

Greetings Delegates!

On behalf of the University of Georgia, I would like to welcome you to UGAMUNC XXVIII and the Mahabharata (mah-haa-baa-ruth) Committee. My name is Manashi Patel, and I have the honor of serving as your crisis director for the conference. I am a senior from Waycross, Georgia studying accounting and political science. I am a part of Greek life on campus; I'm a member of Alpha Kappa Psi - a co-ed business fraternity. In my free time, I love to read, hike, or watch the news or Netflix. Some of my favorite shows to watch are New Girl, Friends, The Patriot Act, and The Office. I'm really excited to meet all of you in February!

I also have the pleasure of introducing the committee chair, Namrata (num-ruh-tha) Kella ([namukella@gmail.com](mailto:namukella@gmail.com)). She is a third-year International Affairs major and Spanish minor from Alpharetta, Georgia. Some of her favorite organizations she's involved in on-campus are Georgia Political Review, SPIA Ambassadors, and of course, Model UN. In her free time, Namrata enjoys thrifting, cooking, photography, and drinking iced coffee regardless of the season.

This is her 3rd year on the Model UN team and her 2nd year chairing and she is so thankful for the friends she's made and the skills she's learned during her time on the team so far.

I'm also excited to introduce the co-chair for the committee, Ashni (uhsh-nee) Patel ([ashni.patel1@uga.edu](mailto:ashni.patel1@uga.edu)). She is a first-year majoring in International Affairs with a minor in Statistics from Sandy Springs, Georgia. She is also involved with Student Government Association, Period@UGA, and the Roosevelt Institute. In her free time, she enjoys watching trashy reality TV, photography, and playing with her dog, Gadget. This is her first year in Model UN, but she is so excited to be co-chairing at her first ever UGA MUNC!

Please keep in mind that the Mahabharata is a sacred text to many people and make sure to be respectful towards the text and religion. In order to keep everything running smoothly, we request the utmost level of maturity in committee. As a crisis committee delegate, you will be experiencing things differently. We are sure that you will do an amazing job bringing your characters to life, and we are very excited to see all the wonderful things you will do in committee!

**Your positions papers are due February 1st, 2020!** Your position paper should explain what approach your character will take regarding personal actions, how you plan to interact with other delegates, and how you will respond to the main issues in the committee. Qualifying position papers for this committee will be one page and 1.5 spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, as well as a standard and consistent citation format of your choosing (i.e. MLA, Chicago, etc.). Email them to [manashi.patel@uga.edu](mailto:manashi.patel@uga.edu) as PDF files before the deadline! If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to email any of us!

Welcome to UGAMUNC XXVII!

Manashi Patel  
Crisis Director  
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# 1 A Note On Pronunciations

## 1.1 General Notes

Hello! I, your chair Namrata, wanted to put in a much-needed note about Hindi pronunciations for English speakers. For those of you who have no experience with the Hindi language, don't worry! I have multiple aids in place to help with any pronunciation issues those reading this background guide may have. I will be providing the phonetic pronunciations of each word that isn't in English as well as hyperlinking those words to an audio clip that pronounces the word for you. I will also be linking helpful sources after this note.

**I want to emphasize the importance of pronouncing these words properly or at least making an effort, because of the respect we should have for ancient Indian culture and language in using the Mahabharata as a topic for this simulation.** Hindi is a beautiful language spoken by nearly 4.5% of the global population. Standard written Hindi script is called Devanagari (dhe-vanaa-gree), which consists of 46 total letters, 11 vowels and 35 consonants. A few important notes to make about the alphabet is that since there are so many letters, not all of the letters have an English equivalent. Additionally, every consonant can be combined with each vowel sound to create different letter sounds. If I do some math, that comes out to around 385 different letter sounds. Granted, there are many exceptions and more than one way to combine vowels and consonants, or even consonants and consonants. I don't say any of this to scare you, but to hopefully make you understand that Hindi is VERY different from English.

While I want to make learning pronunciations as easy as possible for you by putting in audio and linking sources below, I do also want to make a disclaimer. As it is in many languages, the way that I may pronounce a word may differ from the way some of you pronounce those same words. Hindi has regional accents and variations, and just because something is thought to be said one way, that doesn't mean it's the rule all of the time. There are sounds in Hindi that don't have an English translation, and moving your tongue and lips in a way to make the sounds may be something entirely unfamiliar to you. Whether you can speak Hindi or not, I want to be able to teach you about the richness of the culture within the Mahabharata while also treating the topic with respect. This includes putting effort into pronouncing the words and names properly. If you have any questions at all or are simply curious about Hindi and want to discuss it further, please feel free to reach out to me at [namukella@gmail.com](mailto:namukella@gmail.com).

## 1.2 Helpful Sources

- <https://ielanguages.com/hindi-pronunciation.html>
- <https://www.learning-hindi.com/intro>
- <https://www.hindipod101.com/hindi-pronunciation/>
- <http://www.shalinibosbyshell.com/pronunciation.pdf>

## 2 Rules and Procedure

While other delegates at UGAMUNC may be placed in traditional General Assembly-style Model United Nations committees, the Mahabharata committee will run as a crisis committee. While you should still familiarize yourself with the UGAMUNC Rules and Procedure document to brush up on parliamentary procedure, this committee will vary from the typical format. Please familiarize yourself with the following rules specific to this committee, and once again, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at, [manashi.patel@uga.edu](mailto:manashi.patel@uga.edu) or [namukella@gmail.com](mailto:namukella@gmail.com).

