

Untangling the Morals and Ethics of Dharma: A Study on the Epic Mahabharata Through Margins

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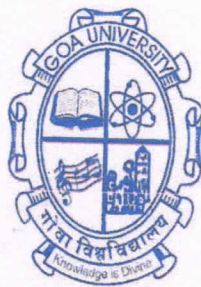
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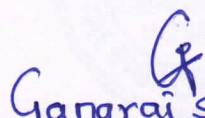
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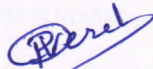
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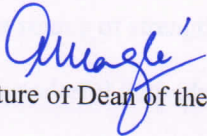
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ABSTRACT

The research on the topic 'Untangling the Morals and Ethics of Dharma: A Study on the Epic Mahabharata Through Margins' was initiated to delve deeper into the diverse interpretations and implications of dharma within the Mahabharata, aiming to shed light on its relevance. Employing a Qualitative research, the study talks about the in-depth textual analysis of Mahabharata with the help of close reading, which will focus on the key episodes and character analysis. Also it ponders upon philosophical inquiry to dissect the moral and ethical intricacies embedded within the Mahabharata with the help of primary texts, secondary sources, and scholarly commentaries.

This study delves into the intricate moral and ethical landscape of the Mahabharata. By examining the margins of this epic, often overshadowed by its central narrative, the study uncovers the nuanced ethical dilemmas, conflicting duties, and complex characters. Also the study also delves into how the male and female characters from Mahabharata were bound by different dharma based on their gender, caste and social structure. Further, it also delves into the lives of marginalised male and female figures, constrained by the rigid expectations of dharma with no avenue for opposition. By exploring the tensions between personal ambition and social obligation, righteousness and expediency, the study seeks to offer insights into the timeless moral quandaries faced by individuals and societies.

Keywords: Mahabharata, Dharma, Marginalised, Morals, Ethics.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Importance and Reasons of proposed Research

The research on the topic ‘Untangling the Morals and Ethics of Dharma: A Study of the Epic Mahabharata Through Margins’ aims to put light of the enduring significance of the famous Indian ancient epic, Mahabharata, and its wide variety of discussions on the themes of morals and ethics of the Dharma principles and how different characters (male and female) are bound with different Dharma. Also, it talks about the ethical and moral dilemmas/choices and their consequences. Further, it also delves into the lives of marginalised male and female figures, constrained by the rigid expectations of dharma with no avenue for opposition. The Mahabharata is undoubtedly one of the greatest works of the world, unique in many ways – unique for the deepest philosophical truths, for the wide range of human life covered by the ethics and for the high spiritual stimulus provided in this epic. The epic is not just a story or a fictional book but also a cultural and historical representation of our ancient Indian society. Dharma being the most vital theme throughout the epic, plays a major role in shaping characters life and death. Better understanding of the concept of Dharma will increase the

appreciation of the aspects such as sacrifice, loyalty, truthfulness, responsibility and duty. It will also help the future researchers, future scholars who are interested in promoting ethical decisions making and moral and cultural values among the new generations. It will help the future generations to understand the importance of being truthful to themselves and others in the growing world. With the help of the researchers we can preserve our culture and values by knowing more about the beliefs people had during that time, gender dynamics that used to play a huge role in shaping one's individuality and also the dilemmas that shaped people's life during that time.

The research serves as a guiding force for the future generations to guide them through their ups and downs. The way characters from Mahabharata find their ways through their dilemmas and hardships they face throughout the epic can serve as an example for the future to make ethical decisions in their lives. It can provide different perspectives on how to look and face difficult situations. It will inculcate the importance of ethics and values among the future generations to live a life full of high morals and ethics. Also the importance of upholding dharma, which is the required duty, will increase in the future.

The ethical difficulties that figures like Yudhishtira, Bhishma, and Draupadi faced and experienced over history and decades may give a shock to the readers. Researchers can highlight and showcase timeless lessons about moral responsibility, the nature of required and correct behaviour, and the consequences of actions by examining these moral dilemmas and the characters' decisions. Because of this, the Mahabharata is a fantastic global resource for ethical inquiry and discussion. Dharma is an universal topic in the Mahabharata, despite its origins in Indian mythology. Also, the study on Dharma from the epic Mahabharata will help in understanding the interdisciplinary aspects by bringing out the views from philosophies, studies based on religion, literature and anthropology. This interdisciplinary approach improves the understanding of Mahabharata's significance as a historical document and

important source of ethical guidance through encouraging international discussion and academic cooperation.

1.2 Historical Background of Mahabharata

One of the two major Sanskrit epics of Ancient India is the Mahabharata; Kurukshetra battle and the Emperors Kauravas and Pandavas destiny's are explained in this epic work of literature. The great scholar forms an important part in the narrator and is frequently credited with authoring the Mahabharata. The final structure was finished about the time of 4th century BCE and is believed to have been written between the 8 and 9 century BCE. The Mahabharata historical foundation is complex, encompassing actual events, mythology and tradition. It is frequently taken as a mirror of the ancient Indian social political and cultural context.

