

LEARNING LESSONS FROM RAJ DHARMA: THE CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

This research paper majorly focuses upon the concept of Raj dharma – “rule by the sovereign” which was prevalent in the ancient India and also talks about the great epic Mahabharata which is considered as the storehouse of wisdom. Raj Dharma expects the king to be righteous and impartial towards his subjects and aims for their welfare. Truth, morality, justice, peace and prosperity are its building blocks. It teaches simple living, sacrifices, devotion, humanity, commitment and charity. However, just like any other vision, this too has changed and modified over time. There are some who strive for it and others who believe that in present conditions of inequalities it cannot be achieved. They say that those who propagate Raj Dharma today just talk about a utopian society the ideals of which can just be discussed and conversed but cannot be implemented. This research paper is an attempt to throw light on the lessons which we can learn from the past events rather than blindly talking about them or using them for the vote bank.

Keywords: Raj Dharma, Morality, Good governance, Humanity and Vote Bank.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Hypothesis Formed

The hypothesis that was formed before undertaking research related to this project was that the Raj dharma is considered the best way of governing people. Even today people believe that if it is preached morality, justice, prosperity, and peace will be ensured. There will be an orderly and a peaceful life thus, transforming the wrongdoers into humane and obedient individuals.

2. Research Methodology Used

In preparing the research paper the researcher has referred to various articles, journals, online blogs, newspaper articles etc. Also, modern works on polity are consulted and all these resources have been duly cited and acknowledged.

3. Limitations

There are chances that the researcher's personal bias might creep into the research work however, it is duly taken care of and the ideas are backed by proper facts and information. The paucity of time also obstructed the smooth progression of the paper as there wasn't enough time to carry out survey-based research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ambit of Dharma is very wide. It engulfs even those concepts or ideas which we would have never heard or talked about. In literal sense, *Dharma* refers to the duties an individual is bound to perform. It is a helping hand for those who are in a precarious situation. It involves all the custom, tradition, rules, regulation, religion and culture that are required to run a peaceful society. If we talk in general sense, without Dharma we cannot run this world i.e. if nobody performs his duties there will be chaos and commotion all over.

It says that the deeds of a person must not hurt others. They shall always assure the welfare and growth of the society. According to the Vedic literature, Dharma means supreme knowledge. When a learned man performs righteous act, it is *Dharma*. The speech of a scholar is *Dharma*. The law he propagates and follows is *Dharma*. There are certain requirements of *Dharma*, it proposes beliefs and principles that society must follow for improving the conduct of man.

According to Manu, good behaviour and complacency are *Dharma*. According to Upanishads, nothing is more powerful than *Dharma*. It is even powerful than a Kshatriya because a virtuous weak man can defeat a sinful robust man. As per Manu, if honesty is *Dharma*, *dishonesty can never be Dharma*. In Mahabharata it is written that in primitive age there used be to be no king, no state to govern and people lived on *dharma*.

1.1. Raj dharma

Raj dharma is considered to be the greatest of all *dharmas*. It refers to the duty of the king to govern his subjects and the way through which he can attain his goals. It is believed that if he strictly follows the concept of Raj dharma, he will gain wealth and opulence. Usually, it is associated with the *Kshatriyas* because they were the ruling class. In the ancient India, the society was divided into four varnas and the Kshatriya Dharma was one of them. They were meant to serve the society with their military and administrative skills. They were expected to reward the righteous and punish the wrongdoer, have knowledge of scriptures, should be ready to die in the battlefield for the benefit of his kingdom. He acts as a mother, father and God

towards his subjects and if he does not work for the welfare of his people then he is a thief and will definitely attain hell after death.

Mahabharata even mentions that a king should be alert like a dog, wise like a vulture, easy going like a crane and infiltrate into the territories of the opponent like a snake without any fear. He should be adroit, ingenious and potent and not a coward.¹

1.2. Danda

The term *danda* implies to the punishment given to the wrongdoers to keep them on the right path. It helps king in maintaining a balance between the evil and upright deeds of his subjects. It actually acts as a sword of the king that arises fear in the heart of the offender. Policies in this arena are called *dandaniti* which opines that it is because of the policy of *danda* that the world is established in a good path. As indicated by the divine inception of Dandaniti, there was no lord, no rebuke and chastiser, no state at the beginning of the krta yuga. Individuals lived joyfully and rescued each other by their own temperance. However, gradually, the circumstances changed. Wickedness prevailed and chaos sneaked in. In this condition individuals drew nearer to Brahmā and mentioned him to eliminate the clamorous condition and to safeguard the world. At that point, Brahma formed an extraordinary composition, comprising of 1,00000 parts, with the title Nīṭisāstra. This composition continuously boiled down to various authorities like, Siva, Brahspati and Sukra. Progressively these compositions were summed up to help individuals for the coming ages.²

