



Yaksha Prashnam - Background



Mahabharatha Collection

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Description: The profound incident from Mahabharata where Yudhishtira's wisdom and adherence to Dharma saved his brothers' lives through answering the Yaksha's queries

Tags: yaksha-prashnam, yudhishtira, dharma, mahabharata, pandavas, krishna, draupadi



The Mahabharata - The Fifth Veda

The Mahabharata, which contains the Yaksha Prashnam (Yaksha's Queries) incident, is considered a significant text, often referred to as the **Fifth Veda** (Bharata Panchamo Vedaha). It is described as the **longest epic the world has ever seen** and is said to contain **1,25,000 shlokas** (Sapadha Laksha Grantham). The Ramayana is considered a subset contained within the Mahabharata.

Gaining knowledge of the foundational principles of **Sanatana Dharma** requires studying the Itihasas (like Ramayana and Mahabharata) first, viewing them as essential preparatory material before approaching complex texts like the Upanishads or the Bhagavad Gita.



Hero and Heroine of the Story

The Hero: Yudhishtira

While figures like Bhishma (dismissed because his death was not peaceful, despite his longevity and knowledge), Bhima, and Arjuna (known for his Dhanur Vidya and Dharma) are mentioned, **Yudhishtira is the true hero.**

- Yudhishtira is characterized by his **firm commitment to Dharma** (righteousness)

- He is **decisive**; he remains firm when seeking peace, but once war is decided, he views it as a battle between Dharma and Adharma
- He is noted for **making correct decisions**

The Super Hero: Krishna

Krishna is also referred to as a **Super Hero** of the epic. He is deeply adored by women and played multiple roles for the Pandavas: best friend, hero, political advisor, and strategist.

The Heroine: Draupadi

Draupadi (Paanchali or Krishnaa) is generally considered the heroine of the Mahabharata.

- She is described as **beautiful** (Kaththalagi)
- She is compared to Sita in the Ramayana in terms of her crucial role, as the war was fought largely because of her
- Her relationship with Krishna is unique, defined not as husband and wife, but as **best friends**



Background of the Origin of Yaksha Prashna

The Yaksha Prashnam episode occurred during the time the Pandavas were completing their exile. They were finishing their **12 years of Vanavasa** (forest life) and were preparing for the **13th year of Agnjaatavasa** (living in disguise).

The Trigger

The incident was triggered by a Brahmin whose fire-generating sticks (Aranikattai) were carried away by a deer caught in its horn. The Brahmin came to the Pandavas and asked Yudhishthira to retrieve the sticks.

The Brothers' Ordeal

The four younger Pandavas suffered from immense thirst while trying to recover the sticks.

- **Nakula**, the first to arrive at a lake, attempted to drink the water despite an asareeri vak (disembodied voice) warning him to answer questions first. Because he failed to heed the warning, he fell unconscious
- **Sahadeva, Bhima, and Arjuna** followed and suffered the same fate after trying to drink without answering the questions

Yudhishthira's Wisdom

When Yudhishthira arrived, he showed **respect and consideration**, realizing the power that had defeated his invincible brothers. The entity, which appeared in the form of a crane and introduced itself as a **Yaksha**, offered to grant him water only if he answered its questions. Yudhishthira agreed, leading to the series of questions known as the Yaksha Prashnam.

This incident demonstrates Yudhishthira's **correct decision-making under duress**, contrasting with the previous haste shown by his brothers.



Reference

Watch the full discourse here: [Yaksha Prashnam - YouTube](#)



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](#).

