and confused, Shikhandi is killed in a sword fight with Ashwatthama when Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, and Kritaverma attacked the Pandava camp on the night of the final day of battle.[10] In some versions of the Mahabharat, Ashwatthama kills Shikhandi's lover (male or female) in front of him; in other versions, it is Shikhandini's partner (male/female) who is butchered.



Learning Outcome

1. **Mahabharata** teaches us is that **learning** is a never-ending process. **We** should keep **learning** whatever comes in our way at any phase of life at any time. Pandavas and Kauravas started their **learning** from Guru Drona in Gurukul in their teenage and **learned** many skills.

2. Before the war, both the Pandavas and Kauravas had reached Dwarka to seek help from Yadavas. Krishna had clearly mentioned that he will not use weapons in this war. Duryodhana (from Kauravas) and Arjuna (from Pandavas) were asked to choose between Krishna (weapon-less) and powerful Narayani Sena (Krishna army). Arjuna had chosen Krishna and Duryodhana chose Narayani Sena considering that they are huge in numbers which will help him to win the Mahabharata war. But as the war progressed, it turned out to be a wrong decision for Duryodhana. Krishna, without even using weapons, led the Pandavas to the victory. So, it is always advisable to go for quality and not quantity.

Having a good and loyal friends/allies can help you win anywhere. Kauravas had extreme power and a prosperous kingdom – Hastinapura (greatest empire of the time). But Pandavas had no wealth, no power, and no kingdom. Before the Mahabharata battle, both sides reached out to various other kingdoms to have allies with them.

On one hand, Kauravas could manage a few allies from old relations like Gandhara (Shakuni), Sindhu (Jayadrath), and Shalya (by deceiving him). On the other hand, despite having nothing, Pandavas got many powerful allies – Panchala (through Marriage with Draupadi), Dwarka (through marriage with Arjuna and Subhadra), Matsya (through the marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara) and The Rakshasas (through the marriage of Bhima and Hidimba). It was the loyal networking power that helped Pandavas in Mahabharata yudh.

3. This is a very popular saying. In the Mahabharata also, we come across this example. Duryodhana was very adamant about killing Arjuna's son – Abhimanyu so Kauravas plotted the Chakravyuh (an invincible army formation which is deadly enough to finish the war in one day) to kill him in absence of Arjuna. Arjuna knew how to tackle the vyuh but he was not available in Kurukshetra as he had to go and fight with the army approaching Matsya kingdom (one of the Pandavas' allies). Abhimanyu only knew how to enter the Chakravyuha, but he didn't know how to come out of it. Had Abhimanyu not gone inside the vyuh, Kauravas had defeated the Pandavas army and won the battle. Hence, Abhimanyu decided to break the vyuh knowing that he will have to face the wrath of Kauravas Maharathis (likes of Karna, Guru Drona, Duryodhana, Ashwathama, Dushasana, and Shakuni) alone. His death at the hands of six great warriors was one of the more tragic and unrighteous acts committed in the Mahabharata war. He was brave and courageous which show his great character but half knowledge cost him his life.

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