1.3. Dandaneeti

The Mahabharata highlights the need and significance of Dandaneeti, it appears as “the most loved concept of the Epic”. On the enquiry of Yudhishtra on rajdharma, Bhisma answered, as per educated and savvy, the royal obligations, which are called rājadharmā, is the most elevated obligation. It is the asylum of the whole living creatures.

sarvasya jīvalokasya rājadharmah parāyanam //³

¹ Puja Mondal, *Concepts of Danda, Dandaneethi, Dharma and Raja Dharma*, YOURARTICLELIBRARY.COM, (July 5, 2021, 6:05 A.M.), <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/political-science/concepts-of-danda-dandaneethi-dharma-and-raja-dharma/40148>.

² Swapna Borah, *Rajdharma in the Mahabharata*, SHODHGANGA, (July 5, 2021, 6:33 A.M.), <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/28095>.

³ Ibid.

Grandsire Bhishma explained to Yudhisthira that, the lord makes the four ages by legitimate utilization of Dandanīti these are specifically, Satya (Krta), Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali or bad habit. When the ruler rules with a total and absolute dependence on the Dandanīti, the premier of ages called krta or Satya. Around then, the honourable lead, everything being equal, and the individuals from the four varnas adhere to their particular obligations. In the period of Krta, the Vedic customs were performed all over. Individuals were sound, long-living, and widows are not to be found. In reality, uprightness and bliss established in a state. At the point when the ruler depends upon three-fourths of Dandanīti and leaving out one - fourth of the same, the age called 'Tretā'. When the ruler notices the Dandanīti by just a half or 50% and neglects the other half, at that point the age sets in a 'Dvāpara'. That time, all conditions disintegrated become still more regrettable. Furthermore, when the ruler, deserts the Dandanīti thoroughly, persecutes his subjects by evil methods for assorted sorts, the age that sets in is called 'Kali'. In the period of Kali, the Vedas vanish and morality ends. Individuals experience the ill effects of illnesses and expire at an early age. The downpour doesn't occur in legitimate time and the earth doesn't yield agreeable grains.

Brahmā says that Dandanīti was made for the tranquillity of the world, and it offers discipline to the sinful and immoral people furthermore, honour to the great ones. Kāmandaka says in his Nītisāra that, "a lord who is self-limited and who controls his subjects with the assistance of Dandanīti achieves salvation. With no issue's success comes to him, similar to the waterways converging into an ocean." A ruler has been constantly encouraged to ensure himself and his subjects by Dandanīti, on the grounds that it focuses on the basic government assistance.

2. THE MAHABHARATHA

The great epic Mahabharata was written by Ved Vyasa. It took him three years to complete it and the major aim behind its development was the welfare of people. It holds a valuable place in the hearts of Indians. It mentions divine characters like Lord Krishna who are venerated, worshipped and cherished even today. Its stories were rehearsed by individuals with commitment without fail. They have been retold a huge number of times for the benefit and development of the coming generation. Practically all Indian individuals accept the episodes depicted in it as if they really occurred in ancient occasions.⁴

⁴ Narayan Joshi, *Mahabharata: History or Myth?* 91, ABORI,47, (2010).

It is also known as Śatasāhasrī samhitā on the grounds that the length of the sonnet is an assortment of 100,000 stanzas. Then again, the biggest size of the work may likewise have been an explanation behind calling it Mahābhārata, for example 'maha' implies, gigantic, and 'bhārata' signifies profundity. The Mahabharata contains various chapters and each chapter (parvan) is so named as to give a trace of their focal subject. Here in the given research paper we are to deal with some chapters from which we can learn valuable lessons.

2.1. Shanti Parva

Toward the end of Mahabharata war, Yudhishthira was disheartened at the demise of his older folks, siblings, family members and friends and family. He was deplored so much that he chose to deny everything and move to timberland and live there. At that point different Great Sages Rishi Vyasa, Narad Muni, and Lord Hari Himself counselled him to surrender such disheartening and administer the realm of Hastinapur with the Code of Dharma, taking into account that it is his obligation.