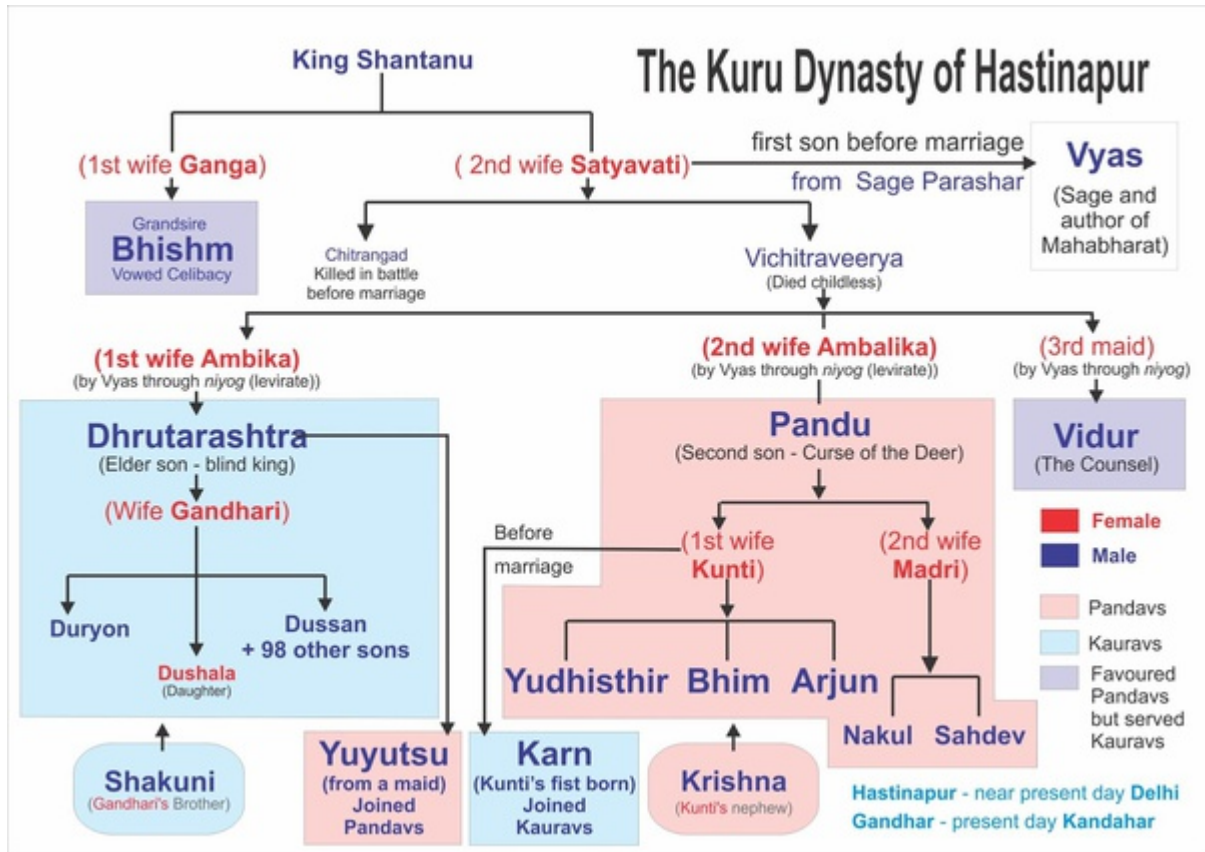
1. **Be respectful.** Ancient Hindu culture is a very unique historical time period, one filled with mysticism, godly intervention, and vital lessons about morality and life. Hindu culture is a defining part of nearly 1/7th of the global population's identity, including the people in charge of this committee and those who may be participating in this committee. The inclusion of demigods and the influence of gods and mysticism is pertinent to the history of this committee. Do not disrespect the Hindu religion or any other aspect of Indian culture by being disrespectful in the powers you ask for and the mystical strength you wield in committee. There is a way to have fun with your character and adhere to historical accuracy while also incorporating the fun elements of crisis.
2. **This is a crisis-style committee, so write directives, not resolutions.** The main method of negotiation in a typical General Assembly-style committee stems from speaking in the front room and the eventual collaborative creation of a resolution. However, in a crisis committee, much of the work you do in the front room will be directives that are written and passed during debate. Although directives and resolutions are very similar, directives are utilized in a crisis committee, not resolutions. Directives are less formal, normally have a title, and are generally more straightforward. They are intended to utilize the powers present in the committee to quickly address the crisis at hand or any related issues.
3. **Utilize crisis notes to accomplish your goals in committee and craft your crisis arc.** Crisis notes are an integral part to your success in committee, and a crisis arc is used to refer to your own character's storyline that is expressed through crisis notes written to the back room. Crisis notes are letters that your character will write to crisis, a body outside of the committee room, to accomplish something without the committee's knowledge. These notes will be addressed to a fictional person that has some relation to your character. A good crisis note not only in-detail explains what your character wishes to accomplish, but also very specifically explains how to accomplish the actions stated in the crisis note. Crisis, who are your Crisis Director Manashi and an UGAMUNC staff person, will answer these notes as if they were this fictional person, responding as that person would under the circumstances from the context you write out. Only address a note to crisis if you have a question about the way the committee is going. There are many fantastic resources that better explain crisis notes in detail, but a starting point can be found [here](#).
4. **While this is a historical committee focused on the Mahabharata, you have the freedom to alter history.** The story of the Mahabharata is the general topic of our crisis committee, and this will be the focus of much of the conversation for the weekend. However, you are more than welcome to focus on related issues of the times or alter the path of history forever. This committee starts out with the dice game between the brothers. Everything up to that point has already been set in history. However, what happens after that point is up to you to decide. You have the freedom to alter the storyline of the Mahabharata with your actions.
5. **Even though you can alter history, keep in mind realistic constraints you may face.** This is a historical committee, so it is expected that all delegates will act in a manner that suits the time period. Be sure to know what kind of technologies have been invented and what has not yet. For instance, gunpowder, canons, and modern technology didn't exist, but there were plenty of spears, arrows, and swords. It will be to your advantage if you know what kind of resources are available to your character.
6. **Accurately represent your understanding of your character.** Many of these characters can be thoroughly researched, even more so than what has been stated in this background guide about them.