The Vedic period that extends from 1500 to 500 BCE in which Mahabharata's origins can be found. The early Vedic texts including the Samaveda, Arthveda Yajur Veda and Rig Veda were composed during its era. These works in questions provide information about the cultural and spiritual practices followed by the ancient Indo-Aryan. It is believed that the Mahabharata itself evolved throughout ages, with new layers being included at different points. The conflict between the Kauravas and Pandavas, the two branches of Kuru dynasty, is at the heart of the Epic. With the leadership of Duryodhana the Kauravas symbolised the forces of a Dharma or unrighteousness, while Yudhishtira the Pandavas represented Dharma or righteousness.

The Kuru dynasty begins at the beginning of the Epic tracing its lineage from the legendary King Bharata to king Shantanu gets married to Ganga and then Satyawati. Devvratha, referred to as Bhishma the son of Shantanu, swears virginity in order to guarantee The Throne as one of Satyawati's sons starting with the chain of events that ultimately

decides the plot of the Epic. The conflict between Dharma and adharma is one of the Mahabharat's major themes. Kurukshetra battlefield provides Arjuna with an ethical quandary, as a reminder of his struggle. In the Bhagavad Gita which is also known as the work of philosophy contained in the Mahabharata where Lord Krishna offers Arjuna moral lessons that help him perform out his military responsibility and preserve righteousness.

The battle of Kurukshetra which lasted for eighteen days and with the Kauravas and Pandavas jointly with their troops of soldiers to start the deadly war is the epic's climax. The conflict is won by the Pandavas, but it comes out at a heavy price: numerous individuals perish, including many famous warriors and rulers.

The Mahabharata is a collection of multiple tales including myth narrative ethical lessons and philosophical debates alongside to bring a story of war and struggle. It delves into deep subjects like sacrifice duty, loyalty, honour and the foundation of reality. The epic sheds of spotlight on human existence and the ongoing conflict between good and evil through the experience of its characters.

Scholars were at odds over whether or not the Mahabharata is accurate in time. Some view it as mythological or allegorical, while others think that it has historical reality blended in with fantasy elements over time. The cultural and historical background. The cultural and historical background of the Mahabharata has been clarified by excavations and literary evidence, although several aspects of the epic are still unexplained

Millions of people across the world still admire and read the Mahabharata despite its ancient root. Its eternal wisdom and universal theme which speak for individuals of any age and background are what give it its ongoing importance. The Mahabharata is considered one of the greatest epics in international literature and its humble Origins as an oral tradition passed down to centuries provide proof to the vastness and variety of the Indian civilization

1.3 Scope

Through an in depth examination of Mahabharata concerning its margins, the proposed research aims to analyse the unique characteristics of ethical and moral ideas related in ancient Indian epic. This research seeks to discover various perspectives on Dharma (duty/righteousness) and its utilisation in various circumstances depicted in the narrative through investigating the epics' perimeter. This research aims to shed light on the ever changing relationships between personal ethics, societal norms, and cosmic structure as portrayed in the margins of the Mahabharata through an integrated strategy that draws from the field of literature, philosophy and cultural studies. The study intends to improve the understanding of Dharma and its relevance in modern discourse of ethics through this research.

1.4 Limitations

- The research will revolve around important characters from Mahabharata
- Since the research is on a mythological epic, certain concepts will be unclear or unexplainable.
- The research only focuses on certain significant scenes and incidents from Mahabharata
- The research will also analyse selected marginalised characters of the epic.

1.5 Research Question/Problem

How were male and female characters in the Mahabharata obligated to adhere to their prescribed duties (dharma)? How did the male and female characters on the fringes of society find themselves powerless against the forces of dharma?

1.6 Necessity in the field of languages and literature

The Mahabharata is a vast epic that consists of numerous themes. Most of the time, the marginalised characters or the characters who are on the margins of the society are often neglected due to the high profile characters like Bhishma and Arjuna. The research will be beneficial for the study of marginal characters like Satyawati, Karna, Eklavya and others which will help in understanding their perspectives on morality. Also dilemmas played an important role in shaping the lives of characters from Mahabharata. Studying the specific moral and ethical dilemmas will help in understanding the complex nature of ethical decisions making in Mahabharata as well as in today's society. Also studying themes like caste, gender, social class will help in understanding the nuance of injustice and inequalities which are still present in contemporary society.

