

TITLE: CHARACTER SKETCH OF ANY 5 CHARACTERS FROM MAHABHARATA.

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ARJUNA

ABOUT:

Arjuna is the great hero of the Indian epic Mahabharata. His name means shining and relating to brightness. He is the son of the storm god Indra) and the third of the famous Pandavas, the five noble brothers who serve as the protagonists of the Mahabharata. Arjuna represents the best aspects of humanity:

- ✚ Courage, Strength, and Humility
- ✚ Intelligence and Wisdom
- ✚ Commitment to Truth and Justice
- ✚ Performance of Dharma with Karma.

Arjuna takes main in the role of the seeker-student to the god Krishna's role of teacher-guide. Arjuna initially refuses to take part in the Kurukshetra war until he is convinced that he must by Krishna who explains to him his duty to himself and others and the ultimate meaning and order of existence.

Family, Birth, & Character:

Dhritarashtra and Gandhari had 100 sons known as the Kauravas. The eldest of whom was the prince Duryodhana. Years passed and Kunti returned from the wilderness with five sons – **Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva** – as well as the corpses of Pandu and Madri. After funeral services were completed, the boys and their mother moved into the royal palace. The five Pandavas were all conceived through supernatural means. Pandu was unable to have sexual relations with a woman because of a curse placed on him, but Kunti had been granted a favor by the gods that she could call upon any deity at any time to conceive a child. **In Arjuna's case, this was the storm god Indra.**



The sons of Pandu and those of Dhritarashtra grew up together in the palace and were trained and educated by the same teachers. Drona was their teacher for military arts and weaponry and his school attracted the noble youths of other families including a young man named Karna of the Suta clan. Karna was actually the eldest of the Pandavas, Kunti's first son by the god Surya, but his family and lineage was unknown, even to him, until his hour of death.

Exile & Draupadi:

Duryodhana first attempt to rid himself of the five brothers was inspired by a fair in a village nearby. He suggested to his father that Kunti and her five sons should go, stay in a place prepared for them, and enjoy themselves. The Pandavas, meanwhile, began a life disguised as a Brahmin family who had become poor and moved from village to village. The brothers would go out during the day and beg for alms which they would bring back to Kunti who would divide the food between them all. One day, they learned of a festival taking place in the kingdom of Panchala to award the hand of the princess Draupadi in marriage and decided to attend.

Many suitors arrived to compete in the archery contest to win Draupadi. A pole was erected in a pool of water with a handmade fish-target revolving at the top. Each suitor was to raise and string a heavy bow and shoot an arrow into the eye of the fish but had to do so by looking down at its reflection in the pool. The suitors all failed one by one, but Arjuna was able to win easily as he was the greatest archer in the land.

The brothers had always done exactly what their mother told them to and so Draupadi became the wife of all five brothers who agreed each would have her exclusively for a year before she was passed to the next. The Pandavas' identity was revealed and a wedding celebration was held which included Dhritarashtra and his sons. Dhritarashtra divided his kingdom in half and gave a part to the Pandavas who quickly turned it into a lush paradise through their various exceptional skills.



BATTLE OF KURUKSHETRA & GITA:

The Pandavas have now fulfilled the terms of losing the dice game and demand their kingdom be returned. Duryodhana refuses, however, claiming he will give them nothing. Krishna intervenes and asks for just five cities, one for each brother, but this is also rejected. War is inevitable and both Arjuna and Duryodhana go to Krishna for assistance. Krishna says he will not fight for either side but will assist; each side may choose either Krishna himself alone or Krishna's army. Duryodhana chooses the army while Arjuna chooses only Krishna, claiming he needs nothing more. The two armies meet at Kurukshetra with Krishna serving as Arjuna's charioteer. Before the battle, Arjuna has Krishna drive him to a place between the two armies so he can look upon them and, when he does, he loses heart.