After the coronation ceremony Yudhishthira as King, went to Lord Krishna and was amazed to see him in profound idea. On enquiring, Shri Krishna answered,

Yudhishthira! I was pondering over Bhishma, the perishing coal, lying on a bed of bolts! Ganga's child mentored in the Vedas as a student of rishi Vashista, knowledgeable in war and battle as a most loved student of Parashurama. At the point when he goes, the world will go dull like a night without the moon. Yudhishthira, subsequently proceed to meet him when he is yet alive and asks him anything you desire to know about laws concerned with lords.⁵

The time when Bhishma realized that Yudhishthira's heart is brimming with distresses on the demise of the veterans of Kuru Parivar and he is blaming himself for all that, at that point Bhishma assuages him, saying:⁶

⁵ MUNESH KUMAR KELLA. BLOG, <http://muneshkumarkella.blogspot.com/2014/06/shanti-parva-book-of-peace.html> (July 7 2021, 8:05 A.M.).

⁶ A K Bhattacharya, *The concept of Raj dharma*, Business Standard, BUSINESS STANDARD.COM, (July 6, 2021, 8:50 A.M.), https://www.business-standard.com/article/beyond-business/the-concept-of-raj-dharma-114040901338_1.html.

While it is dharma for brahmins to examine, do retribution and to give. Similarly, it is dharma for a khsatriya to participate in war. If welcomed, a khsatriya can't decline to battle. In the event that somebody is going in some unacceptable way, regardless of whether it is a dad, a sibling or a granddad, he ought to be rebuffed. It is khsatriya dharma to murder any individual who violates dharma out of avarice'. (Bhishma)

The guidance continues for different days, and Yudhisthira posed the same number of inquiries as he can, and he got all replied from Bhishma. It is by Shri Krishna's leniency that torment of difficult injury brought about by bolts which penetrated the assemblage of Bhishma was disappeared so he could give the directions appropriately.

From the abovementioned, it can be concluded that, however Bhishma belonged to the Kaurava armed force and fought for them, however truly he aspired for the success of dharma and destruction of adharma. There is always a victory of virtue and uprightness over evil and wickedness.

Bhishma very delightfully portrayed rules and regulations about Dharma in Rajadharmamanusasana. He said an individual must never lose his pride and resole even at the most difficult situations. For instance, in spite of solicitation from his maa (Kuntī), Karna never changed organization (even in clash) of Duryodhana in light of the fact that, this demonstration will mirror his pitilessness, feebleness and injustice.

Once more, in this parva it is discovered that, when Kuntī revealed the truth with respect to Karna, at that point Yudhisthira reviled her (Kuntī), "no lady can hold any confidential information." Here, reflects Yudhisthiras love for fraternity and set up that, no man ought to attempt any sort of offense who needs to live in harmony. In this parva, the enormity of Pāndavas is very flawlessly depicted. They venerated the elders; inspite of profane conduct of Dhrtarāstra (the dad of Kauravas), they (Pāndavas) never shamed him, yet they contrasted him and god.

2.2. Bhishma's interpretation of Raj Dharma

When Yudhisthira approaches Bhishma while he is on his death bed, Yudhisthira is very disheartened and dejected and is afraid of the jinx from Bhishma. To these words Bhishma clarified the obligations of Ksatriyas in the combat zone along with dharmas of different

positions. Bhīṣma says that obligation of the Brāhmins are blessing, study and atonement; on the otherhand Ksatriya's obligation is to rout adversary in the combat zone.

Bhisma further said that Raj Dharma is superior to all the Dharma's and this is also acknowledged by the Vedas. The significance of Raj Dharma is expressed through Dandaniti which says that it is the duty of the ruler to punish the corrupt and immoral person and bring him onto the right path. If he follows these guidelines Raj Dharma will be established. Ksatriyas are made by Lord Brahmā for rescuing the subjects, performing penances, and to showcase their military skills and sacrifice life for the welfare of society.⁷

A ruler ought to consistently perform moral deeds, on the off chance that a ruler performs indecent or adharma than a wide range of trouble will emerge. In the event that a mighty lord abuses his frail subjects than his devotees will additionally perform the same conduct, believing that, it is their obligation.

3. THE CONCEPT OF STATE

The state and the government play a very important role in the society. A state is an authority that governs a particular territory or an area. It frames laws and regulations that are to be followed by the society. If we talk about the ancient India, state was regarded as an essential tool to ensure harmony and happiness. It was a social association with political force. Nonetheless, ancient researchers were not consistent in their view with respect to the root of the state.

If we talk about Mahabharata, the term 'Rajya' was used to refer to the state. The rajya was governed by the King and represented all the seven components placed around him. These components were – the raja, the territory, the treasury, friends, fort, military resources and the territory and the people. These seven organs had equal calibre and were considered extremely necessary for the proper functioning of the state. Henceforth, the state is a network that connects the government and the people.

