The Mahabharat as a Foundation of the Indian Knowledge System: Educational and Ethical Perspectives

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Abstract:

This research paper discusses how the Indian text, the Mahabharata, has influenced the Indian Knowledge System. The Mahabharata is an important epic poem in Indian literature. This religious text has profoundly influenced the Indian Knowledge System. It has impacted various aspects of Indian culture, philosophy, religion and social structure. The fundamental ideals and principles of Indian literature are still shaped by an ancient work from millennia ago. The epic serves as a vital source for writers, inspiring a range of genres and styles. This epic has had a special influence on the Indian Knowledge System. Consequently, particular focus has been directed towards the epic's impact on the Indian educational framework and knowledge system. The influence of moral philosophy (ethics) and pedagogical approaches has been emphasised.

Keywords: *Knowledge, Spiritual Education, Truth, Violence, Ethics, Value Education.*

Introduction:

The Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, offers profound teachings on various aspects of life and management principles. Despite being an ancient book, it contains timeless wisdom that remains applicable to modern management practices. Although these contemporary management terms are not explicitly mentioned in the epic. Yet the stories, characters, and their actions within it provide valuable lessons that can be applied to modern institutions. This article examines how the Mahabharata has shaped India's social values, educational system, and customs, exploring their historical, cultural, and ethical implications.

The, written by the sage Vyasa (Krishan-Dwaipayana Vyasa), Mahabharata described as "not a history but a mythological story". It describes the dynastic struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas for the throne

of Hastinapur. Within this central story is a vast struggle of educational discourses and allegories that encompass an aspect of human life and knowledge management prevalent in ancient India.

Vyasa himself says that, "Whatever there is in this world for knowledge about the various paths and goals of life is in this book; and whatever is not here is not to be found anywhere" (Vyasa,1990).

The main theme of the epic is to explore the complexities and nuances of religion, the actions of its characters, and the moral dilemmas they face, teaching that adhering to moral principles, even when difficult, is crucial for personal growth and social harmony. A key part of the Bhishma Parva is the Bhagavad Gita, a profound philosophical dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna. It is considered the essence of the Vedas and Upanishads, providing insight into karma, devotion, knowledge, and the path to spiritual liberation.

The epic is an integral part of both traditional and modern Indian education systems, influencing literature, art, dance, and oral tradition. The Mahabharata is a living tradition that connects ancient wisdom with contemporary life, providing a holistic framework for understanding existence and navigating the complexities of the human condition.

Research Questions:

1. How can lessons from the Mahabharata help students improve focus, motivation, and moral values?

2. What do different characters of the Mahabharata teach students about handling failure, choosing good friends, and following the right path?

Research Objectives:

1. To analyse lessons from the Mahabharata to help students improve focus, motivation, and moral values.

2. To analyse the different characters of the Mahabharata teaches students about handling failure, choosing good friends, and following the right path.

Methodology:

The researchers employed a qualitative approach and analysed the data using the content analysis method. This research paper is based on some secondary data. The data has been sourced from various research reports, journals, websites, research papers, magazines, daily newspapers, and educational textbooks.

Analysis:

The Mahabharata is not a self-help book or a collection of stories about gods and demons; it is a blueprint, a guide that provides direction for every step of life. The Mahabharata also teaches us what to do and what not to do.

Objective 1: To analyse lessons from the Mahabharata to help students improve focus, motivation, and moral values.

i.   Do not be a Goldfish:

The biggest problem for students is distraction. Nowadays, in the internet generation, students read their studies and notes on their phones and also engage in celebrity gossip. Then our brain gets contused. Reels have destroyed our brains. Also, various studies have shown that "The typical person has an attention span of