It is imperative that you understand your character's motives and role in the Mahabharata because this will only stand to help you in committee. Each character is different; they have unique powers, resources, and relationships with other characters. Be sure to represent your character's interests in committee before your own.

7. **This committee is in English only.** Even if you can speak or write Hindi or Sanskrit, there will be no advantage given to any delegate who chooses to write crisis notes or give speeches in Hindi. While we certainly respect historical and cultural accuracy, we don't want to exclude other delegates in committee who may not speak Hindi. However, you can title your directives in Hindi or Sanskrit if you would like. Be sure not to use the stated languages offensively by making insensitive puns for directive titles or using curse words in committee.
8. **All position papers for this committee are due on February 1st by 11:59pm.** Please submit these position papers directly to the Crisis Director Manashi at [manashi.patel@uga.edu](mailto:manashi.patel@uga.edu). A position paper is essentially a short letter outlining your character's position on the crisis at hand and your individual plans to accomplish those plans. We expect these papers to be around 1.5 spacing and one (1) page in length. However, if you would like, you can exceed that. Further guidelines for the position paper can be found in the Letter to the Delegates on the first page of this background guide. Please don't hesitate to email Manashi with any questions or concerns.

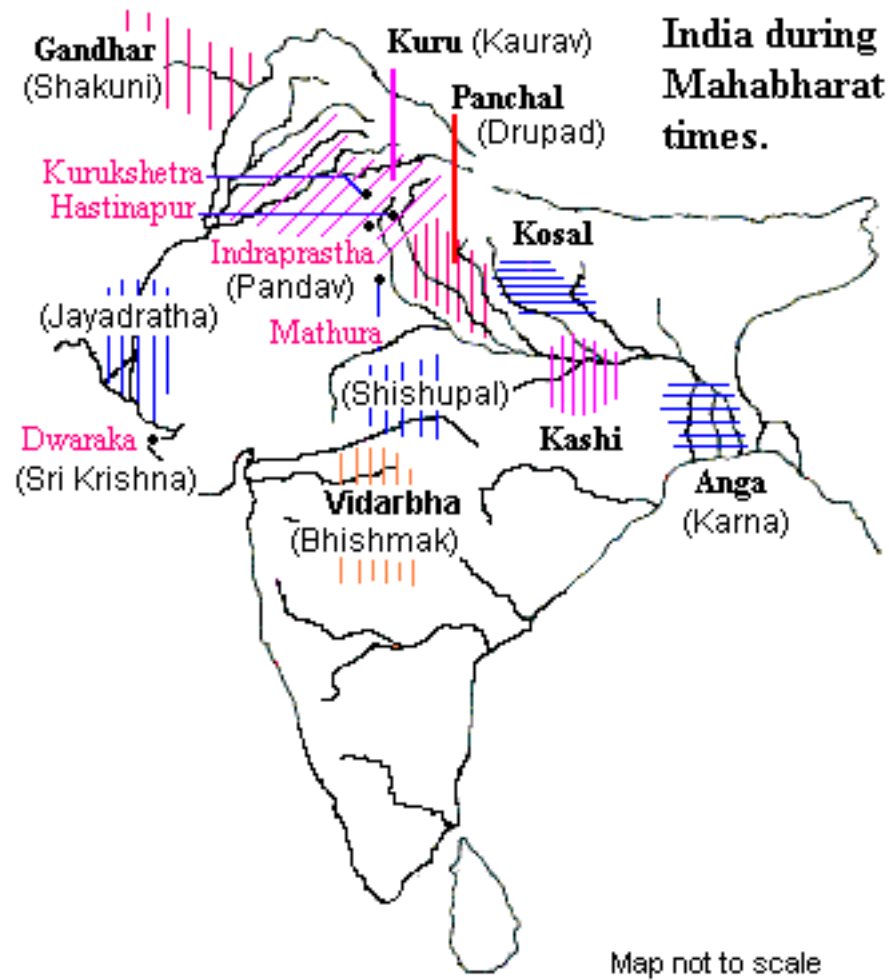
### 3 Graphical Resources

#### 3.1 Family Tree



<sup>1</sup>"Mahabharata - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Mahabharata/>.

### 3.2 Map



<sup>2</sup>"Map of India during Ramayana and Mahabharata - ...." Accessed October 29, 2020. <https://vibhanshu.wordpress.com/2009/01/13/map-of-india-during-ramayana-and-mahabharata/>.

## 4 Committee Background

### 4.1 History of Mahabharata

Mahabharata is a Sanskrit (sun-skriith) word meaning “The Great Epic of the Bharata (baa-ruth) Dynasty”. It is one of the two major epics to detail the ancient history of India, with the other being the Ramayana (raa-mai-yuhn). The Mahabharata comprises 74,000 verses and 100,000 couplets, making the work a staggering 1.8 million words in total. This makes it the longest epic poem in the world, and it is ten times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined. Due to the sheer length of the story, scholars have long tried to figure out when the Mahabharata was completed in full, and have narrowed the time frame to the third and fifth centuries C.E.<sup>3</sup> The story, however, is widely considered by Hindus to be a chronicle of history and the development of Hinduism from 400 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. This is also attributed to the fact that the Bhagavad Gita (bug-vuhd gee-tha), one of the Hindu (hin-doo) holy texts, is a part of the Mahabharata.<sup>4</sup>

