



# CV Hindu Cultural Society Information Sheet



## *Were Krishna's Actions in the Mahabharata War justified?*

The Bhagavad-Gita is seen as a scientific guide to attaining self-realization. By itself, it is probably the most well-known work in Hindu literature. It is, however, simply an episode of the epic Mahabharata, which tells the story of the struggle for a kingdom between two branches of the same family. When the Lord Krishna spoke the Gita to his friend and devotee Arjuna, it was on the battlefield, prior to the start of a war.

The war was to be between the five Pandava brothers (Yudhistira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva), and their cousins, the Kauravas. Below is a *simple* summary of how the prospect of war arose. In the following paragraphs, it should be noted that there is at least one story (and generally several more) behind *each* sentence. The tapestry of these stories gives the Mahabharata a philosophical and political depth that is impossible to convey here.

Yudhistira, the eldest Pandava was the rightful heir to the kingdom. Under the influence of his uncle and blind father, Duryodhana, the eldest Kaurava, wished to inherit the kingdom. For this power, he attempted to kill his cousins. After his failed attempts, he challenged them to a gambling match, in which he cheated to win, and sent the Pandavas into exile. At this time, the Kauravas also publicly insulted Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, by their (failed) attempt to disrobe her. They failed because Lord Krishna intervened to protect his devotee.

After their return from exile, Duryodhana refused to yield the kingdom as he should have; arrogantly saying that he wouldn't even give them enough land into which a pin could be driven. Lord Krishna himself pleaded on behalf of the Pandavas for peace but the Kauravas declined all requests. If the Pandavas wanted their kingdom, war was now their only option. Arjuna initially did not want to fight against members of his own family, but through the Gita, Lord Krishna convinced him that it was his duty to do so.

During the war itself, Krishna suggested that it was their duty to use certain tactics. In the eyes of the Kauravas, these were seen as underhand tactics. Despite only being a charioteer, and therefore unarmed, it cannot be doubted that Krishna influenced the outcome of the war. The manners in which Bhishma, Jayadratha, Drona, Karna and Dhuryodhana were killed are certainly controversial. Also they are certainly (at least indirectly) attributable to Krishna.

Were His actions justified?



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