CONCLUSION:

Once Arjuna is convinced by Krishna's arguments, the terrible battle commences in which most of the participants are killed. After a struggle lasting 18 days, the Kauravas are defeated and destroyed as well as almost all of the army of the Pandavas. Yudhishtira and his brothers take back the kingdom and rule for 36 years until they decide to abdicate and leave the world for a life of peaceful reflection on the Divine in the mountains of the Himalayas. One by one they die until only Yudhishtira is left with his faithful dog and then they, too, enter paradise and are reunited with all who were thought to have been lost.





BHIMA

In the Mahabharata, Bhima was the second of the Pandava brothers. He was son of Kunti by Vayu, but like the other brothers, he was acknowledged son by Pandu. He was distinguished from his brothers by his great stature and strength.

His legendary prowess has been mentioned in glowing terms throughout the epic.

Eg: "Of all the wielders of the mace, there is none equal to Bhima; and there is none also who is so skillful a rider of elephants. On car, they say, he yields not to even Arjuna; and as to might of arms, he is equal to ten thousand elephants. Well-trained and active, he who hath again been rendered bitterly hostile, would in anger consume the Dhritarashtra in no time. Always wrathful, and strong of arms, he is not capable of being subdued in battle by even Indra himself."

He lived for a time in hiding with his brothers during their first exile. In this period, he came across Hidimba and Hidimbi, a rakshasha brother and sister. Because of the enmity of the rakshasha to the people of the Kuru kingdom, Hidimba asked Hidimbi to lure Bhima to a trap. However, Bhima and Hidimbi were attracted to each other. Bhima fought and killed Hidimba, and lived for a year in the forest with Hidimbi, by whom he had a son, Ghatotkacha.

With his brothers, he was married to Draupadi. After the first return of the Pandavas to the Kuru lands, he challenged the king of Magadha, Jarasandha, to a wrestling bout and killed him, thus making it possible for his brothers to take part in the Rajsuya Yajna.

He was furious when the game of dice between his brother, King Yudhishtira, and Duryodhana reached its final stages. But when Dushasana attempted to strip Draupadi in the court, he swore that he would kill him one day and drink his blood.

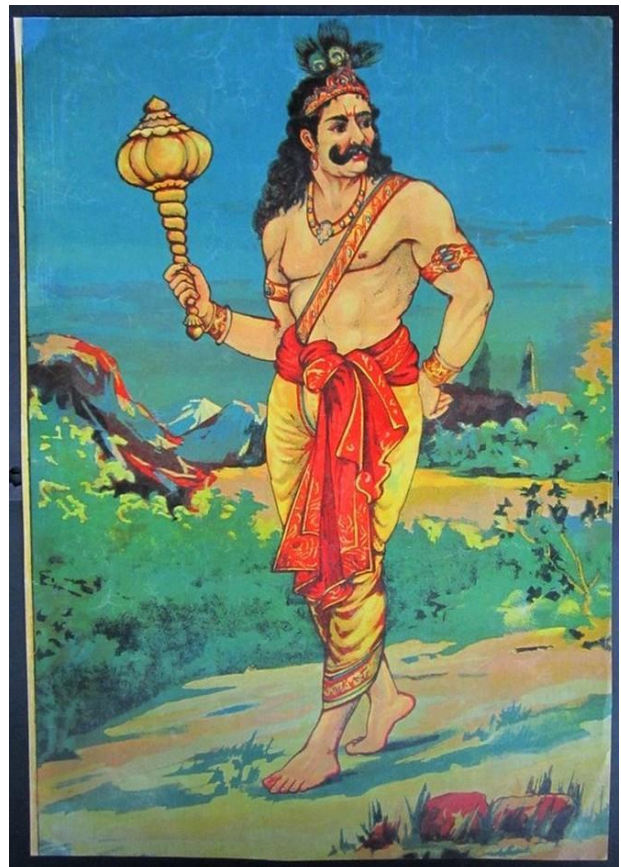
During the second exile of the Pandavas, he visited Alakapuri and was blessed by Kubera. At the end of their exile at the court of Virata, he disguised himself and acted as a palace cook.