Although it has been theorized that more than one person wrote the epic, authorship is usually conferred to the sage Vyas (vi-yas). Due to the veracity of the Mahabharata itself being disputed, scholars are unsure as to when Vyas lived. However, certain facts about Vyas’ life are known and have been recorded. Vyas was born to Satyavati (sath-yuh-vuh-thee) and Brahmin Parashara (braah-man par-sha-rah). His mother, Satyavati, was a ferryman’s daughter, and his father, the Brahmin, was a wandering sage descended from Vasistha (vah-shisht).<sup>5</sup> Vasistha was one of the seven great Rishis (ri-shees), a yogi or an enlightened sage, during the Vedic (vai-dik) times.<sup>6</sup> Vyas was born on an island covered in Badara (buh-daa-raa) trees (Indian Jujube trees), which earned him the name Dwaipayana (dvai-pah-yaan), which means “island-born”. He was also born with extremely dark skin, which is why he was also called Krishna (krish-naa). Vyas was the first child born to his mother, Satyavati, before her marriage to the Kuru (koo-ru) King Shantanu (shaan-tha-noo), the king of Hastinapur (has-thee-naa-pur).<sup>7</sup>

King Shantanu was the youngest son of the Kuru King Pratipa (praa-theep), having earned the throne by default because all of his older siblings forfeited their claim to the throne for varying reasons. As king, Shantanu was walking the banks of the Ganga (gun-gaa) river when one day he saw a beautiful mysterious woman. He asked for the woman’s hand in marriage and she agreed, but on one very important condition. Shantanu could never question any actions by his new wife, who unbeknownst to him, was the goddess Ganga (Hindu goddess of the river). Once married, Ganga gave birth to her first son. After the birth of her son, King Shantanu found Ganga drowning the child. Even though he was upset, King Shantanu remembered the promise he had made to his wife, and kept silent. However, this continued six more times, with Ganga giving birth to seven sons total and drowning them all. Finally, when the eighth son was born and Ganga went to drown him, King Shantanu could no longer restrain himself. He confronted Ganga and asked how she could kill their children and rob him of potential heirs. Ganga finally revealed her identity to Shantanu and explained that she and her children were the victim of a curse placed on her by Brahma (bhra-maa). Ganga explained that since Shantanu had broken the condition in place by questioning her actions, she had to leave him, but she wasn’t going to kill their eighth child. Instead, Ganga took the eighth son with the promise that she would return him to Shantanu in due time.<sup>8</sup>

Eventually, a day came when King Shantanu was walking along the banks of the Ganga river and noticed that the river had become extremely shallow. Upon investigation, he discovered a young man standing in the river had curbed the river’s flow with a celestial weapon. The mysterious young man recognized King

<sup>3</sup>“Mahabharata - New World Encyclopedia.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Mahabharata>.

<sup>4</sup>“Mahabharata Definition, Story, History, & Facts Britannica.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mahabharata>.

<sup>5</sup>“Vyasa - New World Encyclopedia.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vyasa>.

<sup>6</sup>“Saptarishi and their contributions to the world - Vedicfeed.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://vedicfeed.com/saptarishi-and-their-contributions/>.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid

<sup>8</sup>“The story of Shantanu | Mahabharata Stories, Summary and ....” Accessed October 21, 2020. [https://www.mahabharataonline.com/stories/mahabharata\\_character.php?id=45](https://www.mahabharataonline.com/stories/mahabharata_character.php?id=45).



Shantanu as his father, but instead of revealing himself, instead disappeared using the power of illusion. King Shantanu became frustrated and called upon the goddess Ganga to show herself and explain who that young man was. Ganga appeared and introduced the man as Devavrata (dhe-vav-ruth), the son of King Shantanu.<sup>9</sup> Devavrata had been taught political science by Brihaspati (brr-hus-puh-thee) (the guru of the Devas), knowledge of the Vedas (vei-das) from Rishi Vasishta, and the art of archery from Parashurama (par-shur-um). This had made Devavrata an exceptionally skilled administrator, and an undefeatable warrior.<sup>10</sup> Devavrata promptly returned to Hastinapur with the king, where he was crowned the heir.

Then King Shantanu met and fell in love with another woman, Satyawati, who was the aforementioned mother of Vyas. Satyawati was the daughter of Dasharaj (dhaash-raaj), a fisherman and ferryman who raised Satyawati by the Yamuna (yuh-moo-naa) river. When King Shantanu asked for Satyawati's hand in marriage, Dasharaj refused.<sup>11</sup> He said that Satyawati's marriage to the King could only happen if it was Satyawati's children that would have a claim to the throne. This directly conflicted with King Shantanu's promise to Devavrata. In order to please his father, Devavrata renounced his title as crown-prince. This didn't fully please Dasharaj, who countered that Devavrata's children could still claim the throne. Devavrata then vowed he would be celibate for the rest of his life so that he wouldn't ever have any offspring. This earned Devavrata the name of Bhishma (bhee-shum), which means "he of the terrible oath". This selflessness and strictness of the oath taken by Bhishma earned him recognition by the gods and his father, and he was granted the boon (blessing) of Ichha Mrityu (itch-cha mri-thyu). This boon stipulated that Bhishma could choose the time of his death, but he was not immortal.<sup>12</sup> Thus Bhishma pledged eternal loyalty to defend whoever was on the throne of Hastinapur.

King Shantanu and Satyawati had two sons together, named Vichitravirya (vi-chit-ruh-veer-yuh) and Chitrangada (chit-raang-daa). When King Shantanu passed away, he passed the throne to Vichitravirya. Both of King Shantanu's sons died childless, and Satyawati arranged for more heirs to be produced using the ancient practice of Niyoga (nee-yogh). Niyoga is when another man can father children with the widow whose husband dies childless. Satyawati requested that Vyas produce sons with both of Vichitravirya's widows, named Ambika (um-beek-ah) and Ambalika (um-ba-leek-ah). When Ambika was sent to Vyas, it is said that she closed her eyes out of shyness and her aversion to Vyas' appearance. Because of this, Vyas told Satyawati that Ambika's son Dhritarashtra (dri-tharash-thruh) would be born blind, and therefore would be unfit to rule. Satyawati then warned Ambalika to remain calm when she saw Vyas, but Ambalika grew pale when she saw him. Then, Vyas proclaimed that Ambalika's son Pandu (paan-du) would be born anemic and also unfit to rule the kingdom. Finally, Vyas asked for one of the wives to be sent to him again so that they could produce a healthy heir. Instead, Ambika and Ambalika sent one of the maids to see Vyas. Due to the maid's calm and collected composure upon seeing Vyas, he blessed her with a healthy baby named Vidura (vi-dur).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup>"Shantanu – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/shantanu/>.