8.25 seconds." (Carr,2010). This means that a student gets distracted every 8 seconds. In fact, a goldfish's memory is 10 seconds. And our 8 seconds means that we are more distracted than a goldfish. But in the Mahabharata, there is a solution to this problem. That is, Guru Dronacharya ties a wooden bird to a tree in a quiet place. He calls all his students for a test. He says, "Tell me what you can see before shooting an arrow" (Vyasa, 1990). Yudhishthira says, "I can see trees, leaves, birds." (Vyasa,1990). Bhima says, "I can see birds and pulses" (Vyasa,1990). Almost all the students said the same thing; in that sense, no one was wrong, because none of these students were bad students, but Arjun was extraordinary. So, Arjun said, "I can only see the bird's eye, nothing else." We all know this story, but we can learn from it rather than just thinking of it as a story. From here, students must identify a goal that will set them apart. We have to find a goal that will make them extraordinary. A goal that is not just for passing the exam but for making them a good person, which will give meaning to all your steps. Which you have to find out yourself: true Lakshya, true goal, can only be internal; it can't be external. Once this goal is fulfilled, the phone will disappear on its own, setting you apart from the ordinary and making you more like Arjun.

ii. The biggest fear:

The biggest fear of any student is failing. Students are most afraid when the exam results are released. If you think about it, you are more afraid of failing a four-letter exam than a four-letter exam. For this, many people do not give themselves a chance and end up lying to themselves. But here I remember the story of Karna from the Mahabharata, who was rejected from birth. After Kunti gave birth, he threw her into the water and floated her. Then he was trying to learn the art of the bow. But Dronacharya said, "He is not a Kshatriya, so he cannot be taught the art of archery" (Vyasa,1990). Later, Karna finds a way to learn from Parashurama, even if it means lying, but he is also punished for this deception. His punishment is a curse: when his own knowledge is needed most, he will forget it. This is what happened to Karna in the end. In the end, Karna was insulted by being called a son of a bitch. However, Karna never backed down because of this and went to the battlefield, becoming a warrior capable of fighting alongside Arjuna. As a result, Arjun understood that rejection is a form of redirection.

iii. The influence of society:

You are the ordinary five people with whom people spend the most time. The biggest difference between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is that their friend circles were different. Duryodhana was both strong and intelligent. However, he was in the circle of a manipulator like Shakuni and a yes-man like Karna, who never said that Duryodhana was wrong; he did not have the power to say that he was going in the wrong direction, which was one of the reasons for Duryodhana's downfall. Because they never asked questions in their friend circle, they just disappeared. Toxic Friend Circle. It doesn't Always Look Toxic. Where the Kauravas had Shakuni and the Pandavas had Krishna. When Arjuna had doubts, Krishna would answer him. When Arjuna became overconfident, Krishna would question his achievements. Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer not only on the battlefield but also in the politics of life. This means you need a friend in your life who will point out your mistakes and help you become a better person.

iv. Finding your own Shri Krishna means finding your Dharma:

In life, everything does not happen by focusing on talent; sometimes, we need internal power to guide us, and sometimes, even after everything is done, we feel confused, lost, and lonely. Then all the steps seem wrong. Then we have to remember that- this happens to the best of us. Sometimes there is darkness around us, and we feel like we freeze. Just like that, when Arjun froze, it was also the time to fight, and not only fight, but also win. Then, he had knowledge, intelligence, scriptures, and power, but he needed Shri Krishna in his life to remind him of the word 'Religion'. Religion does not mean any particular English term; here,

religion is a universal concept and, with it, a personal one. One must discover one's own religion. The way to find this religion is- Find your purpose, don't lose your ethics and morals, build a better world, perfect nature, and be mindful of your actions. If we help students find this religion, then we will see a better generation, one that leaves the world better than it was found. So, find the Krishna of your life and worship your religion. Whenever religion declines and unrighteousness increases, God appears to establish religion, an important aspect of knowledge.

"Whenever there is a decline in religion and an increase in unrighteousness, I create myself" (Vyasa,1990).

v. Emphasis on action:

Lord Krishna says in verse 47 of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita of the Mahabharata:

"The mother rarely bears fruit through her action. The mother is the one who does the work of the community" (Vyasa,1990).

