



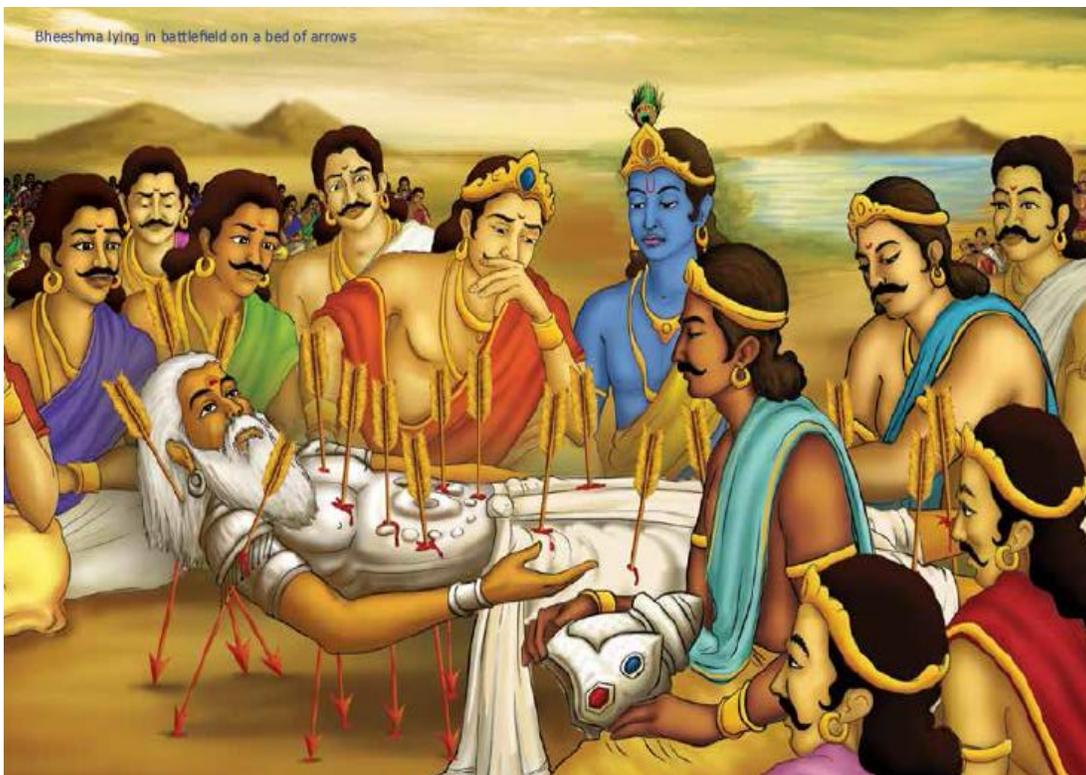
Bheeshma Nirvana

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When did Bheeshma leave his mortal coil?

In the chapters dealing with the war, *Bheeshma Parva*, in verses 6.114.86-100, after being mortally wounded, we find Bheeshma saying that he would wait until *Uttarayana* to die.

Again in the same *Parva*, in 6.116.13, he repeats that he is waiting for the return of the sun and the moon to breathe his last. He calls the alignment as *Sasi Surya Yoga*. *Sasi* is another name for the moon and *Surya* means the Sun.



Bheeshma lying in the battlefield on a bed of arrows

It is only in *Anushasana Parva*, the chapters after the war, in the *Mahabharata*, that we find Bheeshma mentioning the exact number of days as well as the particulars of the lunar month, day and phase.

The relevant verse reads as,

Parivrtto hi BhagavansahasransurDivakarah

Astapancasatamratryahsayanasyadya me gatah

Saresunisitagresuyathavarsasatamtatha.

Magho'yamsamanupraptomasahsaumyoyudhistira

Tribhagasesahpakso'yamsuklobhavitumarhati.