<sup>10</sup>"The Story of Bhishma | Mahabharata Stories, Summary and ...." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.mahabharataonline.com/stories/mahabharata.character.php?id=44>.

<sup>11</sup>"Satyawati – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/satyavati/>.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid

<sup>13</sup>Ibid

## 4.2 History of the Kauravas (kau-ruhvs)

Since Pandu could not become king due to the curse placed on him by Rishi Kindama (kin-dham), Dhritarashtra, Pandu's brother, was given the throne. However, Dhritarashtra had been blind from birth. Nonetheless, he was no less than Pandu in any way. He had received the same military training and education as Pandu. Dhritarashtra married Gandhari (ghaan-dhaa-ree), who decided that like her husband, she too would live in darkness. Gandhari covered her eyes by tying a silk cloth. She declared that she would only open the tie upon her death.<sup>14</sup>

While Gandhari was queen of Hastinapur, a famous sage, Dwaipayana, came to visit the palace. Gandhari personally looked after the comforts and needs of the sage. Dwaipayana was so

impressed by her care and her selfness that he granted her a boon. Gandhari asked for a 100 sons that would equal her husband in accomplishments. Dwaipayana granted her wish, and Gandhari became pregnant.<sup>15</sup>



Two years later, Gandhari was still pregnant. She showed no signs of delivering anytime soon. At the same time, Kunti (kun-thee), Pandu's wife, had birthed five divine sons. Hearing of the birth of Kunti's sons, Dhritarashtra was furious at them being born first because the oldest son is always favored for the throne of Hastinapur. Meanwhile, Gandhari also became infuriated with her everlasting pregnancy, and she hit her abdomen hard.<sup>16</sup> Soon after instead of delivering a baby, Gandhari delivered a horrifying lump of mass. Upset and dejected, Gandhari went to look for Sage Dwaipayana. She complained to Dwaipayana and doubted the sincerity of his boon. The sage replied that he had never lied, not even in jest. She would have her 100 sons.<sup>17</sup>

Dwaipayana told Gandhari to go back and cut her lump of mass into a 100 pieces. Gandhari cut the mass of lump into 101 pieces because she also wanted a daughter. She placed each piece into a separate pot and filled each pot with ghee, or clarified butter. Finally Gandhari's wish was granted and the first Kaurava, Duryodhana (dur-yo-dhan), was born. When he was born, several animals started howling nonstop. This was considered a bad omen, and Vidura advised Dhritarashtra and Gandhari to drown the child in the holy river Ganga. Both parents refused to give up their first child, and this decision would very much shape their future. Duryodhana's birth was soon followed by his 99 brothers, and his sister, Dussala (dhoo-sha-laa).<sup>18</sup>

The Kauravas' childhood was full of love and care. All 101 siblings were doted on by both their parents. The Kauravas got their education and military training from Guru Dronacharya's (Drona) (goo-ru droh-naa-chaar-yuh) (droh-naa), who also taught the Pandavas (pahn-duhvs).<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Duryodhana was given the opportunity to learn mace fighting from Balarama (bah-laa-raam), an older brother of Lord Krishna. Balarama also taught mace fighting to Bhima (bhee-muh), a Pandava. Both Duryodhana and Bhima were the best students and extremely talented at their respective fighting styles.<sup>20</sup>

The Kauravas harbored a large resentment toward the Pandavas. They developed a hatred for the Pandavas early on because of the lineage to the royal throne. Duryodhana was especially jealous and hateful towards Bhima. Bhima was younger than Duryodhana, yet he was faster and stronger. The Kauravas blamed the Pandavas for being ambitious and wanting to steal the throne of Hastinapur from them, the rightful heirs. They believed it should be Duryodhana who should be crowned king as the eldest of the Kaurava sons.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup>"Mahabharata - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Mahabharata/>.

<sup>15</sup>"Kauravas - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Kauravas/>.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Ibid

<sup>18</sup>"Mahabharata - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Mahabharata/>.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid

<sup>20</sup>"Kauravas - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 20, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Kauravas/>.

<sup>21</sup>Doniger, Wendy. n.d. "Mahabharata." Britannica. Accessed October 20, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mahabharata>.

During the Kauravas' childhood, Shakuni (sha-ku-nee), Gandhari's brother, intentionally fed into the Kaurava children's righteousness. Shakuni pledged to make a Kaurava son the rightful King of Hastinapur.<sup>22</sup> He encouraged Duryodhana's narcissistic pride. The hate between Kauravas and Pandavas that started during childhood and festered throughout their lives would set the stage for an epic battle.

### 4.3 History of the Pandavas

The Pandavas are the offspring of Pandu—the grandson of King Shantanu, nephew of Bhishma, and brother of Dhritarashtra. He was crowned King of Hastinapur because his brother, Dhritarashtra, was blind. Pandu had two wives: Kunti and Madri.

While hunting one day in the forest, Pandu saw a pair of deer fornicating, so he shot them with arrows. The deer turned out to be the sage Rishi Kindama and his wife making love in the form of deer. As the sage (a profoundly wise man often in legend and mythology) lay dying, he placed a curse on Pandu because Pandu had not only killed him and his wife while they were making love, but Pandu was also not remorseful for his actions. The curse stipulated that Pandu would die if he ever approached either of his wives with the intention of having intimate relations.<sup>23</sup> With knowledge that his actions were wrong and that he could no longer produce heirs to the throne, Pandu abdicated the throne of Hastinapur. Thus, Dhritarashtra, the blind son, became King of Hastinapur.

