



AMRITA
VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM

School of Engineering
Chennai Campus

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NAME: POSINA PRANAVEE

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DEPARTMENT: AMRITA DARSHANAM (INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
FOR SPIRITUAL STUDIES), AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM,
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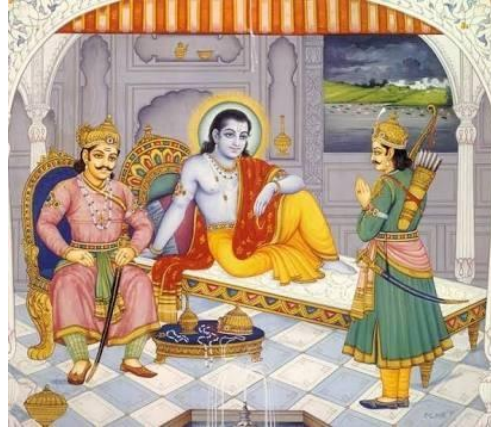
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LEARNINGS FROM THE MAHABHARATA

1) Quality Over Quantity



One of the important lessons from Mahabharata will be that always choose quality over quantity. Before the war, both the Pandavas and Kauravas had reached Dwarka to seek help from Yadavas. Krishna had clearly mentioned that he will not use weapons in this war. Duryodhana (from Kauravas) and Arjuna (from Pandavas) were asked to choose between Krishna (weapon-less) and powerful Narayani Sena (Krishna army). Arjuna had chosen Krishna and Duryodhana chose Narayani Sena considering that they are huge in numbers which will help him to win the Mahabharata war. But as the war progressed, it turned out to be a wrong decision for Duryodhana. Krishna, without even using weapons, led the Pandavas to the victory. So, it is always advisable to go for quality and not quantity.

2) Learning Never Ends



Another important lesson Mahabharata teaches us is that learning is a never-ending process. We should keep learning whatever comes in our way at any phase of life at any time. Pandavas and Kauravas started their learning from Guru Drona in Gurukul in their teenage and learned

many skills. But once they returned to Hastinapura, Kauravs hardly learned anything else. But at the same time, Pandavas continued to learn new things and improve their skills. Arjuna worshipped Lord Shiva and learned Pashupatastra. He even got divine weapons from Indra. Bheema (one of the Pandavas) also worshipped Lord Hanuman and found new ways to increase his strength and other important lessons. Their learnings helped Pandavas win the Mahabharata war. Similarly, you should never stop learning. You never know when a small thing can do a big change and can open new doors of opportunities.

3) Networking is Power

Networking is very important for any business model. Having a good and loyal friends/allies can help you win anywhere. Kauravas had extreme power and a prosperous kingdom – Hastinapura (greatest empire of the time). But Pandavas had no wealth, no power, and no kingdom. Before the Mahabharata battle, both sides reached out to various other kingdoms to have allies with them.

On one hand, Kauravas could manage a few allies from old relations like Gandhara (Shakuni), Sindhu (Jayadrath), and Shalya. On the other hand, despite having nothing, Pandavas got many powerful allies – Panchala (through Marriage with Draupadi), Dwarka (through marriage with Arjuna and Subhadra), Matsya (through the marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara) and The Rakshasas (through the marriage of Bheema and Hidimba). It was the loyal networking power that helped Pandavas in Mahabharata war. The take away here is a network with the right people and expand your reach. Connect with people who share a similar cause.

4) Half Knowledge Is Dangerous

This is a very popular saying. In the Mahabharata also, we come across this example. Duryodhana was very adamant about killing Arjuna's son – Abhimanyu so Kauravas plotted the Chakravyuh (an invincible army formation which is deadly enough to finish the war in one day) to kill him in absence of Arjuna. Arjuna knew how to tackle the vyuh but he was not available in Kurukshetra as he had to go and fight with the army approaching Matsya kingdom (one of the Pandavas' allies).



Abhimanyu only knew how to enter the Chakravyuha, but he didn't know how to come out of it. Had Abhimanyu not gone inside the vyuh, Kauravas had defeated the Pandavas army and won the battle. Hence, Abhimanyu decided to break the vyuh knowing that he will have to face the wrath of Kauravas Maharathis (likes of Karna, Guru Drona, Duryodhana, Ashwathama, Dushasana, and Shakuni) alone. His death at the hands of six great warriors was one of the more tragic and unrighteous acts committed in the Mahabharata war. He was brave and courageous which show his great character but half knowledge cost him his life. This story gives us the lesson that if you want to be successful you need to be well prepared for the task at hand.

