

The Story of the Descent of Consciousness into Matter in the Mahabharata

Shantanu (*God beyond creation*) has two wives. The first is Ganga (*Cosmic Intelligence, AUM*.) Ganga has eight children. She drowns the first seven in the Ganges, meaning that these qualities are hidden in the material world. Her first child is Katustha Chaitanya, or Christ Consciousness – spirit hidden at the heart of all creation. The next six are the governing intelligences of the causal, astral, and physical planes on a mass and individual level. Shantanu begs her not to drown the next child, and Bhishma (*individualization, or universal ego*) is born and is not drowned (*is apparent in creation*.) Then, to fulfill a promise, Ganga drowns (*hides*) herself.

Shantanu then marries a second time to Satyawati (*Primordial Nature as matter*.) She is the daughter of a fisherman and smells so foul that no one will touch her. Taking pity on her the sage Parasara blesses her with radiant beauty and a son, Byasa (*relativity, the power to discriminate*.) Shantanu and Satyawati have two sons: Chitrangada (*chitta, primordial feeling*) and Vichitravirya (*soul or divine ego*.) Both of these sons die without children. Vichitravirya, however, has two wives; Ambika (*negative doubt*) and Ambalika (*positive discriminating faculty*.) By ancient law Byasa agrees to produce progeny for them on behalf of his brothers.

From the union of Byasa and Ambika (*doubt*) is born a blind son, Dhritarashtra (*manas, the blind sensory mind*.) From the union with Ambalika is born Pandu (*Buddhi, discriminating intelligence*.)

Dhritarashtra marries Gandhari (*desires*) who blindfolds herself out of respect for her blind husband, and from their union are produced a hundred sons, the eldest of whom is Duryodhana (*King material desire*.) He becomes king regent, ruling the Kauravas and their kingdom in place of his blind father. His intense hatred and jealousy of his cousins, the Pandus, is the cause of the great war of Kurukshetra.

Pandu has been cursed for accidentally killing a sage and is forbidden to embrace a woman on pain of death. He marries Kunti (*dispassion*) and Madri (*attachment to dispassion*.) Kunti has been given five miraculous mantras that allow her to have sons by any chosen god. She has three sons: Yudhishthira (*bishuddha chakra*) by Dharma, Bhima (*anahat chakra*) by Vaya, and Arjuna (*manipur chakra*) by Indira. She gives the other two mantras to Madri who has twin sons, Nakula (*swadistan chakra*) and Sahadeva (*muladhara chakra*) by the Ashwani twins. Pandu dies young and the five Pandava children are raised in the court of their uncle, Dhritarashtra. Much of the Mahabharata involves their youthful adventures and the animosity of Duryodhana culminating in their exile from the kingdom. His refusal to give them back their rightful kingdom upon their return from exile is the immediate cause of the war of Kurukshetra.

At a swayamvara ceremony Arjuna, through his skill in archery (*meditation*) wins the hand of Draupadi (*Kundalini power*). Upon Arjuna's arrival home his mother, Kunti, before seeing Draupadi tells him to share his "prize" with his brothers. She endures the brothers' exile with them.

The main character in the Mahabharata is Krishna (*the divine in human form, spiritual eye*) who is cousin to both the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He agrees to help both sides in the great war, giving his army to Duryodhana and agreeing to serve Arjuna but only in the role of charioteer and advisor. His wise and loving council to Arjuna on the eve of the battle comprises the Bhagavad Gita.