This means you have the right to perform the action, but not the result of the action. This was originally said to encourage Arjuna to perform his duty without worrying about the outcome of the fight; the meaning here is that one should simply do one's work without being attached to the result of any action. When Arjuna was hesitant to fight, Krishna told him this so that he could concentrate on fulfilling his duty without worrying about the results. With this knowledge, students can understand that one can also succeed through action without being greedy for results alone, as Arjuna did in the battle of Kurukshetra.

Objective 2: To analyse the different characters of the Mahabharata, the text teaches students about handling failure, choosing good friends, and following the right path.

a. Arjun

From the character of Arjuna in the Mahabharata, we learn about dedication, focus, a sense of duty, and the right path even in difficult situations. He was a great archer who worked hard to achieve his goal and always prioritised his duty. Arjuna's life experiences and his conversation with Lord Krishna teach us valuable lessons about duty, religion, and the spiritual aspect of life.

b. Shri Krishna

We can learn many important life lessons from the character of Shri Krishna in the Mahabharata, such as focusing on duty, following the right path, standing against wrongdoing, and fighting when necessary. He taught Arjuna that one should perform one's duties without worrying about the consequences of one's actions. From his life, we understand the difference between right and wrong and get inspiration to fight for the truth.

c. Karna

From the character of Karna in the Mahabharata, we learn about the depth of confidence, loyalty, sacrifice, and friendship. At the same time, we also learn about the consequences of ego and excessive focus on rewards, as well as the dangers of being led astray.

d. Kunti

From the character of Kunti in the Mahabharata, we learn about devotion to religion and truth, the powers and limitations of motherhood, resilience in the face of adversity, and the importance of family unity. As an

ideal mother, she teaches her sons to follow the path of truth and justice, yet she also manages to cope with an exceptional power and the circumstances that result from it, such as concealing Karna's birth.

e. Bhima

From the character of Bhima in the Mahabharata, we learn valuable lessons about strength, commitment, justice, and a profound love and sense of responsibility towards family. He was determined to keep his promises, such as his promise to drink the blood of the chest of injustice, which is an integral part of his character.

f. Duryodhana

From the character of Duryodhana, we learn about the terrible consequences of pride, greed and misuse of power. From his character, we can also learn that injustice and bad company lead people to the path of destruction and that power should not be misused under any circumstances.

g. Pandavas

From the character of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata, we learn valuable lessons in duty, determination, concentration, and adherence to one's religion. They never gave up, even in the face of adversity, and stood firm in defence of their ideals. Arjuna's dedication and courage to overcome fear also inspire us.

Educational Implication:

The Mahabharata has had a profound moral, humanistic and philosophical impact on the Indian education system, teaching character formation, values (Dharma) and a sense of responsibility. It teaches goal-oriented thinking through examples such as Arjuna's focus or Ekalavya's concentration, and also provides lessons on karma and neutral duty through the Bhagavad Gita.

The educational implications of the Mahabharata are discussed in detail below:

a. **Moral and Values Education:** Through the study of the Mahabharata, we learn the motto 'Dharma rakshit rakshatah' (If you protect Dharma, Dharma will protect you). It teaches honesty, justice and the triumph of good over evil.

b. **Character building:** Through the Kauravas' fall from pride and the Pandavas' sacrifice, we are helped to build humility and morality in our lives.

c. **Attention and Concentration:** The story of Arjuna noticing the bird's eye remains a powerful inspiration for students to maintain concentration and focus.

d. **Strong determination:** Ekalavya's devotion to his Guru and hard work teach him how to achieve the impossible.

e. **Professional responsibilities and work:** The Bhagavad Gita teaches that one should do one's duty without expecting any reward.

f. **Crisis Resolution:** This epic poem teaches us to make decisions with patience and courage when facing adverse situations in our personal or social lives.

Conclusion:

The Mahabharata is a multifaceted system of Indian knowledge that has exerted a lasting influence on ethics, education, and human nature, remaining relevant today. Its teachings include the importance of duty beyond attachment, the consequences of pride and bad associations, and the need for a complete education, as depicted by the various characters in the Mahabharata. Ultimately, while the knowledge of the epic is invaluable, action and regular interactions are inevitable, and life is a complex balance of good and evil.

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