1.7 Relevance to society

Dharma is known for the righteous duty and commitment to responsibilities in Hinduism. Adhering to one's duty or dharma leads to an ethically peaceful life. The experiences of the characters from Mahabharata can offer diverse perspectives and takeaways that can be considered as an important aspect to the ones who are interested in living an ethical life. The experience of Pandavas and Kauravas throughout the epic offers a rich tapestry of moral values that can be relevant in present life. Also, the epic teaches us the importance of speaking truth or being truthful to others and also its consequences.

Characters like Yudhishtira and Bhishma highlight the importance of being truthful to God and yourself which helps in adhering to one's duties and responsibilities for example the academic works. Also, Mahabharata highlights the personal and societal morals and ethics based on interconnectedness. This will help in understanding an individual's duty and

responsibility towards their society. Moral quandaries that are difficult in choosing between two decisions that hold equal ethical importance. Moral quandaries are still there in society and this research can help in guiding an individual which will be beneficial for them. The research will serve as a bridge between the traditional beliefs of the era of Mahabharata and contemporary dilemmas, especially moral dilemmas.

1.8 Objectives

- Investigating the foundational principles of dharma as depicted in the Mahabharata.
- To explore the ethical dilemmas faced by characters and their adherence to dharma in the Mahabharata narrative.
- To analyse how dharma is different for men and women.
- Exploring the agency and autonomy exercised by the marginalised characters in defining and practising dharma amidst the societal constraints in Mahabharata

1.9 Literature Review

1. "Imbibing Ethics and Dharma" By Sunil Kumar

Mahabharata is India's one of the famous mythological epics that holds a massive significance in terms of morals and ethics. The major concept of the major theme along which all the other concepts revolve around is the concept of Dharma. Mahabharata is a famous epic in India alongside Ramayana that also holds a major significance in today's world. Mahabharata was narrated by Vedavyasa and written down by Lord Ganapati. Mahabharata has around 100000 verses. The major theme in Mahabharata is Dharma and how the characters try to uphold it based on their understanding of Dharma and also based on aspects like caste, gender, traditional norms, social class. The Mahabharata takes place as a result of the enmity between Pandavas and Kauravas despite being cousins. This war takes

place for the rightful claim on the throne of the kingdom, Hastinapur. Mahabharata also covers themes like gender dynamics, morality, duty, Righteousness.

Also, Mahabharata also includes sacred books like Bhagavad Gita which talks about the ethical discourse between the warrior, Arjuna and the divine force, Krishna. When Arjuna faced ethical and moral dilemmas while competing against his own clan and family, he seemed to feel weak. But through the guidance of lord Krishna who was the charioteer of Arjuna in the war, Arjuna eventually participates in the war and fights against his own family for the greater good. Through the spiritual knowledge and guidance of lord Krishna, Arjuna was able to bring out the best version of himself. The article also talks about the overall concept of Dharma and its Philosophy in the Hindu scriptures, where an individual is bound to follow his dharma not just in the epic but also in today's world. It also talks about the devotional verses that were highlighted in the Bhagavad Gita and how Lord Krishna helps in guiding Arjuna. Also how every action has its own consequences. The Characters in Mahabharata perform Adharma which has its own consequences. Lord Krishna teaches everyone how to remain detached from the outcomes and focus on goals. Also the concept of war that was fought for the greater good is also highlighted.

2. "The Concept of Dharma and its Significance" By Ivan Kovacs

The article by Ivan Kovacs on the Concept of Dharma from Mahabharata and its significant aspects highlights the wide variety themes and the importance of Dharma in Hindu scriptures. It also talks about the background of Mahabharata and the origin of Dharma. Under this article, the importance and background of Bhagavad Gita is also showcased with the examples of the warrior Arjuna and the divine entity Krishna. How lord Krishna guided Arjuna and other Pandavas through victory. Arjuna faced a lot of moral and ethical dilemmas that resulted in his hesitancy to fight against his own family which includes people like Bhishma and Guru Dronacharya.

The article also includes incidents like Bhishma's guidance to the Pandavas to follow the path of righteousness and truth. His guidance to the eldest Pandava, Yudhishtira on his duty to follow the Dharma of the king Raja Dharma in order to maintain the balance between the king and his citizens. The article talks about the meaning of Dharma in Hindu scriptures and philosophies regarding this concept. The article covers the aspects of Dharma and different forms of Dharma like Sva-dharma, Raja Dharma, Kula Dharma, Adharma and other forms of Dharma. It also talks about the various consequences and outcomes if the Dharma is not followed or adhered to by the characters in Mahabharata. It also talks about how every action has its consequences, good or bad.