5) Passion Always Find Success



Karna, being passionate about learning the archery skills, taught us that if you are passionate to do something, you will always find a way to succeed. From the birth itself, he had to face many challenges – was abandoned by his mother Kunti (Pandavas mother; Karna was the elder brother of Pandavas but was kept as a secret by Kunti), fought discriminations all his life, rejected by society, discarded by Guru Drona, insulted by Draupadi by calling him Suta-Putra (son of lower caste) and refusing to marry him in the swayamwara. Being born in the lower

caste, he was refused to learn archery and other skills by saying that these skills were only for Kshatriyas (higher caste) and not for Suta (lower caste). But his passion to learn led him to Lord Parashurama who taught him the archery and other divine skills. He became a great warrior (equivalent or even more powerful than Arjuna). In conclusion, he almost became a puppet in the hands of fate but was a perfect example of how one can fulfill one's passion despite all the hurdles and challenges life throws at us. He inspires us to work towards our goal no matter how difficult situations we come across in our life. If we are honest and dedicated to our goal, we will conquer all the difficulties and will eventually reach the goal.

6) Using Illegal Techniques Can't Help You Win



Kauravas had Shakuni as one of the key strategists. Throughout his life, he had only focused on getting his work done even if that required using illegal techniques. He tried everything to make Duryodhana – the King Of Hastinapura. He even tried to kill Pandavas – by burning them in the fort of lac, giving the poison mixed with a sweet dish to Bheema, playing the cruel dice game to make Pandavas slave and insult Draupadi by undressing her. Despite trying all the illegal strategies and methods in the Mahabharata war, he could not defeat the Pandavas. Pandavas had Lord Krishna as the key strategist and planner. It was his wisdom, knowledge, and strategies that helped Pandavas to win the Kurukshetra Mahabharata war.

7) Teamwork and Assigning the task correctly

Building a team is an easy task but teamwork and task assigning are important aspects. That's what even we have seen in Mahabharata as well. Kauravas had a great team with many powerful Maharathis such as Bhishma Pitamaha, Guru Drona, and Angraaj Karna who were

undefeatable. They could not be defeated but still, they got killed and could not make Kauravas win the Mahabharata battle. One major thing missing was teamwork and a collective motive. Bhishma and Drona did not want to kill Pandavas and wanted only to capture them so that Kauravas can win the war. Karna only wanted to kill Arjuna and prove he is the greatest of all. He had promised Kunti that he will not kill any of the other Pandavas. But on the other side, Pandavas had a collective motive and correct task assignment.

- Shikhandi was destined to kill Bhishma as per Lord Shiva's boon
- Drishtadyumna was destined to kill Guru Drona as he was born to do so
- Arjuna was chosen to kill Karna
- Bheema had pledged to kill all Kauravas and was assigned this task.
- Yudhishtira, Nakul, and Sahadev were assigned to kill the army of enemies and other tasks based on their talent and skills.

They showed great teamwork and won the historic war.



The lesson here is that the right team is made by selecting the right individuals. While working in a team, you should find talent within the team and assign tasks accordingly. Everyone has a unique talent and skills.

8) Keep Your Words & Promises



Karna was very kind and generous. He believed in selfless charity and due to which he was known as Danveer. He had promised that after every morning prayers and Surya Namaskaram if someone begs him something he will donate that without a second thought. Karna had a natural armor (Kavacha & Kundalas) provided by God Sun which acted as a shield whenever he was in danger. It was very precious to him and could have won the war for Kauravas. In order to protect Arjuna, his godfather Indra begged for alms where he asked for both Kavacha & kundalas. Karna had already got the wind of it but he selflessly donated them to Indra. Indra was so moved by this gesture, he gave Karna his vajra (a powerful weapon which could kill Arjuna). This teaches us that one should always keep his words.

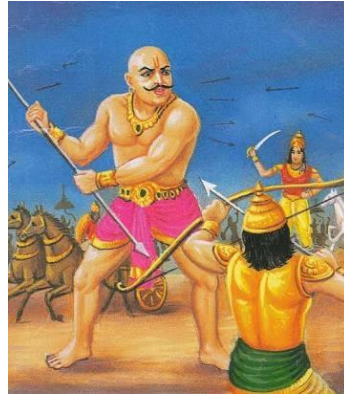
9) Motivation Is the Key To Success



Just before the starting of the war, Arjuna denied killing Bhishma Pitamah 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 – Karmanye 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. 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.

10) Sometimes Smaller Sacrifices Have To Be Made



After Arjuna killed Jayadratha with the help of Lord Krishna, Kauravas decided to attack Pandavas camp in the night itself to kill Arjuna. Karna had got the deadliest weapon from Indra which could kill Arjuna so they wanted to bring Arjuna in front of Karna at any cost. Krishna knew this strategy and asked Bheema to take help from his devil son – Gatotkacha. Gatotkacha started destroying Kauravas' army. Krishna wanted to save Arjuna and he knew Karna will be forced to use that weapon on Gatotkacha to save Kauravas instead of Arjuna. Krishna sacrificed Gatotkacha's life to save Arjuna's life. Similarly, success does not come without any price. We also need to sacrifice a few things at times to achieve our goal.

11) 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. Someone has rightly stated — Life happens just outside our comfort zones.

12) 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 forethought. 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.

As the age old saying goes- "The way to hell is paved with all good intentions!".