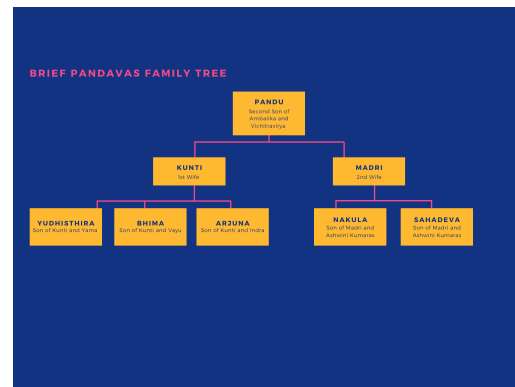


Figure 1: A short Pandava family tree

Due to the curse, Pandu could not engage in sexual intercourse with any of his wives. However, Pandu's first wife Kunti was given a boon (blessing) from another sage. The boon was that if she chanted a mantra, she could invoke any god of her choice and get a son from him. Thus, Pandu and Kunti got their first son, Yudhishtira (yood-his-thir), from the god of death Yama (yaam). Their second son, Bhima, was a gift from the god of wind Vayu (vaa-yu), and their third son, Arjuna (ar-joon), was from the king of heaven Indra (indh-ruh). After having their three sons, Kunti transferred her boon to Pandu's second wife, Madri (maa-dhree). Madri then had two more sons—Nakula (naa-kul) and Sahadeva (suh-huh-dev)—from the Ashwini Kumaras (ash-vi-nee kum-ars), the Hindu Vedic gods of medicine. All of the Pandava sons were born in the forest where Pandu and his wives were in exile.<sup>24</sup>

### 4.4 The Death of Pandu

One day, Pandu forgot about the curse and made love to Madri. Afterwards, the curse was fulfilled, and Pandu died. In grief, Madri committed suicide, and Kunti adopted her sons. Following Madri and Pandu's demise, Kunti took all five sons back to Hastinapur.<sup>25</sup> Upon return, Dhritarashtra named Yudhishtira the crown-prince much to the chagrin of Dhritarashtra's eldest son, Duryodhana. While in Hastinapur, the Pandavas also met their cousins, the Kauravas. The Kauravas kept taunting the Pandavas, and the cousins

<sup>22</sup>Ibid

<sup>23</sup>"Pandavas - Ancient History Encyclopedia." Accessed October 20, 2020. <https://www.ancient.eu/Pandavas/>.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid

<sup>25</sup>"Birth of Pandavas and Kauravas." n.d. Hinduism for Kids. Accessed October 20, 2020.

got into many disagreements. All of the Pandava sons were sent to Guru Drona's school to train in advanced military arts as decided by their grandfather, Bhishma. Arjun trained in archery, Bhima in mace fighting, and so on. When Drona had deemed their training appropriate, he arranged tournaments for them to test their skills. No one was able to match Arjuna's archery skills. A commoner, **Karna** (**kuhrn**), appeared and demanded a battle with Arjuna. Karna was insulted by Bhima for being of mixed caste. This sparked the beginning of a feud between the Pandavas and Karna. Duryodhana became friends with Karna by giving him some territory from the Kuru empire so he would be considered a royal, so he could challenge Arjuna. This act cemented a friendship between Karna and Duryodhana.

Once the brothers returned to Hastinapur, the Pandavas and their mother, Kunti, lived in the *Lakshagriha* (**laak-shaa-gri**) (House of Wax) in the forest of **Varnavat** (**var-naa-vuth**). The plan to build the *Lakshagriha* was Duryodhana and Shakuni's. It was meant to be a death trap as wax is highly flammable, and no one would suspect foul play thus ruling the Pandavas' death an accident. However, the Pandavas' uncle, Vidura, learned of the plot and warned the Pandavas in time. Ultimately, the Pandavas were able to escape safely. News of the fire at *Lakshagriha* reached Hastinapur, but Vidura was the only one that knew that the Pandavas were safe. As a result, Duryodhana thought the Pandavas were dead. Vidura shared with Bhishma that the Pandavas were indeed safe.<sup>26</sup>

## 4.5 The Hiding Period

Kunti and the Pandavas lived in hiding after they escaped the murder plot because Kunti believed that this would avoid further problems with the Kauravas. The Pandavas took shelter in a forest and disguised themselves as sages. The most important thing that happened during their hiding period was the Pandavas meeting with Krishna, their maternal cousin from Kunti's side. The Pandavas learned of a *swayamvara* (**svah-yum-vaar**), which was the practice of choosing a husband from a list of eligible suitors, taking place for the hand of the **Panchala** (**paan-chaal**) princess **Draupadi** (**drau-pah-dhee**). The Pandavas disguised themselves as Brahmins in order to witness the event. Krishna befriended Draupadi, and he told her to look out for Arjuna. The task to win Draupadi's hand was to string a steel bow and shoot a target on the ceiling—the eye of a moving artificial fish—while only looking at its reflection in the oil below. Only three men present were reasonably capable of accomplishing the task: Krishna, Arjuna, and Karna. Krishna was a spectator and a friend of Draupadi, so he did not attempt the task. Karna was denied the chance to compete by Draupadi given his low-born caste. When no royal princes could successfully accomplish the task, the *swayamvara* was opened up to the Brahmins. Arjuna, who was disguised as a Brahmin, won quite easily and went home after marrying Draupadi. When the Pandavas got home, they said, “Mother, see what we have brought today” indicating Arjuna bringing back Draupadi. Without looking up, Kunti said, “Whatever it is, share it among yourselves.” Aghast, they said, “Mother, it's a woman. We have brought a princess.” She turned around, looked at Draupadi, the most stunning woman she had ever seen, and said, “It doesn't matter. I told you to share, and that's it.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, Draupadi ended up becoming the wife of all five Pandava brothers. She shared a bed with each brother for a year and rotated from there on. Her opinion was regarded highly by all the five Pandava brothers, and she was very intelligent. After the wedding, the Pandavas decided it was time to go back to Hastinapur and claim what was theirs. The Kuru family elders and relatives negotiated a split of the kingdom. The Pandavas obtained a territory called **Khandavprastha** (**khand-hav-prsth**) which was filled with wild forests inhabited by Lord **Takshaka** (**thak-shak**), the King of Snakes and his family. Through hard work and the help of Krishna, the Pandavas were able to rebuild the whole region, including a new palace for themselves, and named it **Indraprastha** (**indruh-prasth**). They then invited their Kaurava cousins to their new kingdom. As Duryodhana explored the palace, he did not see a crystal screen and walked into it. As if that was not embarrassment enough, he then fell into a pool, thinking it was a solid floor.