He was a pivotal figure in the great battle of Kurukshetra, killing six out of the eleven akshauhinis of the other side (Kauravas). Six akshauhinis adds up to the astronomical figure of around 1,705,860 men and 787,320 beasts which is testimony to the portrayal as the character of supreme physical prowess. In the battle, his charioteer was Krishna's son himself. During a majority of the 18 days during which the battle was fought, the kauravas were frightened to face his might and sent elephants to fight him. An entire sub-chapter is devoted to describing the "light chat" or banter that he used to maintain with Krishna's son whilst fighting the enemies - yet another glimpse into the power that VedaVyasa invests in

Bhima's persona. Bhima's weapon of choice was the mace - which means he was skilled in close combat. Amongst the most important personalities that he quelled were Baka (head of a cannibalistic race), Kirmira (Baka's brother), MaNiman (leader of the anger-demons in Kubera's garden), Jarasandha, Dushasana etc. He also defeated mighty Dronacharya by breaking his chariot eight times while Arjuna was trying to find and kill Jayadratha, defeated and forced the powerful Karna to withdraw from battle in four pitched battles while Karna was trying to save the remaining brothers of Duryodhana. During the battle, he killed the elephant called Ashvatthama, which enabled the Pandavas to spread the falsehood that Ashvatthama son of Drona, had been killed. At the end of the battle, he also fatally wounded Duryodhana in a duel, after striking him a foul blow below the waist. At this time, Balarama criticized Bhima for the foul blow, but was calmed down by Krishna. Bhima refrained from killing any respectable elders in the Kauravas side out of respect for their virtue. The only elderly person he killed was the king of Bahlika (Bhishma's maternal uncle) - and he does this because the king of Bahlika asks Bhima to kill him to release him from the sin of fighting for the kauravas (Bahlika had to fight with the kauravas on account of Bhishma's, his nephew).

He finished his days with his brothers and Draupadi, on their great and final journey toward Vaikunta. He was the last to die on the journey, leaving Yudhishtira alone to complete the journey by himself.

Although there are several instances of Arjuna and others doubting or questioning the will of Krishna, the portrayal of Bhima's devotion to Krishna is unblemished in the original Mahabharata.



KARNA

ABOUT:

Karna is one of the central figures in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. He was the first son of Kunti, and was thus half-brother to the Pandavas, and the eldest of them. Although Duryodhana of the Kauravas appoint him king of Anga, his role in the legend far exceeds the importance of a king. He fought for the Kauravas in the great battle at Kurukshetra.

Family, Birth, & Character:

