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DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATION ENGINEERING

III YEAR/ VI SEMESTER

19HST105 ESSENCE OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

UNIT 2 INDIAN LITERATURE, CULTURE, TRADITION, AND PRACTICES
the Mahabharata.



THE MAHABHARATA

Mahabharata, (Sanskrit: -Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty) one of the two Sanskrit epic poems of ancient India (the other being the *Ramayana*). The *Mahabharata* is an important source of information on the development of Hinduism between 400 BCE and 200 CE and is regarded by Hindus as both a text about dharma (Hindu moral law) and a history (*itihasa*, literally -that's what happened). Appearing in its present form about 400 CE, the *Mahabharata* consists of a mass of mythological and didactic material arranged around a central heroic narrative that tells of the struggle for sovereignty between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas (sons of Dhritarashtra, the descendant of Kuru) and the Pandavas (sons of Pandu).

It is written by Ved Vyasa. The poem is made up of almost 100,000 couplets—about seven times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined—divided into 18 *parvans*, or sections, plus a supplement titled *Harivamsha* (-Genealogy of the God Hari; i.e., of Vishnu). Although it is unlikely that any single person wrote the poem, its authorship is traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyasa, who appears in the work as the grandfather of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The date and even the historical occurrence of the war that is the central event of the *Mahabharata* are much debated.



Along with its basic plot and accounts of numerous myths, the *Mahabharata* reveals the evolution of Hinduism and its relations with other religions during its composition. The period during which the epic took shape was one of transition from Vedic sacrifice to sectarian Hinduism, as well as a time of interaction—sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile—with Buddhism and Jainism. Different sections of the poem express varying beliefs, often in creative tension. Some sections—such as the *Narayaniya* (a part of book 13), the *Bhagavadgita* (book 6), the *Anugita* (book 14), and the *Harivamsha*—are important sources of early Vaishnava theology, in which Krishna is an avatar of the god Vishnu. Above all, the *Mahabharata* is an exposition of dharma (codes of conduct), including the proper conduct of a king, of a warrior, of an individual living in times of calamity, and of a person seeking to attain *moksha* (freedom from samsara, or rebirth). The poem repeatedly demonstrates that the conflicting codes of *dharma* are so -subtle! that, in some situations, the hero cannot help but violate them in some respect, no matter what choice he makes.



The *Mahabharata* story has been retold in written and oral Sanskrit and vernacular versions throughout South and Southeast Asia. Its various incidents have been portrayed in stone, notably in sculptured reliefs at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom in Cambodia, and in Indian miniature paintings.

Influence

In its scope, the Mahabharata is more than simply a story of kings and princes, sages and wisemen, demons and gods; its legendary author, Vyasa, said that one of its aims is elucidating the four Purusarthas (goals of life): *Kama* (pleasure), *artha* (wealth), *dharma* (duty), and *moksha* (liberation). The story culminates in *moksha*, believed by many Hindus to be the ultimate goal of human beings. Karma and dharma also play an integral role in the Mahabharata.

The Mahabharata includes large amounts of Hindu mythology, cosmological stories of the gods and goddesses, and philosophical parables aimed at students of Hindu philosophy. Among the principal works and stories that are a part of the Mahabharata are the following (often considered isolated as works in their own right):



- Bhagavadgita (Krishna instructs and teaches Arjuna – **Anusasanaparva**)
- Damayanti (or Nala and Damayanti, a love story – **Aranyakaparva**)
- Krishnavatara (the story of Krishna, the *Krishna Leela*, which is woven through many chapters of the story)
- Rama (an abbreviated version of the Ramayana – **Aranyakaparva**)
- Rishyasringa (also written as Rshyashrnga, the horned boy and rishi – **Aranyakaparva**)
- Vishnu sahasranama (the most famous hymn to Vishnu, which describes His 1000 names – **Anushasanaparva**)

Important Life Lessons From The Mahabharata That Are Relevant Even Today

The epic tale Mahabharata is something everyone should read at least once in their life. Even if you are not into mythology and religion, this book will still hold great value in your life. There are plenty of life lessons one can learn from the Mahabharata.

1) Being kind, humble and generous is not enough to live life.

The way Karna's life moved, we realised, more often than not, that the world is an evil place to survive in. And to ace it, we must understand how it really works.