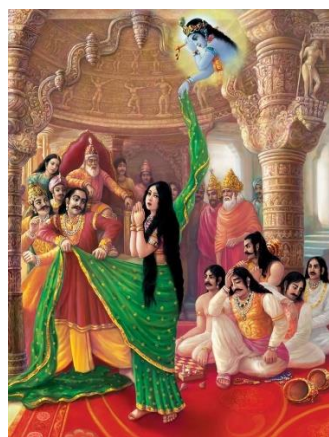
13) Never Give Up On Yourself



When Guru Dronacharya denied to accept him as a student, Eklavya did not lose the spirit and the desire to learn archery. He took the soil from the traces of footsteps of Guru Dronacharya, made a symbolic teacher out of that and practised the skill of archery all by himself, and thus excelled in it. This teaches us to never give up on ourselves. Lord Krishna knew that a hundred sons of Gandhari along with the others had to be sacrificed for the welfare of the future generations, the innocent masses. He told Arjuna to kill his own kins, for the bigger purpose of establishing Dharma. This is the most important lesson and serves as the conclusion of the whole Mahabharata. The real aim of every man is Dharma, righteousness. Without giving up on the self, one should keep walking on the path of righteousness.

14) Wrong Thinking Is The Only Problem In Life

Krishna saved Draupadi while she was being humiliated in the court of Dhritarashtra. When she met him after the incident, the first question she asked was, why she was chosen by nature as the victim of the incident. She questioned if it was because of some poor karmas or misdeeds she might have done in her past life. To this Krishna replied that it is not the victim, but the victimizer who should be credited with bad karmic records in past life. Therefore, he said that it was the misdeeds of Yudhishtir that she became a part of such a sinful act.



Thus, though Draupadi suffered, God came to save her and was there by her side all the time. But believing that it was her past mistake for which she was being punished by nature, was a wrong way of thinking. Such thoughts would have just undermined her faith in herself as well as God. Right thinking also means checking your beliefs, thus moving towards right belief as well as self-belief. It was all on the basis of right belief that Krishna's father could carry baby Krishna to Gokul in a basket amidst the heavy rains despite being in the captivity of Kansa. It was all because of immense faith in oneself that the Pandavas were successful in defeating the

Kouravas. The best teacher of archery, Dronacharya, had denied to accept Ekalavya as his student. Still, it was all the power of self-belief that he is today known for his excellent skill in archery.

15) Renounce The Ego And Individuality And Rejoice In The Bliss Of Infinity

Krishna tells us to believe that we are a part of a higher being, the ultimate power, from whom all the lives and the soul have come. When we know that the body we possess is mortal but the soul is real and immortal, only then can we rejoice. We need to believe that we are a part of the supreme power, who is infinite in all measures.

Trapped in the selfish desires we forget to trust what God does. People often repel changes. They need to know that change is the only constant. Nothing in the universe has ever remained same. Krishna himself has said in the Mahabharata that change is the law of nature. Lord Krishna himself had to see drastic changes all throughout his life. Born to some other parents and looked after by others, he had a peaceful life in Gokul and Vrindavan, but had to leave it at the call of duty. Similarly, he was in love with Radha but got married to Rukmani. Amidst all kinds of changes in his life, he handled himself as well as the situations very well. This change is evident in the life of the Pandavas. While at one point of time, they were the lords of palaces, at others they had to wander in the forests, hiding their true identities, all for the bigger goal of Dharma.

16) 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.

17) 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.

As author and success coach, Tony Robbins states, “Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach.”

18) Be Diplomatic – Pen is Mightier than the Sword

King Pandu was on his quest to expand the borders of Hastinapur's empire. He decided to attack the kingdom of Madra.

Madri was the princess of Madra and she secretly adored Pandu. But Madra king was not in friendly terms with Hastinapur and hence the chances were very thin. This was the perfect moment she was waiting for.

She went to Madra king and told him that defeating the hastinapur army is no easy feat. Even if you defeat him, you will lose thousands of men, wealth and property. The only way to permanently avoid this war is to offer me to King Pandu and make friendly relationship with Hastinapur so that they can never attack Madra kingdom in future.

Madri acts diplomatic by not revealing her desire that she wants to marry Pandu. Instead she focusses on the part that she is helping her kingdom and saving the lives of thousands of people who might have otherwise died in the war. One diplomatic decision can exceed the might of millions of men and an entire army. Pen is mightier than the sword. Be diplomatic when its required.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Mahabharata throws light on what we must not do in life. By invariably doing the wrong things, the characters of the Mahabharata tell what we must avoid in our own lives. The main theme of the Mahabharata is the idea of sacred duty. Every character in the epic is born into a particular social group, or caste, that must follow the duty prescribed to it by sacred law. The characters who perform their sacred duty are rewarded, while those who do not are punished. This is the great lesson that Lord Krishna gives Arjuna when he begins to doubt his role in the battle.

In conclusion, as Lord Krishna would have us believe, we need to remember that we are social as well as moral beings and we need to take a decision that is best suited for the maximum number of our stakeholders when faced with grey areas of decision making that impact a large number of people. Being one of the greatest Hindu epics, each character in the Mahabharata has something to teach us. Imbibe these lessons from the Mahabharata and make your life more meaningful. Remember, wrong means do not justify a right end.

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