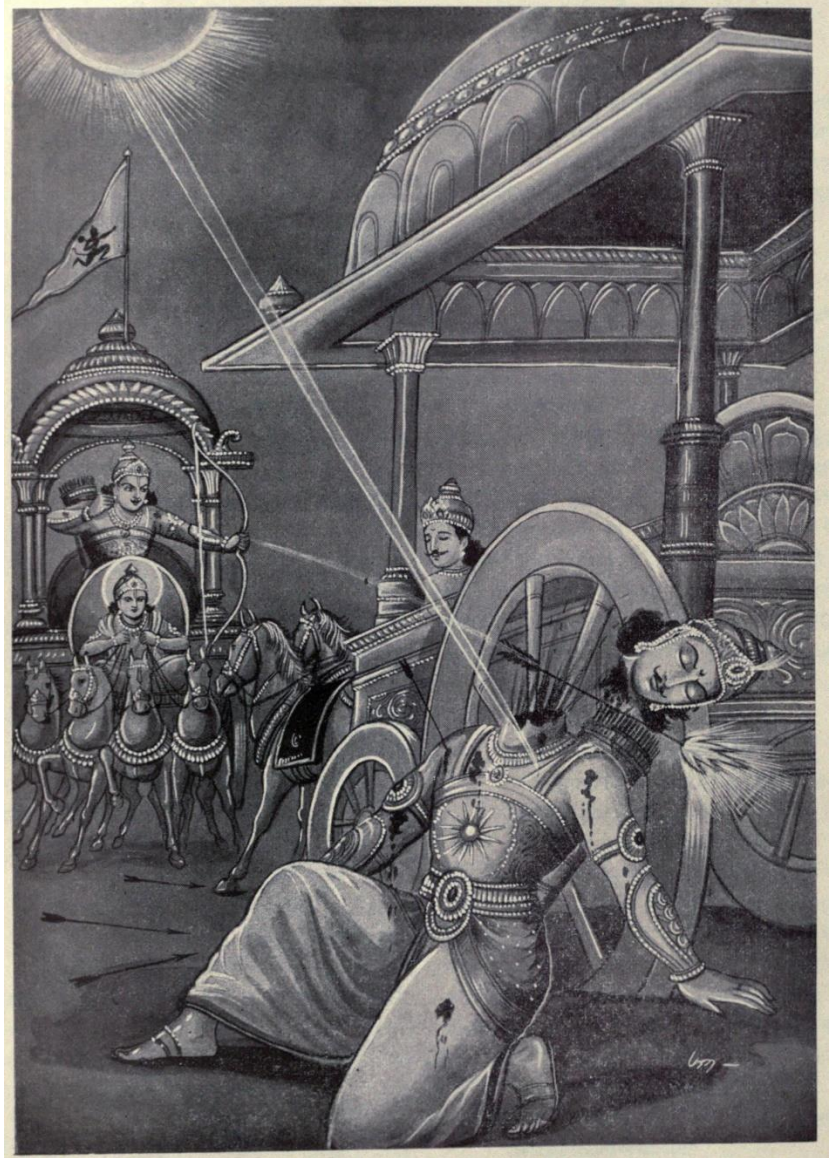
The princess Kunti attended to the sage Durvasa for a full year, while he was a guest at her father's palace. The sage was pleased with her service and granted her a boon whereby she could call upon any god of her choice, and beget a child in his image. Unsure of whether the boon would actually be granted, Kunti, while still unmarried, decided to test the boon and called upon Surya the sun god. Bound by the power of the mantra,

Surya granted her a son as radiant and strong as his father, although she did not want a child (wishing only to test the power). Through his divine power, Kunti retained her virginity. Thus Karna was born. Surya gifted Karna with an armour ('Kavacha') and a pair of earrings ('Kundala') which dipped in Amrit, which were attached to him from birth. Unwilling to face the world as an unwed mother, Kunti abandoned Karna, setting him afloat in a box in a river.



The child Karna was borne down the river and picked up by King Dhritarashtra's charioteer, Adhiratha, a sudra. Karna was raised by him and his wife Radha (not the same Radha who was Lord Krishna's Companion at Mathura) as their son and named Vasusena (born with wealth), due to his natural set of armour and earrings. They knew something of his parentage by the jewellery he was found with, and never hid from him the fact that he was not their biological child. He was also known as Radheya because of the name of his mother Radha.

The bond between Karna and his foster family was one of pure love, respect and affection despite the lack of blood relationship. Adhiratha was honored by Karna in front of all the warrior kind, and Karna lovingly performed his duties as a son and brother within his foster family, despite his rise as king of Anga and the eventual revelation of his true birth.



CURSE:

Departing from Parashurama's ashram, Karna wandered for some time. Mistaking a cow for a wild animal, he shot an arrow and killed it. Incensed, the Brahmin who owned the cow cursed Karna, stating that when Karna would fight the most crucial battle of his life his wheel would get stuck in the mud, rendering him vulnerable to his enemy. Returning home, Karna informed his family of his training, keeping the curses a secret. He subsequently decided to seek out a position in the Hastinapura court.

KARNA & DURYODHANA:

Karna is spoken of as a loyal and true friend to Duryodhana. While he was later party to the infamous game of dice to please Duryodhana, he was opposed to it to begin with. Karna disliked Shakuni, and advised Duryodhana continuously to use his prowess and skill to defeat his enemies, rather than deceit and trickery. When the attempt to kill the Pandavas in the house of lac fails, Karna chides Duryodhana in his despondence, telling him the ways of cowards are doomed to failure and exhorting him to be a warrior and obtain what he wants through valour. As a king, warrior and friend of Duryodhana, Karna became part of the Hastinapura court.

