

LEARNING FROM THE MAHABHARATA



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1) **Motivation Is the Key To Success:**



When Arjuna denied to fight against his relatives and kill them, Lord Krishna stood up, motivated him, and thus Bhagvad Geeta was formed. The strong motivation given by Krishna at the time of need led to the epic victory of Pandavas. Just before the starting of the war, Arjuna denied killing Bheesham Pitaamah and other relatives.

He asked Krishna if he was committing any sin by slaying his dear ones just because of a piece of land. Lord Krishna stood up and motivated him. That was the time Bhagwat Geeta was formed. Krishna told him the truth of life. One of the most quoted Bhagwad Geeta quotes is – Karmanyne Vadhikaraste, Ma Phaleshu Kada Chana.

It tells us that we should only perform our duty and should not be entitled to the fruits of action. Those who acquire knowledge only to achieve something else will never be able to extract the true virtue of it. It was the strong motivation provided by Krishna which led to the Pandavas victory.

Motivation is another one of the important blogging lessons from Mahabharata. It shows that when you are motivated you can do anything and can achieve your goal. Motivation is the driving force that drives you to accomplish goals and it's necessary for all types of success. Everyone has its own reasons and ways to get motivated – Giving yourself a reward and find reasons why you should succeed etc.

Motivational facilitation and management skills of lord Krishna are, timelessly, still very useful and relevant for modern managers. By learning through these developments of the battle of krukshetra, modern manager can understand the maximum utilization of the available limited resources in order to ensure required outcome.

2) Sometimes Smaller Sacrifices Have To Be Made:



The death of brave hearts should be a blot on the powers-that-be, whose incompetence is often the main reason for the deaths of lives that had not even lived a complete life. Sacrifices for the nation is a much touted phrase in our country, but wonder why the sacrifices are made by the young only and seldom by the old.

The epic Mahabharata throws up many an instance where young brave hearts have had to lay their lives, while the seniors have managed to save theirs and often thanks to the younger generation. Abhimanyu, ventured into the Chakravyuhu with the permission of Yudhishtir, who knew that he was too young to face the might of Dronacharya who was a master in preparing such formations.

The death of Abhimanyu saved the day, besides the senior Pandavas. Ghatotgacha, the son of Bhima too was 'sacrificed' to save Arjuna. It was well known to all that if Ghatotgacha was unleashed on the Kaurava army, they would have no option but for Karna to use the divine weapon which he had planned to use against Arjuna, and kill Ghatotgacha. In his death, Ghatotgacha not only saved Arjuna, but inflicted a heavy casualty on the Kaurava army.

Finally, Barbareek, who was a grandson of Bhima had set out to participate in the war of Kurukshetra promising his mother that he would fight for the weaker side. When Krishna meets him and sees his immense talent and learnt that he would fight only for the weaker side, he posed a dilemma for Barbareek – whichever side he joined, would make the opposite side, weaker. Barbareek was in a fix.

In this state of dilemma, Krishna made him agree to be sacrificed as was the practice during those times to sacrifice a brave young man to Goddess Kali prior to any battle. Barbareek today is better known as Khatu Shyam Baba in the North.

3) Right Knowledge Is The Ultimate Solution For Our Problems:

Shishupal was the cousin of Krishna. The family priest had predicted at the time of Shishupal's birth that he would be killed by Lord Krishna. But Shishupal's mother tried hard to convince Krishna not to kill her son. She took a promise from Lord Krishna that he should forgive his first hundred mistakes.

Shishupal was a spoilt man and he abused Krishna ninety-nine times. When Krishna gave him a final warning not to make one more mistake, Shishupal just ignored that too and abused Krishna once more, making it the hundredth sin of his life. Thus Krishna chopped off his head with the Sudarshan Chakra.

If Shishupal's mother had convinced her son instead of convincing Krishna, she would have saved his life. Shishupal's wrong knowledge put him in trouble. The priest's prediction would not have worked if Shishupal worked on disproving it through right knowledge and renouncing sins.

Right knowledge also asks you to think not of the results, and this is probably the biggest lesson we get from the Mahabharata. It has been mentioned in the holy book that one should neither desire the benefits of his actions nor long for inaction. Both are extremes and extremes do not beget good results.

Focusing on the result and not on the action, only leads to poor performance due to distributed concentration and it demotivates a man if the desired results are not achieved. Even if the results are achieved, the man will be trapped in the demonic quality of pride, which eventually leads to destruction.

4)We should get out of our comfort zones more often:



Pandavas were constantly pushed out of their comfort zone right from their childhood. They were born and brought up in the forest. While they were young adults, they returned to a life of royalty. While in the palace, the Kauravas constantly harassed the Pandavas throughout their childhood and hence the Pandavas were always watching their backs.

Later, the kingdom of Hastinapur was divided and Pandavas once again had to leave Hastinapur and establish a new kingdom for themselves from scratch. They did this very successfully. They were again banished to the forest after the infamous ‘game of the dice’ where they lost everything to their cousins. Pandavas adapted and survived in the forest for 13 years and then returned to embark on a battle. On the other hand, the Kauravas always stayed within the comfortable confines of Hastinapur.

As a result, the Pandavas became fearless and were mentally and physically prepared to face any kind of circumstances they might encounter, while the Kauravas lacked even the basic understanding of life. Our natural tendency is to avoid change and hence we avoid getting out of our comfort zones. Our survival instincts kick in when change occurs as our brain is afraid of the unknown. We need to rewire our brains and firmly place this understanding in the mind that when we make changes or take calculated risks, either good things will happen, or bad things will surface.

Either ways, when all is over it will still be okay. This practice helps us deal with stress better, increases productivity and creativity. Even a small act of driving a different route to office everyday can boost our brain power tremendously.