Further, it also covers the incidents and scenes from Mahabharata where the characters are adhering to their given dharma for example Bhishma's oaths and commitment to dharma, Yudhishtira's ultimate commitment to truth, Duryodhana's greed towards the throne of Hastinapur and jealousy towards the Pandavas, Dhritarashtra's Adharma and following his son's Adharma is also highlighted. Also, the humiliation of Draupadi and Kunti's silence on Karna's birth and origin is also highlighted. Also the discourse between Arjuna and Krishna is also covered in this article where how the guidance of Krishna resulted in Arjuna's agreement to fight against his rivals and family for the greater good. The spiritual guidance of Krishna resulted in the victory as the Pandavas successfully defeated the Kauravas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra war and claimed their rights on the throne of Hastinapur which resulted in harmony and peace for the citizens of Hastinapur.

3. "The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma" By Gurcharan Das

The book I'm referring to is 'The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma' by Gurcharan Das. It talks about the author's viewpoints and perspectives on Dharma. I would be using this book as a reference for my research as it will help me to understand the multiple perspectives and takeaways on the concept of Dharma. In the book, the author

Gurcharan Das has picked some of the major characters from Mahabharata who faced moral dilemmas in certain situations where they had to uphold their Dharma.

Characters like Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Krishna, Draupadi are mentioned in the book. Before going into the details of the concept of Dharma, the author has analysed and summarised the Mahabharata by giving a back story of the epic. The author had tried to divide the Dharma of different characters through different sections and also tried to give his views on Dharma. It contains a prelude and concepts like the jealousy and envy of Duryodhana, Karna's questions on his status and birth, Arjuna's dilemmas on the battlefield of Kurukshetra war, Draupadi's fightback against the odds, Yudhishtira's leadership and commitment to truth, Krishna's guidance to Arjuna through Bhagavad Gita and the revenge of Ashwatthama at the end of Mahabharata. Also, the author had given his perspectives on the above mentioned situations.

4. "Ethical Issues In The Mahabharata In The Context Of Dharma" By Shazia Yousuf,
Symbiosis Law School, Hyderabad

This research looks at moral behaviour in the setting of dharma in the Mahabharata. Even though the Dharmasutra/Dharmasastra literature contain many rules for what defines dharma, characters in the Mahabharata do not always follow the dharma requirements outlined in textbooks. As a result, a common topic in the Mahabharata is that dharma is difficult to understand. The research is also based on the idea that dharma cannot be subsumed under an all-encompassing particular moral theory, as is sought in western moral theories, but rather is determined by the individual conditions that one faces. Keeping these factors in mind, the research then examines personalities like Satyawati, Bhishma, Kunti, Karna, and Yudhishtira in the framework of Dharma.

Being able to evaluate what is good and wrong in each situation is a difficult task at any time. An ethical issue is concerned with how to act properly in any given situation. As a

result, the literature on Moral Philosophy is insufficient. We will never be able to tell if morality is transcendental, empirical, or rooted in a general ethos of individual civilizations. Different cultures have created behavioural models based on their perceptions of what it means to be correct in certain situations.

5. "Moral, Ethical, and Life Lessons from the Mahabharata" By Venu Payyanur

The article talks about the ethical and moral dilemmas faced and experienced by some of the major characters of Mahabharata and how the consequences of their decisions shaped their lives and destiny. Before delving into the detailed study of character's dilemmas, the article largely focuses on the concept of ethical dilemma in the Hindu mythology. Ethical dilemmas occur when an individual faces difficulties in choosing between two equally important ethical decisions.

According to the article, the solutions of the dilemmas that we face in life are very sorted and simple. It's just we being very conscious about our things tend to make things look difficult. A workaholic in today's time will be facing the dilemma of choosing between two or more career opportunities which will be equally beneficial. The author through this article has tried to gather some of the major episodes of Mahabharata where the characters face and experience moral and ethical dilemmas while adhering to their dharma that is righteous duty.

Bhishma, who was known for his ultimate commitment to dharma and his oath of living a life like a Brahmachari faced a lot of moral dilemmas while making and also after making the bold decisions that shaped the course of the entire Mahabharata. His decision to serve the throne of Hastinapur by becoming a servant despite his rightful claim on the throne for his father's happiness highlights his bold decisions. Although these decisions came with many consequences. His decision of not becoming the king made sense in one situation. But on the other hand, his decision to serve the kingdom of Hastinapur selflessly cost him as he had to fight against his own family that is Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war.

Also, the dilemma of Kunti, the mother of Pandavas when she abandons her first son that was given to her as a vardaana by the Surya Deva is also highlighted by the author. Her decision to abandon her first son, Karna since it was her first child before marriage and later transforms into a moral dilemma whether to accept him or not highlights Kunti's dilemma over her son. The author has beautifully compared the examples from Mahabharata with the real life examples. Further, Yudhishtira's dilemma during the Kurukshetra war when Dronacharya asks him about his son's death. Also, Karna's dilemma where he was torn between his morals and loyalty towards Duryodhana showcases Karna's dilemma. Arjuna's dilemma on the battlefield of Kurukshetra war where he has to fight against his own clan and family is also showcased by the author in this article.