<sup>26</sup> “Escape from Lakshagriha.” n.d. Hinduism for Kids. Accessed October 20, 2020.  
 “Birth of Pandavas and Kauravas.” n.d. Hinduism for Kids. Accessed October 20, 2020.  
<https://www.hindujagruiti.org/hinduism-for-kids/589.birth-of-pandavas-kauravas.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Sadhguru. “Mahabharat: Living the Story.” *Isha*, <https://isha.sadhguru.org/us/en/wisdom/article/mahabharat-living-story>.

Draupadi, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, and their servants laughed at him. Duryodhana was enraged by their insults and jealous of the newfound wealth of Pandavas, so Duryodhana decided to plan his revenge.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.6 The New Pandava Land, Indraprastha

The news of Draupadi's marriage to the Pandavas spread fast across the lands, eventually reaching Hastinapur. The blind King Dhritasrashtra ordered a feast in the honor of the marriage, and he made arrangements for the kingdom of Hastinapur to welcome the Pandavas. The Pandavas were given a royal welcome back to Hastinapur. Upon their arrival, Dhritasrashtra called the five Pandavas to the throne room. After consulting with his advisors, he had come to the decision to split a portion of the kingdom off for the Pandavas. The Pandavas agreed to the split portion.<sup>29</sup> When Dhritasrashtra decided to split the kingdom, he gave the Pandavas the portion with a haunted forest. This forest was ruled by Lord Takshaka, the King of Snakes. Yudhishtira knew the defaults of the kingdom he was given, yet he accepted without any arguments. Yudhishtira was getting ready to leave with the Pandavas when Lord Krishna intervened on his behalf. Lord Krishna demanded that along with the land, the treasures of the kingdom such as gold, horses, cattle, etc, should be divided between the Pandavas and Kauravas. The generous conditions put forth by Lord Krishna were unexpected, and Dhritasrashtra approved the offer because he wanted the Kauravas to look like benevolent and fair leaders despite the fact that the Kauravas had just offered the Pandavas a piece of land overrun by snakes.<sup>30</sup>

After the splitting of the kingdom, many people of Hastinapur decided to go with the Pandavas. They started on the long trek to their new kingdom. With the help of Lord Krishna, the Pandavas were able to successfully settle in their new kingdom of Indraprastha overnight. Lord Krishna quickly built palaces, towers, and new buildings in an area that was previously seen as uninhabitable. The Pandavas ruled their beautiful kingdom very wisely. Yudhishtira was a just and fair king. The kingdom flourished with peace and prosperity and the citizens were happy under the Pandava rule. The news of this prosperity spread to Hastinapur where Duryodhana was seething with jealousy and rage.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid

<sup>29</sup>“Mahabharat Episode 26: A New Beginning for the Pandavas.” 2017. Isha. <https://isha.sadhguru.org/us/en/wisdom/article/mahabharat-26-pandavas-beginning>.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid

<sup>31</sup>Anand, Gautam. 2016. “Chapter 17 – Indraprastha : The New Pandava Land.” <https://mymahabharatblog.wordpress.com/2016/12/03/chapter-17-indraprastha-the-new-pandava-land/>.

## 5 Starting Scenario: The Dice Game

Due to his humiliation at Indraprastha and the continued successes of Yudhishtira as a ruler, Duryodhana found himself growing increasingly envious. For this reason, Duryodhana and his uncle Shakuni hatched up a plan in which they could trick Yudhishtira into gambling away his riches and kingdom. Shakuni knew he would win at the game of dice they had planned due to his sheer skill at the game and his knowledge that Yudhishtira would never turn down an opportunity to play. The Pandavas are invited to the Kuru court and Yudhishtira is challenged to the game of dice. As predicted, he is unable to resist and ends up gambling away his kingdom, riches, brothers, and even his wife Draupadi. Now that Draupadi is considered the property of Duryodhana, he ordered that she sit on his lap and also ordered Dushasana to disrobe her as well.<sup>32</sup> Draupadi prayed to Krishna to save her, and Krishna granted her a miracle. As Dushasana unraveled her sari, the length of cloth seemed to be never-ending and eventually he had to stop due to exhaustion.<sup>33</sup> An enraged Draupadi tries to curse the Kuru court, but before she is able to, Dhritarashtra and Gandhari intervene. They fear revenge for the actions of their son by their allies and the gods, and so they return all of Yudhishtira's losses back to him, as well as granting Draupadi two wishes.<sup>34</sup>

Then, Duryodhana and Shakuni order that the game be played again. However, this time the conditions have changed. Shakuni says that if Yudhishtira loses this game, then he and his brothers must spend 13 years in exile. Additionally, the 13th year must be spent in hiding, and if they are found by the Kauravas, then the Pandavas will be forced to go into exile for another 13 years. This is where our committee begins. You are all in the court of the Kuru family in Hastinapur deciding how to move forward with the dice game conditions set in front of you. Will you play the game and face exile? Or will you change the course of history by setting your own rules?