5) Get a mentor — Even the best needs them



Along with being the greatest warrior of the time, Arjuna was also well versed in the fundamentals of life and duty. There was no match for him in any walk of life. Even then, he chose Lord Krishna to accompany and guide him during the war.

Before the war, both Arjuna and Duryodhana (the eldest of the Kauravas) approached Lord Krishna for help. They were given a choice of either choosing Krishna, the lord himself or his huge army. Arjuna made a wise decision and chose Krishna as his mentor. Krishna agreed to this on the condition that he will not fight in the war but only be Arjuna's charioteer. Duryodhana of course, chose to take Lord Krishna's army.

In the war that ensued, even though Pandavas had a much smaller army, under the able guidance and mentoring of Lord Krishna, they were able to defeat the Kauravas.

Just like Lord Krishna who gave Arjuna and the Pandavas invaluable advice during the war, good mentors and coaches act like charioteers in our life and steer us to success. They act as facilitators and help us to discover ourselves without hand-holding.

6)Selflessness Is The Only Way To Progress And Prosperity:



There was a sage named Barbarik; he wanted to support the weaker in the war. Barbarik was so powerful that he could have become the reason for the victory of the Kouravas. Only Krishna knew that the Kouravas would be the weaker team.

So he, already knowing about Barbarik met him on his way to the battlefield. Krishna, disguised as a Brahmin asked Barbarik to give away his head as a donation to him, and Barbarik, who never let go a Brahmin empty-handed, fulfilled his wish. Pleased by his selflessness, Krishna gave a boon to Barbarik that he would be known by the name of Shyam and will be worshipped as another form of Lord Krishna. Thus, selflessness helped him progress from being a warrior to a deity.

7) Every action or decision has consequences and most importantly, unintended consequences:

Out of the many things that the great epic Mahabharata teaches us, the important one is about “unintentional or unintended consequences” of our actions or decisions.

Kunti, mother of Pandavas, was blessed with a mantra (chant) by the recital of which she could entice any higher soul and could begot a worthy son. When she received this mantra, her curiosity knew no bounds and she tried it out to see if it really works. The result — Karna was born. At the time, she was still unmarried and begetting a child was taboo for unmarried females. Kunti left her new-born baby in a basket and set it afloat in the river so she does not have to face the wrath of the society.

Kunti’s curiosity caused serious repercussions for Karna and he suffered lifelong. Ultimately, he fought alongside Kauravas against his own brothers and was martyred in the Kurukshetra war. Kunti’s intentions were not bad, but the unintended consequences were too big to bear.

There are several such examples in the epic — The great grandfather Bheeshma’s oath to remain a bachelor and childless lifelong, the stalwarts of the court of Hastinapur allowed Duryodhana to conduct the ill-reputed Game of dice where the Pandavas lost everything, allowing Shakuni (Duryodhana’s uncle) to stay back in Hastinapur even when he had his own kingdom to take care of, ignoring Dhritarashtra’s (Kauravas father) unreasonable ambitions, all of which led to severe consequences and several more unintended consequences.

Often in our personal & professional lives, we take decisions or actions with shortsightedness or without a fore thought. The intentions may not be wrong. But such shortsighted decisions often causes more harm than good.

In every decision that we make, we must think and factor in as many possible repercussions and make our intentions clear to all the stakeholders beforehand to minimize unintended consequences and their effect.

8)Don't change the goals — adapt the plans and strategies:

The main goal of the battle of Kurukshetra was to uphold Dharma (the right way of living). During the war, under the guidance of Krishna (an incarnation of God himself), several rules were adapted, modified or even broken to ensure this goal was achieved.

When we are faced with an unprecedented problem, we stop trying and give up on our goals instead of adapting the plans and strategies and thinking of all possible ways to reach the goal.

What better example than with the covid19 pandemic. A lot of people and businesses adapted to the circumstances without losing sight of their goals and are thriving.

LEARNING OUTCOME:

There are the philosophical messages contained in various sections of Mahabharata, such as the Pandava's exile stories in Vanaparva, and various other places. Apart from this, the story as such offers various practical things to be learnt. Some that are coming right on the top of my head are: Yudhisthira pawns his brothers, himself, and Draupadi as a stake in a game of dice. He treats human beings as materials. He becomes the means by which Draupadi is humiliated.

But when Yudhisthira dies, he is shown around the hell for the one 'sin' he committed: that is, the utterance of an apparent lie (Ashwatthama has fallen, but he was an elephant) that led to the fall of Drona. Inferences from these two events is that, even though the first act was morally wrong, it was Dharma. Yudhisthira was following the Kshatriya Dharma all throughout. Thus, it is a very fine line between what is 'legally' correct and what is 'morally and ethically' correct. Karna is renowned for his acts of charity. But it is this very act of reckless giving-away without thinking for a moment of its consequences that led to his downfall.

Kauravas had numerically larger army than Pandavas. But Pandavas had the company of Krishna. And they were fighting for a just cause. Even though Duryodhana was correct from his own viewpoint (his claim was that, the Pandavas are not the direct sons of Pandu, so they did not have a claim on the throne), he employed cunning ways to oust them. He paid the price for his acts.

Karna fought for Duryodhana only for friendship, despite knowing that he could have ruled over the whole of the kingdom. This was only because of the trust Duryodhana showed on him. Drupada humiliated his friend Drona when the latter approached the former desperately for help. The result: Drona got his revenge by asking Arjuna to humiliate Drupada.

By doing this project I learnt to relate the situations that took place in Mahabharata and the real life situations. So that with reference to those situations, I can be able to take right decision which leads me to the path of Righteous Dharma and I also learnt about the people and their culture. I can be able to compare how the culture was now and back then, there were so many differences. So these are the things I learnt by doing this project.

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