1.10 Hypothesis

Exploring the margins of the epic Mahabharata provides insight into the complex interplay of morals and ethics inherent in the concept of dharma, offering a nuanced understanding of how characters navigate dilemmas, conflicts, and moral ambiguities within the epic narrative.

1.11 Research Methodology

The research will employ a combination of Qualitative methods.

The primary text used for this research 'Mahabharata' by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari published by Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan centre at Bombay. General editors are R. R. Diwakar and S. Ramakrishnan.

And the Secondary texts includes 'The Difficulty of Being Good: On a Subtle Art of Dharma' by Gurcharan Das. First published in Allen Lane by Penguin Books India 2009 and Bhagavad Gita As It is'. It is the Second edition; revised and enlarged with the original

Sanskrit text, roman transliteration, English equivalents, translations and elaborate purports by 'His Divine Grace', A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

To provide a historical and cultural context for the Mahabharata

Study of in-depth textual analysis of Mahabharata with the help of close reading, which will focus on the key episodes and character interactions to explore the nuances of Dharma principles as portrayed in the epic.

1.12 Chapterization

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Exploring the concept of 'Dharma' in Mahabharata

- Definition and Significance of 'Dharma' in Hindu philosophy
- Dharma in Mahabharata
- Different forms of Dharma in Mahabharata
- Role of Dharma in Character Development

Chapter 3: Dharma's Trails: Exploring Morals, Ethics and Dilemmas in Mahabharata

- Principles of morals and ethics of dharma in Mahabharata and their significance
- Moral and ethical dilemmas and their complexities in Mahabharata
- Consequences of moral and ethical dilemmas/choices

Chapter 4: Dharma's Gender Divide: Unpacking Male Dominance, Female Subjugation, and Marginalisation

- Dominant aspects of male characters in upholding dharma
- Subjugation and submissive nature of female characters in upholding dharma

- Delving into marginalised male and female personas who find themselves powerless against the dictates of Dharma.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

CHAPTER TWO

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA IN MAHABHARATA

2.1 Definition and Significance of Dharma in Hindu Philosophy

The concept of Dharma in Hinduism holds a greater value and ethical importance due to its multifaceted nature and flexibility in understanding all forms of life and dimensions. The word Dharma comes from the Hindu mythology and scriptures, which basically means one's duty towards all beings, forms and universe. Dharma also includes concepts like moral and ethical duties. The word Dharma and its essence is found in many Hindu scriptures. Dharma basically means righteous or righteousness. It serves as a guiding force for each and every individual and also towards the universe.

The importance and relevance of Dharma is highlighted in many great epics. Besides that, Vedas and Rigvedas also hold the vitality of Dharma and its relevance. Some of the great epics like Mahabharata and also the famous Ramayana, which is known for its ultimate essence of Dharma throughout the story. Scriptures like Rigveda hold the importance of Dharma in a very beautiful manner by highlighting the concepts like balance of the universe and sustainability of the universe. But also, the concept of Dharma doesn't remain the same throughout the years. It has changed and made numerous forms that helped in shaping its culture and better understanding of Dharma.

Dharma is something that has helped in developing characters of even those who didn't believe in God or its universalism. Dharma has many forms and it comes to a person through different perspectives and experiences. Being committed to dharma directly means being committed to responsibilities for example family and responsibilities towards society. Also, dharma towards oneself is also an important aspect of commitment to dharma. Dharma as discussed is not a fixed concept, it keeps changing based on one's situations and incidents but the basic ethics of Dharma remains the same, that is duty towards both, society and oneself. Being truthful is one of the major aspects of Dharma which eventually helps in guiding to a more peaceful and ethically valued life.

The concept of Dharma is majorly based on adherence to Truth and Righteousness. Dharma is originally based on 'Purusharthas' through which the basics of Dharma stands out. Righteousness is one of the most important aspects under purusharthas. Aspects like salvation which means 'Moksha' in Sanskrit. Profitability which means Artha in Sanskrit. Delight which means Kama in Sanskrit. All the mentioned aspects of Dharma works like a cycle for the better functioning of the universe. Dharma plays a major role in shaping one's destiny and life and also helps in better functioning of all the other aspects mentioned. It helps an individual to live a life full of morals and ethics while also taking care of other desires.

Dharma being the multifaceted concept offers a lot to today's generation too. It can help an individual to lead an ethical life even though it is difficult to uphold certain things in today's 21st century. There are many perspectives and interpretations of Dharma which showcases the widespread themes of Dharma too. This includes Schools of philosophy Which talks about different forms and dimensions of dharma through their studies. In Hinduism, there are many philosophical schools that offer different perspectives and forms of Dharma which can be beneficial for the betterment of a person. Dharma also plays a major role in shaping an individual's duty and responsibility based on their perception towards

dharma, their viewpoints. Also, the duties and responsibilities that are given to individuals are based on their work, social class, caste and gender in order to maintain the stability of the universe by giving each and every individual their dharma based on their perspectives. In Hinduism, adherence to dharma is considered as basic moral for a human being.