3.1. Origin of State

The Mahabharata maintains the hypothesis of heavenly origin of the state. It states that at the dawn of krtayuga, there was a golden period which prevailed for a long time. There was no

⁷ Nikul Joshi, *Caste System in Ancient India*, WORLDHISTORY.ORG, (July 7, 2021, 9:07 A.M.),<https://www.ancient.eu/article/1152/>.

state, no ruler, no army and no battles. People used to live in harmony with one other and followed the laws of nature.⁸

However, the golden age steadily declined individuals' brain was redirected from integrity and their activities were loaded with self-centeredness. However, the golden age steadily declined individuals' brain was redirected from integrity and their activities were loaded with self-centeredness. The life of individuals became hopeless affected by obliviousness [moha], dream [māyā], avarice [lobha], passion[kāma], and connection [rāga] The law of wilderness [mātsyanyāya] prevailed in the general public, for example, the sturdy started to abuse the feeble as in the sea huge fishes ate all the little ones.

At last they chose to move toward Brahmādeva the maker of the universe for discovering some cure.. Consequently, he framed a bunch of law code, to be executed by an established power. He at that point created an extensive law book containing one lakh sections. However, in later time the agreement was again ineffective. And afterward individuals went into a common agreement between themselves too likewise with the king. Whoever does profane or unsocial acts like misappropriation and infidelity would be ousted from society

4. ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Justice assumes a very significant part in moral decisions. Justice, as a central moral idea, is additionally a regulating interest in an ever-increasing number of territories of public approach, guaranteeing authenticity and wide support of arrangements in democratic social orders.⁹

Justice is the most significant and most talked about target of the State, and Society. It is the premise of deliberate human living. Justice demands equivalent treatment of equivalents, and proportionate and just rewards for all. It represents concordance between singular interests and the interests of society.¹⁰ Indeed, Justice stands as the main righteousness or ideal or target to be achieved. In its Preamble, the Constitution of India gives primary importance to achieving social, economic and political justice for every one of its kin.

⁸ Supra Note 2.

⁹ K H Stumpf, C U Becker & S Baumgärtner, *A Conceptual Structure of Justice - Providing a Tool to Analyse Conceptions of Justice*, 19, ETMP, 1187 (2016).

¹⁰ K.K. Ghai, *Speech on Justice: Meaning and Types of Justice*, YOURARTICLELIBRARY.COM, (July 8 2021, 5:04 P.M.), <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/speech/speech-on-justice-meaning-and-types-of-justice/40361>.

4.1. Justice in Mahabharata

A ruler ought to choose for secret conferences three qualified clergymen. Prior to passing any judgment on a specific case, a lord ought to turn to the three clergymen alluded above independently and afterward with the three together; Once the rajguru has expressed his views, the ruler ought to report the same to the nation, with the goal that the individuals everywhere in the realm may acknowledge/follow the decision. It is along these lines held that equity of the lord ought to consistently be utilized for the benefit of the subjects. A lord at the hour of conference ought to consistently keep away from those people, who are gnome, humpbacked, weak or visually impaired, fool, ladies and eunuch. A lord ought to hold conversations with people without all issues of discourse and grievances.

The lord should help the weak, and who come sobbing for equity and grant them justice. A ruler ought to consistently give decision in discussion with his pastors and imperial rulers; lest all will be pushed to hell including the king.

5. CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, the Mahabharata is a summary of ancient Indian folklore, history, political hypothesis, and theory, and has once in a while been depicted as an ancient reference book of Indian information. The heavenly Hindu sacred text, the Bhagavad Gita, which is viewed as a synopsis of the immense Hindu sacred writings and philosophical writings, is additionally contained inside the Mahabharata. Hindus trust it to be a genuine impression of verifiable occasions. Regardless, the Mahabharata is viewed as the most delegate work of the variety of Indian and Hindu ideas in presence.¹¹

Notwithstanding, in spite of its exhaustive nature, there is a fundamental plot and storyline all through the epic that maintains continuity and consistency. Ethical and political works are dissipated all through the epic as seen in the conversations between characters. The Mahabharata is like an antiquated Indian Game of Thrones, with various groups struggling for authority in an assortment of states. The primary story is the battle for the seat of Hastinapura, the realm governed by the Kuru faction. Despite the fact that Dhritarashtra, the father of Kauravas is elder to Pandu, the father of Pandavas, he is excluded from exercising rights over the throne and ruling the kingdom as he is visually impaired. Duryodhana, the oldest son of Dhritrashtra views himself as a legitimate beneficiary of the throne however, Yudhisthira is more

¹¹ Akhilesh Pillalamarri, *3 Political Lessons from the Mahabharata*, THE DIPLOMAT, (July 8, 2021, 5:48 P.M.), <https://thediplomat.com/2014/08/3-political-lessons-from-the-mahabharat/>.

established and is viewed as authentic for the post. At last, the battle between the Kauravas and Pandavas finishes in the incredible skirmish of Kurukshetra, in which the Pandavas are eventually triumphant.