Karna was never happy with Shakuni's plan to defeat the Pandavas by trickery and deceit. He preferred the way of battle and repeatedly cajoled Duryodhana to choose that path. To please Duryodhana, however, he chose to be a part of the game, leading to the disturbing Cheer-haran scene.

After Shakuni had won the game of dice by trickery, the Pandavas' queen Draupadi was dragged into the court by Duhsassana who attempted to strip her, incited by Karna, Duryodhana and his wicked brothers. Karna calls Draupadi a "whore", and goes as far as to say that whores have no rights so it would not be wrong to bring her nude in front of everyone.

WAR TIME:

On the seventeenth day of battle, the much anticipated confrontation between Karna and Arjuna finally takes place. They were evenly matched during the spectacular combat. Karna had been gifted a bow by Parashurama's called Vijaya(pinakin), one designed by Vishwakarma himself. At Duryodhana request, Shayla, who was a maternal uncle to Pandavas, reluctantly agreed to drive Karna's chariot, hence he had a charioteer to equal Krishna (Shayla had mastered the Ashwahridaya - "Art of Horses")

Without the Shakti weapon, Karna had no particular way to kill Arjuna. He had to rely upon his own garnered skill. In a wondrous, intense display of amazing archery, valour and courage, Karna and Arjuna engaged and exhausted all their brilliance, knowledge and passion. Karna devised an intelligent strategy based upon his personal prowess. He stunned Arjuna with a powerful volley of arrows that struck his chest. And the instant in which Arjuna was dazzled, Karna let loose another powerful volley intended at killing his powerful foe. King Shalya of Madra, Karna's charioteer (Shalya, who was the uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva, had been tricked into fighting on the Kauravas side, but had promised Yudhishtira that he would not allow Karna to kill Arjuna), told Karna to play safe by aiming the {naga-astram} arrow at Arjuna's chest. However, Karna refused to heed that advice and aimed the arrow at Arjuna's head. But Lord Krishna came to his friend

and devotee's rescue, plunging the chariot into the earth by his power, causing the fatal arrow to miss Arjuna by a few miserable inches and strike Arjuna's crown instead.

During the course of combat, one of the Karna's chariot wheels got stuck in loose soil, apparently because of a curse put on Karna by a Brahmin whose cow Karna had mistakenly killed. King Shalya, who was his charioteer, refused to get down and remove the wheel from the mud. Hence Karna asked Arjuna to disengage in combat, while he got off his chariot and removed the wheel from the mud. Arjuna agreed. But Krishna recalled Karna's previous lapses in honorable conduct and ordered Arjuna to shoot at Karna while he was attempting to lift his wheel out of the mud. The chariot wheel remained stuck and the curse of Parashurama's ensured that Karna could not recall the mantras necessary to unleash the more powerful weapons of mass destruction - The Brahmastra. Krishna reminds Arjuna of Karna's ruthlessness against Abhimanyu when Abhimanyu was similarly left without a chariot or weapons.

All of Arjuna's tears, pain and anger swelled up within him as he aimed the fatal shaft Anjalika at a desperate Karna and beheaded him.



SHAKUNI

EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY:

Shakuni was born in Gandhara to its king, Subala. He had a sister named Gandhari, who was dear to Shakuni. Shakuni was one of the greatest illusionists. Shakuni's wife is unnamed in the original version of the epic, but later retellings suggest that 'Arshi' was her name. They had three sons named Uluka, Vrikaasur and Vriprachitti. The original texts of Mahabharata mention Shakuni as personification of Dvapara Yuga.

The Infamous Gambling Game:

When all the family was locked up in a cellar with a minimal amount of food, king Subala decides that his one member of the family should live at any cost to take revenge against Bhishma and the kuru family for this behavior of Bhishma. So Shakuni, who was the youngest and the cleverest son, was chosen by giving all other's meal to survive. On the last breath, Subala stabs Shakuni's Leg and ask him to remember the vengeance against kuru family. He also asks Shakuni to make a dice out of his thigh's bone.