2.2 Dharma in Mahabharata

The epic Mahabharata, narrated by the great Vedavyasa to Lord Ganapati and Ganapati wrote it down. That is the original Mahabharata that we were born hearing and listening to. Mahabharata is one the most popular and widespread Indian mythological texts that played a huge role in shaping the destiny and future of India. The word Dharma originates from Sanskrit, which basically means to maintain. Dharma also encompasses multiple meanings. Through the epic, we can learn a lot especially with the experiences of the characters and their behaviour towards people. Mahabharata revolves around the concept of Dharma making it the central part of the epic and character's life. The characters from Mahabharata showcase tremendous adherence to upholding dharma which talks a lot about their morals and ethics. Also while upholding dharma there comes a lot of difficulties that come their way. Some characters remain successful in upholding their dharma while some face dilemmas. The epic is all about the fight and conflict between justice and injustice, dharma and adharma, truth versus falsehood. Basically, the entire Mahabharata took place as an example to showcase to everyone that even if the adharma tries to promote injustice and falsehood, at the end, it's the justice and Truthfulness that overcomes from every other thing.

The rivalry between Pandavas and Kauravas is the major highlight of the epic where the Pandavas were fighting for the justice and greater good of world whereas the Kauravas for fighting for their revenge and greed for the kingdom and throne which eventually led to their

downfall and Pandavas winning the battle. In the war, characters fought against each other keeping in mind their personal dharma. Characters like Arjuna, Bhishma, Yudhishtira and others faced multiple moral dilemmas while making decisions that were raising questions on their Ethics. Duryodhana and other Kauravas fought for their greed, anguish and jealousy towards the Pandavas. Lord Krishna who was the divine force guided Arjuna and the Pandavas through his role as charioteer. Dharma had always remained a complex concept to understand especially for the characters in Mahabharata in order to live an ethical life. There are multiple examples like Yudhishtira's decision to continue the game of dice even at the cost of his brothers and wife just to uphold his word. There are many controversial decisions that ended up in the downfall of many characters. But anyhow, the end results and consequences of the decisions highlights the importance of upholding dharma.

2.3 Facets of Dharma in Mahabharata

As Dharma, being the central theme of Mahabharata around which all the other themes revolve, showcases his multifaceted nature. That's the reason Dharma can be classified into multiple forms.

The first form of Dharma is Raja Dharma. Raja Dharma is basically known as the supreme form since it means the Dharma of a king of a kingdom. Raja Dharma is tested through how well a king is able to maintain his dharma towards his citizens. If the king has been able to bring prosperity and harmony in his kingdom through his leadership then it is fair to consider that the king is following and adhering to his Raja Dharma. In Mahabharata, kings like Dhritarashtra, who was the king of Hastinapur. King Drupada, ruler and king of Panchal. Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava was also the king of Indraprastha initially and became the new king of Hastinapur after the battle against Kauravas. There were many kings in Mahabharata who fulfilled their duties as king whereas there were also some who failed to

live up to the mark. Yudhishtira who was eventually given the throne of Hastinapur fulfilled his duty as a king by bringing prosperity and happiness in the kingdom after the injustice by the Kauravas. Whereas Dhritarashtra, the temporary king of Hastinapur didn't make a point to fulfil his duty as he was more concerned about his sons especially Duryodhana, which resulted in his degradation.

Next is Kula Dharma which is again one of the important forms of Dharma as it talks about one's duty and dharma towards family and clan. An individual's duty towards their mother, father, wife, brothers and other relations. Protecting one's clan is a Kula Dharma and this is very evident in Mahabharata as we see Pandavas and Kauravas fight for their respective ownership over the kingdom. Eventually, Pandavas won the battle of war as they were fighting for the justice of the world. The Mahabharata that occurred between the two can be seen as a fight between the Kula Dharma.

Next is Sva-dharma, which generally means one's duty towards themselves. It is also considered as Dharma that is very personal. It depends upon what an Individual thinks based on their morals and ethics. This is also known by one's skills and abilities. Karna's commitment to his Sva-dharma that is to stay loyal to his friend Duryodhana who supported him when no did even at the cost of his life at the end of the battlefield. Arjuna's initial dilemma in the battlefield of Kurukshetra war to fight against his clan and then eventually agreeing to fulfil his duty as warrior highlights his Sva-dharma.

Stree Dharma simply means the duties and dharma of women from Mahabharata. Women's role in shaping theirs and their family's destiny by upholding their dharma is the major example from this form. Female characters like Draupadi and Kunti showcase the nature of Stree Dharma. Draupadi's acceptance of five husbands as a misunderstanding of her mother in law in order to protect her family from consequences highlights her Street Dharma.