2) Bad company can ruin your life beyond imagination.

We all hate Shakuni mama, don't we? He literally destroyed everything that the Kauravas owned, and he influenced them to be negative. If it wasn't for him, the war wouldn't have happened at all.

3) Unconditional support and loyal friends can take you places.

The Pandavas had Lord Krishna, and the Kauravas had Karna. Both of them always backed the two parties, no matter what. In fact, Duryodhan was really weak without Karna.

4) You need to fight for what you think belongs to you.

The Pandavas never stopped fighting for what rightfully belonged to them. Their courage and determination is definitely something to admire and learn from.



5) **Being too emotional can be a bad idea.**

Dhritrashtra's love for his son was blind. Throughout the epic, he remained torn between his principles and keeping his son happy. Somehow this made Duryodhan even more evil than what he already was, leading to awful consequences and the war.

6) **Learning throughout life is the best gift you can give yourself.**

Arjun grasped whatever came his way. Not only did he learn the best of military science from Drona, but he was also interested in learning about divine weapons from Indra. He learnt about Pashupatastra from Mahadev as well. Additionally, he treated Yudhishter and Krishna as his mentors too, and continued learning whatever they had to offer.

7) **Sometimes, enemies come in the form of friends.**

Although the Kauravas were more in number, their supporters were not really in favour of them. Bheeshma, Vidura and Drona secretly admired the Pandavas. Especially Vidura, who was the ultimate guide in everything the Kauravas did.

8) **Respect Woman**

Draupadi had five husbands. They were strong and wealthy, but they all became helpless when she was disgraced by multiple other men. They had everything, but failed to show courage. Draupadi's anger and desire for revenge led to the war and downfall of the Kuru clan.

9) **Half knowledge can be more dangerous than no knowledge**

Abhimanyu wouldn't have died. Although we remember him for his bravery and undying courage, he ultimately lost his life.

10) **You cannot be stopped if you are passionate about what you do.**

Most of us know that Arjun was the greatest archer in the world. But Eklavya was even better than him. He hid himself behind the trees and grasped everything that Drona taught Arjun. His passion for archery and hunger for knowledge made him even better than Arjun at archery.



11) A good strategy is what you need to sail your boat.

If Pandavas didn't have Krishna and his master plan, they wouldn't have witnessed the victory they did. Always have a plan.

Story

The story begins when the blindness of Dhritarashtra, the elder of two princes, causes him to be passed over in favour of his brother Pandu as king on their father's death. A curse prevents Pandu from fathering children, however, and his wife Kunti asks the gods to father children in Pandu's name. As a result, the god Dharma fathers Yudhishtira, the Wind fathers Bhima, Indra fathers Arjuna, and the Ashvins (twins) father Nakula and Sahadeva (also twins; born to Pandu's second wife, Madri). The enmity and jealousy that develops between the cousins forces the Pandavas to leave the kingdom when their father dies. During their exile the five jointly marry Draupadi (who is born out of a sacrificial fire and whom Arjuna wins by shooting an arrow through a row of targets) and meet their cousin Krishna, who remains their friend and companion thereafter. Although the Pandavas return to the kingdom, they are again exiled to the forest, this time for 12 years, when Yudhishtira loses everything in a game of dice with Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas.



The feud culminates in a series of great battles on the field of Kurukshetra (north of Delhi, in Haryana state). All the Kauravas are annihilated, and, on the victorious side, only the five Pandava brothers and Krishna survive. Krishna dies when a hunter, who mistakes him for a deer, shoots him in his one vulnerable spot—his foot—and the five brothers, along with Draupadi and a dog who joins them (Dharma, Yudhishthira's father, in disguise), set out for Indra's heaven. One by one they fall on the way, and Yudhishthira alone reaches the gate of heaven. After further tests of his faithfulness and constancy, he is finally reunited with his brothers and Draupadi, as well as with his enemies, the Kauravas, to enjoy perpetual bliss.

The central plot constitutes little more than one fifth of the total work. The remainder of the poem addresses a wide range of myths and legends, including the romance of Damayanti and her husband Nala (who gambles away his kingdom just as Yudhishthira gambles away his) and the legend of Savitri, whose devotion to her dead husband persuades Yama, the god of death, to restore him to life. The poem also contains descriptions of places of pilgrimages.



THANK YOU