



# The Five Ratnas of Mahabharata



## Mahabharatha Collection

 **Date:** 2025-10-30

 **Description:** Understanding the Pancha Ratnam - five invaluable gems that illuminate the moral and philosophical core of the Mahabharata

 **Tags:** mahabharata, pancha-ratnam, hindu-philosophy, sacred-texts, dharma

The five "Ratnas" (Pancha Ratnam), or invaluable gems, found within the Shri Mahabharatam serve to structure the text by highlighting concentrated areas of wisdom and conversation, thereby illuminating its moral and philosophical core.

The Mahabharata itself is a colossal work, roughly three and a half times the size of the Iliad and Odyssey put together, consisting of close to 1,25,000 shlokas. Due to its vastness and complexity, with about 1,600 characters, it is difficult to follow neatly. The five Ratnas function as precious components within this immense work, which is cherished as a "priceless and invaluable gem" in the tiara of Bharata Mata and is accorded the status of the "fifth Veda" (Bharata Panchamo Vedaha).

All five of these Ratnas are described as "beautiful conversations that exist" within the larger narrative.

## The Five Ratnas

### 1. Yaksha Prashnam

**Structure:** This is a compendium found toward the end of the third Parva, known as Vana Parva (or Aranyaka Parva).

**Illumination:** It is a conversation comprised of 124 questions and answers given by Yudhishthira. This section highlights the moral and philosophical wisdom, demonstrating Yudhishthira's composed and peaceful understanding of Dharma.

## 2. Vidura Niti

**Structure:** This is a set of questions posed by Dhritarashtra to his wise brother, Vidura.

**Illumination:** The conversation centers on ethical conduct and statecraft, stemming from the wisdom of Vidura.

## 3. Sanat Sujatiyam

**Structure:** This conversation consists of questions posed by Dhritarashtra to Sanat Sujata.

**Illumination:** Although noted as a "lesser known or a discussed work," its inclusion suggests an exploration of deeper, possibly esoteric, philosophical truths discussed between Dhritarashtra and Sanat Sujata.

## 4. Bhagavad Gita

**Structure:** This is the most famed conversation among the five Ratnas, embedded within the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. It consists of 700 verses and 18 chapters. The number 18 is highly significant in the Mahabharata, appearing in the number of Parvas (18), the number of Adhyayas in the Gita (18), and the number of days the yuddham (war) was fought (18).

**Illumination:** This dialogue encapsulates the core spiritual and philosophical teaching of the epic. The conversation takes place between: - Arjuna (Gudakesha), who represents the one who "had won over sleep" - Krishna (Hrishikesha), who represents the one who "won over his senses" (Hrishikam means Indriyam)

The Bhagavad Gita is described as the "penultimate one" of the five gems.

## 5. Vishnu Sahasranamam

**Structure:** This is the last of the five gems and is considered the "ultimate one". It is a conversation (Shat Prishni) that begins with a set of six questions between Yudhishthira and Bhishmacharya, who was lying on the bed of arrows (Sharatan Bhishma).

**Illumination:** In this section, Bhishmacharya summarized the Namas (names) of Bhagwan, which he had learned and bequeathed from his Purvacharyas. This conversation provides a comprehensive summary of devotional and spiritual knowledge.

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By identifying and highlighting these five crucial conversations, the Pancha Ratnam concentrate the moral, ethical, and spiritual teachings within the colossal frame of the Mahabharata, providing a clear philosophical guide for understanding the text.



## Reference

This blog post is based on notes taken from the following video : **Video Source:** [Watch on YouTube](#) For a more detailed explanation, I highly recommend watching the original video.



## Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

These articles are based on discourses by **Sri Dushyanth Sridhar**, who renders discourses in English & Tamil on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Vishnu Purāna, Bhagavad Gitā, Vishnu Sahasranāma, and Divya Prabanda in the upanyāsam, pravachanam, or kālakshepam style. Visit <https://desikadaya.org> for more information. These notes are presented solely for educational purposes to help viewers download and benefit from these teachings. Any incorrect interpretations or inaccuracies are mine and unintentional—please forgive me. For any feedback, please send an [email](#).