Niti dharma which refers to the Ethics and morals of the political output. This also includes the planning and strategies which helps in politics. Lord Krishna's guidance to Arjuna and the other Pandavas to win the battle against the Kauravas is the major highlight of this form as lord Krishna through his niti guided the Pandavas to the victory. His strategies like trickery towards Dronacharya downfall by making him realise that his son is dead, which was not the case in reality. His guidance to Bheema to attack Duryodhana on his thighs also signifies the strategies. Not just Krishna but also Vidura guided the blind king, Dhritarashtra through his knowledge on Niti Dharma.

Yama Dharma highlights an Individual's duty against their death and also after their death which is also known as afterlife. Major example from this is Yudhishtira whose understanding of Yama Dharma is tested through his answers and perspectives when he encounters Yaksha prashna. It talks about his wisdom and nature.

Next is Brahma Dharma which talks about the duties and the rituals particularly related to Spirituality. These are the duties and rituals that were written down in the philosophical books like Vedas and Rig Veda. Characters while being the supreme warriors and characters also pay their respect towards these rituals by adhering to them even in the challenging situations. Bhishma and Dronacharya both pay their respect towards these rituals that were practised by the Vedas.

Lastly, Satya dharma is something which is very common among most of the characters. This dharma basically talks about one's duty towards truth and being truthful and honest to others. Yudhishtira who was known for his ultimate commitment to truth is the major example. Also, Krishna who remained honest and humble even at the battlefield also showcases the nature of Satya dharma

2.4 Role of Dharma in Character Development

Mahabharata, one of the most profound epics, plays an important role in shaping the destiny of not just the characters from Mahabharata but also serves as a guiding force for the future generations who are interested in knowing more about the concept of Dharma for a better ethical life. The actions, decisions and perspectives of the characters on Dharma shapes their lives in Mahabharata. Characters who were successful to uphold their right dharma were rewarded with greater good and peace which helped in developing their character and personality.

Characters do shape their own destinies by adhering to their given dharma in Mahabharata. The epic is all about the conflict between Pandavas and Kauravas for their respective reasons. Also, themes like family attachments, personal desires, warrior duty, and greed is highlighted through this epic. Dharma in Mahabharata is shown given equal opportunities and chances for all the characters even if they have disregarded dharma. It depends on the characters how they receive the gifts of Dharma at the end of the epic. Everyone has got their dharma based on one's gender, caste, social class. Their actions and deeds shape their future. Each and every character is tested with ethical choices and how they react and take decisions considering the consequences of it.

One of the prominent examples can be Arjuna who fought against his clan and family for the sake of greater good. Initially, he was reluctant to fight against his family but due to the guidance of lord Krishna who was his charioteer, he ended up following his Dharma as a warrior and fought for justice and that's how Pandavas eventually won the battle against their rivals, Kauravas. The discourse between Krishna and Arjuna during the battlefield of Kurukshetra war is covered through Bhagavad Gita, which talks about the spiritual guidance and difficult ethical choices Arjuna took with the help of Krishna. This helped in his growth as a character where he stands out for his duty and warrior ignoring the family attachments.

Another example can be of the eldest Pandava, Yudhishtira who was known for his ultimate commitment to truth. His commitment to his word to continue the game of dice arranged by Kauravas to destroy them looks controversial. He puts everything on stake including his brothers and wife, Draupadi. It might have helped him in shaping his character by staying committed to his words but his family had to pay the price which seems unfair as they were forced to spend fourteen years in the forest. Besides this one incident, his commitment to truth always helped him live an ethical life. Through his truth, he won the battle against Kauravas. It was an example of how truth defeats falsehood at any cost. He was also rewarded as he received heaven after his life.

On the other hand, characters like Duryodhana, Dushasana were given the required punishment for their disregard towards dharma. Their involvement in Draupadi's humiliation caused them their life at the battlefield. This also highlights how dharma can also lead to one's downfall if not adhered to or violated. Bhishma who was known for his oaths and commitment to the throne of Hastinapur also faced numerous dilemmas as he was bound to fight against his family, Pandavas as a result of his oath. Although he stays neutral but ends up fighting with the Kauravas.