Shakuni was not only very clever and mastermind but was also an illusionist, talent of which he could bring to his advantage any time when playing a dice game. Yudhishtira was a big gambler who lost everything to Duryodhana in the dice game with the help of Shakuni. This became the main reason for the **"KURUSHETRA WAR"**.





Figure 2: Shakuni's DICE



Figure 1: Shakuni defeating Yudhishtira

ROLE IN THE WAR:

On the 18th day before the war, Duryodhana convinced Shakuni to be the Commander-in-Chief of his army but he preferred Shalya. Shakuni participated in the Kurukshetra War and defeated many warriors.^[22]

On the very first day of the war, Shakuni, Duryodhana and Dushasana attacked Yudhishtira to kill him but they failed. On the 2nd day, he got defeated by Sahadeva in a Sword Duel and by Satyaki in Archery. On the 4th day, he killed 5 powerful Generals of Magadha. On the 5th day of the war, he got defeated by Arjuna in Archery battle and by Dhrishtadyumna in Sword Duel. On the 7th day, he got defeated by Bhima in Gada-Yuddha and by Drupada in Archery.

On the 9th day of the war, he got defeated by Yudhishtira in a Spear Combat and by Abhimanyu in Archery. On the 10th day of the war, he stopped Shikhandi from reaching Bhishma. He also defeated Shikhandi in a battle of Axe-Fighting on the same day. Shakuni also stabbed him in his stomach. On the 12th day, he slew king Sahadeva of Magadha. Later, he defeated Upapandavas and Virata. He also fought with Dhrishtadyumna two times, firstly he defeated him and secondly he got defeated.

On the 13th day, Shakuni and other Maharathis attacked and killed Abhimanyu. Many of them backstabbed Abhimanyu. On 14th day, he fought with Nakula to save Jayadratha but got defeated. After Jayadratha death, he planned a Night War. In the night war he defeated Drupada, Virata and Satyaki. On the 17th day his son, Vrikaasur was slain by Nakula.

DEATH:

After the Game of Dice episode in the Mahabharata, the youngest of the Pandava brothers Sahadeva had taken an oath to avenge Draupadi insult and had sworn to kill Shakuni, the mastermind of the episode.

On the 18th day of the Mahabharata war, Pandavas attacked Shakuni, Uluka and their army. As Duryodhana and his other brothers rushed to protect their uncle, Bhima stepped in and fought the remaining Kauravas and killing many of them (except Duryodhana). Meanwhile, Nakula killed many prominent Gandharan warriors and the bodyguards of Uluka. Sahadeva fought Shakuni and Uluka and, not long afterwards, killed Uluka. Shakuni became furious and attacked Sahadeva. He broke his chariot and bow, Sahadeva ascended another chariot and fought Shakuni ferociously. After many attacks and tackles, both of them descended their chariots to settle things in a duel. Sahadeva was then able to smash an axe into Shakuni's forehead, fulfilling his oath.



Figure 3:SHAKUNI THE GAMBLER

DURYODHANA

ABOUT:

Duryodhana, formerly named Suyodhana is supposed to be the avatar of demon Kali and a great warrior. He is the main character of the most popular Hindu epic Mahabharata and eldest among the Kauravas, the hundred sons of King Dhritarashtra and Queen Gandhari. Being the crown prince of Hastinapura, Uttar Pradesh, Bharat, he was fierce and never believed in the miracles of Lord Krishna. Duryodhana is derived from two Sanskrit words: 'Du' meaning difficult and 'Yodhana' meaning to fight, as a whole which meant difficult to fight.

Born from A Jar:

During the time of Dwapar Yug, the great sage Vyasa came to Hastinapura. The queen of Hastinapura took such good care of him that he was pleased by her devotion and said, "Ask anything you want." Gandhari then replied she wants 100 sons and a daughter. Gandhari became pregnant but could not deliver the baby even after two years of pregnancy. Finally, she delivered a lump of flesh. She then thought of throwing the flesh away.