- Mahabharata 13.153.26-28

The translation reads as,

The thousand-rayed maker of day, the radiant Surya has turned around on his northward course. I have spent 58 sleepless nights. But it feels as though it has been a century since I have lain stretched on these sharp arrows. O Yudhishtira, the lunar month of Magha has come. This is the lit fortnight and remainder three parts ought to be.

Bheeshma thus states that,

- the Sun had turned around and *Uttarayana*, i.e northern movement of the sun had commenced
- the lunar month of *Magha* had arrived
- it was the bright fortnight – implying that it was *Shukla Paksha*

The last part of the verse mentions “3 parts” but seems to be shrouded in ambiguity on whether 3 parts have gone by or whether 3 parts are yet to come by. Also 3 parts of what, is not very evident either. This has stirred up many a debate among scholars and one finds many interpretations of this line.

However, this ambiguity is sealed by a verse in the *Shanti Parva*, which reads,

Shukla pakshasyaashtamyam

Maghamasasyaparthiva

prajapatye cha nakshatre

madyampraptedivakare

Nivritamatretvayane

uttarevaividikare

samaveswhayatmanam

atmanyevsamahitah

- Mahabharata, Shanti Parva 47 – 3

“In the ashtami of shuklapaksha of Magha month, in Rohininakshatra, when the sun was at zenith, around noon, when the sun had turned Uttara already, i.e. when the Sun had turned north, Uttarayana had begun, Bheeshma’s soul joined the Supreme Divine.”

i.e. Bheeshma breathed his last on the 8th phase in bright fortnight of *Magha*, i.e. on *Magha Shukla Paksha Ashtami*, now known as *Bheeshma Ashtami*.

The *Mahabharata* text describes the night of Bheeshma’s *Nirvana* further as mighty Saturn had stationed itself near *Rohinistar*, i.e. Aldeberan in Taurus constellation.



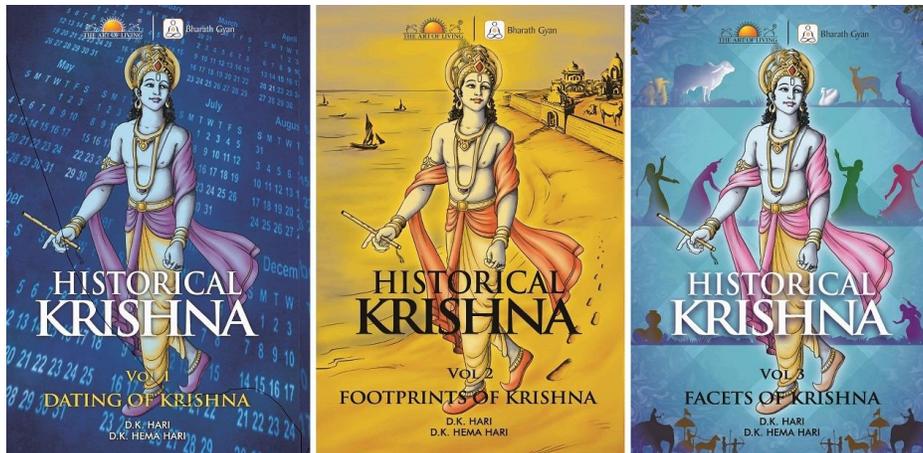
- Mahabharata 6.2.32

These are very exact statements and have to fit in the sequence of dates arrived at, through any method of dating.

From the details about Bheeshma’s demise, *Bheeshma Nirvana*, searching the past for such a time window which not only meets above descriptions from the text, but also fits with the time frame of the other events, we find that the winter solstice, *Uttarayana*, had occurred in lunar month of *Magha*, on *Shukla Paksha Sapthami*, 7th phase, brighter half, on 17th January, 3066 BCE.

Bheeshma therefore breathed his last on the next day, *Ashtami*, 8th phase of the moon, 18th January, 3066 BCE.

(The above is an extract from our book, “**Historical Krishna**”)





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