In Mahabharata, innumerable political strategies and techniques are employed to turn the clock in one's favour. The two main characters who use these techniques are Shakuni and Lord Krishna. They had employed an assortment of political methodologies that are of great significance even today. This is particularly significant for Indians since it gives them a practical and sensible perspective of the world.

5.1. Contemporary Relevance:

Mahabharata is the analogical dualism of a person. All that has happened is going on and will occur later on is as of now shrouded in Mahabharata. Some once likewise said that Maharishi Vyasa tasted everything in-universe. The Mahabharata appears to be a war story.¹²

There a man was raised to the degree of God in Ramayana and in Mahabharata, a divine being is brought down to the degree of man.

The Mahabharata has wonderful reach for transformation, change, and contort. Researchers, intelligent people, legislators and average people have utilized the epic. The epic, its characters, topics, circumstances, examples, lessons, equals, and suggestions have been completely valued, acknowledged and appreciated in India.

What is prominent today?

- Family contention over properties lead to fights in court and unjustifiable intends to win the case simply like the Kurukshetra War?
- Ladies actually exposed to attack and mortification simply like Draupadi's Vastraharan
- Spouses like Yudhisthir think about their wives as properties?
- Unmarried moms like Kunti scared of notoriety and embarrassment because of their ill-conceived kid thus to forsake them simply like Karna?

¹² Avinash Tietler, *Does Mahabharata have any relevance today*, THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHY, (July 8 2021, 6:09 P.M.), <https://theindianphilosophy.com/why-mahabharata-is-relevant-today/>.

- Fathers like Dhritarashtra who aimlessly uphold each offense of their cherished children?
- Segregation in the general public based on birth simply like Karna looked in Mahabharata?

5.1.1. Analogies in Mahabharata

Dhritarashtra represents the consequences of blind trust and connection to somebody. His ambition blinded him to such an extent that blinded him and he absolutely trusted his son and supported him for no good sense. Unnecessary attachments blinds an individual and dissuades him away from the path of honorableness.

Duryodhan speaks to the liberated Ego which can cause extraordinary decimation. The legend of conscience without order will drive us towards the edge of annihilation.

Pandavas speak to indisputably the Human qualities Yudhishthira speaks to Uprightness, Bheema speaks to Vigour, Arjuna speaks to Expertise, Nakula and Sahadeva speak to the Twin estimations of Equanimity and Sagacity.

Vidura speaks to the heart, a still, small voice that can be smothered if the pessimism is strong enough.

5.1.2. Relevance of Mahabharat

What is the pertinence of the Mahabharata in the modern world ? The appropriate response is as convincing as it is clear: the fundamental test in the advanced world lies in maintaining dharma or nobility and satyam or truth. What the present reality gravely needs is dharma, the ability to verbalize it, the ability to fabricate it, and the ability to support it.

"The motivation behind why we all keep on relating to the Mahabharat even today is that the setting might be extraordinary, the financial milieu might be unique, yet the contention of dharma, the difficulty, the individual decisions, the private issues

are that every single one of us faces each day," the Padma Shri awardee Debroy said.¹³

The Pandavas are five, while the Kauravas are a hundred in number. This implies man's penchant to do evil far surpasses his inclination to do great. The Mahabharata outlines the significant truth that the Lord will be the Guide of whoever introduces Him as his sarathi (charioteer). He won't think about that position mediocre. He is the Sanathana Sarathi (Eternal Charioteer) who comes to be the Charioteer of all. He is the Lord for all who look for a Master, a Guru, a help. The spirit is the Master in each one and Krishna is the Universal Soul embodied. He will safeguard one who approaches Him with confidence, commitment, and give up by committing all idea, word, and deed to the Supreme Intelligence.¹⁴

The Mahabharata instructs us that on the off chance that we regard dharma, it will regard us, in the event that we follow dharma, it will follow us and on the off chance that we cling to dharma, dharma will cling to us.

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¹³ *Mahabharata relevant even in modern times*, INDIAN EXPRESS, (July 8 2021, 9:05 P.M.), <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2016/nov/07/mahabharat-relevant-even-in-modern-times-1535832.html>.

¹⁴ Ramnath Narayanswamy, *The Significance of the Mahabharata*, DECCAN HERALD, (July 8, 2021, 11:17 P.M.), <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/373967/significance-mahabharatha.html>.

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