

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 1: Background-1 (May2 –May 8, 2018)

After finishing our yearlong series on Upanishads last week, we will now embark on a new series on Shrimad Bhagavadgita starting this week. Our task is made a little easier after studying the Upanishads since the philosophical content of the Bhagavadgita is largely an extract from the Upanishads. But before we start, we need to have some background information on the Author Maharishi Vyasa, the characters involved in Gita such as Kauravas and Pandavas (Arjuna in particular), as well as Lord Shri Krishna, the divine communicator with Arjuna in the latter's quest for the Truth. We will also explore if and how the author, normally referred to as Veda Vyasa, is related, biologically or otherwise, to any of the characters mentioned in the Bhagavadgita or in the great epic Mahabharat, which the Bhagavadgita is derived from. The truth of life, death, and eternity are revealed to Arjuna by Shri Krishna.



The Author Maharishi Veda Vyasa: In scriptures, Maharishi (or Brahmarshi) Vyasa is known by three different names, including **Krishna Dvaipayana, Badarayana, and Veda Vyasa**. The name Krishna Dvaipayana refers to his dark (Krishna) complexion and his place of birth on an island (Dvaipa). He was born in an island on the Yamuna river near Kalpi, Uttara Pradesh, India. This island was covered with Indian Jujube (Badara) trees, hence his name Badarayana. He was also the compiler or splitter (Vyasa) of Vedas, and so is mostly referred to as Veda Vyasa. Right from his birth, he had already possessed the knowledge of the Vedas, Dharmashastras, as well as the Upanishads. At a very tender age, Vyasa gave out to his parents the secret of his life that he should go to the forest and do Akhanda Tapas (Severe Penance). His mother at first did

not agree, but later gave permission on one important condition that he should appear before her whenever she wished for his presence. Vyasa took initiation at the hands of his twenty-first Guru, sage Vasudeva. He studied the Shastras under sages Sanaka and Sanandana. He compiled the **Vedas** for the good of mankind and wrote the **Brahma Sutras** for the quick and easy understanding of the Shrutis; he also wrote the **Mahabharat** to enable people of ordinary intellect to understand the highest knowledge in the easiest way. Vyasa wrote the **Eighteen Puranas** and established the system of teaching them through **Upakhyanas** or discourses. In this way, he conveyed the significance of three different paths of liberation from the cycles of birth and death, viz., Karma Yoga, **Bhakti (Upasana) Yoga, and Jnana Yoga**. Vyasa's *Jaya* (literally, "victory"), the core of the Mahābhārata constitutes the **Bhagavadgita**, the most sacred text of Hinduism, which covers diverse aspects of human life, including geography, history, religion, warfare, morality, and spirituality. Maharishi Vyasa is believed to have been born near the end of Dvapara Yuga, and lived through early years of Kaliyuga, more than 5000 years ago. Many Hindus celebrate **Guru Purnima** in honor of Brahmarshi Vyasa during the month of Ashadha which normally falls in the month of July. It is not only his birthday but also the day when he started writing the Brahma Sutras.

[Read Here for More Information on Brahmarshi Vyasa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vyasa)

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