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<sup>32</sup>"Duryodhana – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/duryodhana/>.

<sup>33</sup>"Draupadi – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/draupadi/>.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid

## 6 Characters

1. **Bhishma:** The son of King Shantanu and Ganga (goddess of the river), Bhishma is one of the most powerful warriors to have served the Hastinapur throne. Not only is Bhishma a great warrior, but he is also extremely intelligent, having been trained in the art of leadership by many great Rishis. Due to his oath of celibacy, Bhishma is seen as a prime example of an officer bound to his duty due to diligence and selflessness.
2. **Vyas:** Vyas is the author and one of the most important characters in the Mahabharata. He lives in the forest near **Kurukshetra** (**ku-rook-shay-thrah**) and is able to observe some events of the Mahabharata as they unfold. He is the grandfather to both the Pandavas and the Kauravas and serves as a spiritual guide to them throughout the story. Certain Hindu traditions also believe that Vyas is an avatar, or a physical manifestation, of the god Vishnu.<sup>35</sup>
3. **Draupadi:** She is considered one of the most important women in the Mahabharata. Draupadi is the daughter of **Draupada** (**drau-padh**), the King of Panchala. Draupadi is described as a beautiful dark-skinned woman, and upon her birth, it is prophesied that she would bring about the destruction of the Kuru line. She is the wife of each of the Pandava brothers and a good friend of the god Krishna.<sup>36</sup>
4. **Vidura:** Meaning skilled, intelligent, or wise in Sanskrit, Vidura serves as the trusted advisor to King Dhritarashtra during his rule. By being the uncle of both clashing families and a half-brother to King Dhritarashtra and Pandu, he is a respected authority figure to the Pandavas as well, even going so far as to warn them about Duryodhana's plans to sabotage them.<sup>37</sup>
5. **Yudhishtira:** The firstborn son of Pandu and Kunti from Yama (the God of Death). As the firstborn son, he is the rightful heir according to the order of succession. He is the most truthful man to have ever lived, having never lied to anyone, or disobeyed anyone.
6. **Bhima:** The second son of Pandu and Kunti from Vayu (the God of Wind). Bhima is hotheaded, and always ready to fight. He is skilled in mace fighting, and he is one of the strongest people in the kingdom. Bhima also married a **Rakshasi** (**rak-sha-si**), a female demon.
7. **Arjuna:** The third son of Pandu and Kunti from Indru (the God of Heavens). Arjuna is the second-most skilled archer in the kingdom, after Karna. He is the closest to the five brothers' wife, Draupadi and her friend, Lord Krishna.
8. **Nakul:** The first twin born to Pandu and Madri, from Ashwini Kumaras (the Gods of Medicine). He is a skilled swordsman and is rumored to be one of the most handsome men in Hastinapur. Nukul is prominently talented in **Ayurveda** (**ai-yoor-veda**), which is the practice of traditional medicine.
9. **Sahdev:** He is the twin of Nukul, and the youngest Pandu. Sahdev is often overlooked as the last Pandu, however, he is very skilled in fighting, especially with an axe. He is also very skilled in Ayurveda.
10. **Kunti:** She is the mother of the three eldest brothers of the Pandavas; Kunti was given a boon with which she could call on any deity and have a child with him without pregnancy. She is the first wife of Pandu, and the sister of **Vasudeva** (**va-su-dev**), the father of Lord Krishna. Kunti is a woman with high morals and social values, and she is always guiding her sons' actions.
11. **Karna:** Karna is the first son of Kunti, who used her mantra to summon **Surya** (**soor-yuh**), the sun god, and have Karna. He was abandoned by Kunti but was soon taken in by King Dhritarashtra's charioteer, **Adhiratha** (**uh-dhi-rath**). As Karna grows into adulthood, he becomes a warrior and seeks a position in the Hastinapur court by competing in a tournament, where he forms a strong bond with Duryodhana and a rivalry with his half-brother Arjuna.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid

<sup>36</sup>Ibid

<sup>37</sup>"Vidura – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <http://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/vidura/>.

12. **Duryodhana:** Duryodhana is the eldest Kaurav brother and the son of the blind King Dhritarashtra and Queen Gandhari. He is the crown-prince of the Kuru Kingdom and its capital Hastinapur along with his cousin Yudhishtira. He is loved by his family, but he has never been seen as equal to the Pandavas. Duryodhana is mentored by his uncle, Shakuni, who helps him mastermind plots against the Pandavas.
13. **Gandhari:** Gandhari is the princess of Gandhara (gaand-haar), Shakuni's sister, and the wife of the blind King Dhritarashtra. She is also the mother of a hundred sons and one daughter, the Kauravas. Gandhari is a virtuous woman and has high morals. Unfortunately, most of Gandhari's sons do not hold the same values as her.
14. **Dhritarashtra:** Dhritarashtra is the blind son of the late King Shantanu who is ruling the Kuru Kingdom and its capital, Hastinapur. He is not able to wield any weapons due to his blindness but is strong enough to crush iron with his bare hands. Although Dhritarashtra is a fair and just ruler, he is constantly torn between following moral law and the love he has for his eldest son, Dhritarashtra. He often condones the actions of his son solely because of his affection for him.<sup>38</sup>
15. **Dushasana:** Dushasana is a Kaurava prince and is the second eldest son of King Dhritarashtra and Gandhari. Dushasana is devoted to his elder brother, Duryodhana. As a result, he is closely involved in his older brother's schemes against the Pandavas and is in the Kuru court's inner circle. However, Dushasana has an affinity for alcohol and is considered to be weak.

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<sup>38</sup>"Dhritarashtra – Vyasa Mahabharata." Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/dhritarashtra/>.