Vasya said her not to worry as his boon could not go easily in vain. He divided that flesh into 101 equal mass and kept each one of them in a jar filled with ghee. She was said to wait for two more years. Two years passed and she found a baby boy after opening the jar. The baby boy was named Suyodhana (meaning one with good arms in warfare). Gandhari took a baby girl from the last, 101st jar and named her Duhshala

Duryodhana Childhood:

Because of the fierce and unbeatable nature of Suyodhana, his name was later on changed to Duryodhana. Duryodhana learned military skills from his gurus, Kripacharya and Dronacharya. During the course of training, he appeared to be excellent with Gadha (mace) and wanted to excel in it, which he took training from Balarama.

As mentioned in Shanti Parva, Karna is supposed to be the genuine and close friend of Duryodhana. Karna was a support system of Duryodhana in the war of Kurukshetra and he always thought Karna superior to Arjuna.

From the very childhood, Kauravas always hated Pandavas. Duryodhana even attempted to kill Bhima by feeding him the poisoned feast.

The Game of Dice:

After Duryodhana returned from a visit to Indraprastha he told about his insult to his uncle Shakuni. Shakuni then planned a game of dice to rob Yudhishtira and his kingdom. Shakuni sent an invitation to the dice game. The game was supposed to be played between Shakuni and Yudhishtira. Shakuni was an expert in the game of dice, as a result, Yudhishtira could not compete with him and kept on losing Kingdom, his four brothers, his wife and finally himself. Dhritarashtra and Bhishma could not tolerate this form of injustice and made Duryodhana return everything back to Yudhishtira.

However, the clever Shakuni sets the condition that Pandavas have to spend entire thirteen years in exile in the forest if they want their kingdom back. However, Pandavas after returning from the exile asks for their kingdom but Duryodhana refused to return. Now the war was inevitable. And the war of Kurukshetra soon started.



The War of Kurukshetra:

In the war of Kurukshetra, Duryodhana and his massive armies were on one side and Pandavas and Krishna and their smaller army were on another side. In between the war, Duryodhana always seemed unsatisfied and would blackmail Pandavas now and then. He also used his Gadha. Kauravas were fighting with physical and military forces and Pandavas with the wisdom of Lord Krishna, slowly and gradually Kauravas started losing the war.

Kauravas killed Abhimanyu – the son of Arjuna in a disrespectful manner. Thus, to take the revenge of his son's death, Arjun alone killed at least thousands of Kuru soldiers. This made Kauravas weaker and fragile. Duryodhana started falling apart as all of his brothers and armies were already killed.

Gandhari surprised by the death of all sons except Duryodhana thought of blessing him. She decides to remove her blindfold to bless her son and calls him naked to bless him on thigh and groin. In the meantime, Krishna, who was leaving the tent-covered his thigh and groin. Gandhari was shocked to see this and could not bless him, which became susceptible to the Pandavas attack.

In the end, with Lord Krishna's advice, Bhima attacked Duryodhana on his thigh. The hit was so hard that Duryodhana that he died on the spot. Finally, Pandavas cremated him.





LEARNING OUTCOME

1.A revengeful instinct can only to one's downfall

The Kauravas lost everything to their blinded desire to ruin the Pandavas.

2.We Should stand by what's right and even fight for it.

Arjuna was initially hesitant to carry on war against his relation. But Krishna reminded him that one has to stand by Dharma, even it meant going against one's own family.

3. The Eternal Bond of Friendship.

The friendship between Krishna and Arjuna is something all of us admire. It is perhaps because of Krishna's unconditional support and motivation that the Pandavas managed to survive the war. The friendship between Karna and Duryodhana, on the other hand, is no less inspiring.

4. From Duryodhana, we learnt that ' pride comes before the fall.'

Duryodhana teaches us how blind swa-dharma (desires for your own Self) can lead you to "Adharma." Duryodhana greed is wrong, his methods are wrong. He teaches us that blind pride and wrong actions have consequences and one must be careful and thoughtful about their actions and thoughts.



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