CHAPTER THREE
DHARMA'S TRIALS: EXPLORING MORALS, ETHICS AND DILEMMAS IN
MAHABHARATA

3.1 Principles of Morals and Ethics in Mahabharata

3.1.1 Living Peace: Embracing Ahimsa

Ahimsa which means non-violence is considered as a major aspect which helps an individual to live a peaceful life. In Hinduism, the act of non-violence is considered as the supreme quality compared to all the other principles. The act of non-violence is equal for everyone including humans, animals and plants too. Ahimsa contains qualities like respect towards all the living and non-living beings. Concern and empathy for all the living beings also falls under the theme of Ahimsa. Mohandas Karamchandra Gandhi, India's prominent freedom fighter who fought against Britishers for India's freedom and safety can be considered as a major example of following the path of Ahimsa. Gandhi played a major role in India's freedom struggle by embracing non-violence against the opposition. With the help of Ahimsa, Gandhi performed Satyagraha. In today's world where everyone is executing Ahimsa in order to receive what they desire, Gandhi proved that even with the act of non-violence, you can achieve what you want. Ahimsa inculcates a sense of unity and

humanity among all the beings. Due to less violence, people feel connected to each other. Ahimsa also resolves the violent conflicts in a peaceful manner which can lead to a better and peaceful life. Not everything should be resolved with conflicts and war, some situations and incidents can also be neglected by adhering to Ahimsa by compromising and apologising to the other person.

Ahimsa can only lead to destruction, regardless of the situation. When a person inculcates the thoughts of non-violence then life becomes a bit easy to survive. When you let things go instead of reacting to each and every small thing then it can lead to a peaceful and prosperous life. Ahimsa forces a person to indulge qualities like kindness, patience and forgiving people even if they did wrong to you. This can lead to better health. Words can be considered as a most powerful weapon and humans tend to forget that their words might hurt someone very badly. Inculcating qualities of Ahimsa among oneself can reduce verbal spat, bitter words, arguments, fights and other violent conflicts. Ahimsa is something which is very vital in today's cruel world where everyone has become selfish and greedy which is followed by Non-violence. Applying the qualities and principles of Ahimsa can lead to a beautiful and healthy journey of life.

One of the most important and prominent characters of Mahabharata who carried the qualities of Ahimsa with him throughout the journey of his life was Lord Krishna. In a place where every other character was fighting for their rights and justice, Krishna remained untouched and unbothered by the chaos around him and stayed committed to his principles of Ahimsa that is to deal with all the hurdles and difficulties with the sense of compassion and sympathy towards every other being. When the entire Kingdom of Hastinapur were fighting against each other, Krishna being the charioteer of Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra war remained detached from the armors. His decision not to participate in the war as a

warrior but rather as a guide and charioteer showcases his immense respect for Ahimsa. Although, he knew that it is only by Non-violence the world would be a better place.

3.1.2 Satya's Legacy: Illuminating Paths of Truth

Truthfulness which is also termed as 'Satya' in Sanskrit, is another principle of morals and ethics and is considered as a supreme aspect in humans to live a peaceful life. Being truthful to oneself and to others is considered as a beautiful quality in humans which can lead to life full of morals. It is considered as a major quality in humans. Major qualities of 'Satya' or truthfulness to someone are honesty, innocence through their actions and words. Being truthful to oneself means not just speaking the truth but also living a life full of morals and ethics. Staying truthful even when the situation allows you to lie is something which stands out. By speaking truth or going ahead on the route of 'Satya' can build the sense of attachment, strengthen the relationships, strengthen the bond between two individuals and can also develop trusting abilities among two individuals. Sometimes the situations might appear challenging and tricky, but the one who stays committed to his adherence to speaking the truth can always find himself/herself in a better place.

A true leader with the qualities of honesty and integrity can always lead his team or his squad to victory. In Hinduism, 'Satya' is prioritised by the many sacred and holy books for the well being of humans. Rigveda, which is one of the most famous and oldest religious texts, mentions and highlights the importance of upholding truth even during adverse situations. It says that "Truth can alone Triumph" which basically means a single person who is truthful to himself can fight against thousands of lies. In Sanskrit it is termed as "Satyameva Jayate ". It highlights that no matter how great or huge is the truth, it can be defeated single handedly by a truth. Any kind of deception or falsehood can be defeated just

by being truthful to yourself. Being truthful means adherence to the principles of Dharma which can lead to a rightful path in life.

In Hinduism, the achievement of a human at the end of his/her life is the realisation of one's honest nature which is also called as 'Atman' in Sanskrit. Furthermore, the importance of existence is also considered as a major aspect. When you're truly indulged in truth then all your ego, arrogance and anger issues vanish. Being on the right path of Dharma can help a person to deal with its anger issues, anxiety issues and other aspects too. It also helps to have a beautiful journey of Spirituality. This journey can help an individual to reach its 'Moksha' which means self liberation. By letting their personal ego and desires, one can receive eternal truth. In Mahabharata, there were many characters who were known for their unparalleled commitment to Satya in order to uphold their Dharma. One of the major examples was the eldest Pandava, Yudhishtira who was known for his ultimate commitment to truth. His ability to speak truth and being honest even during times of difficulty was always cherished till the end. Also, the Mahabharata highlights the punishments and outcomes of the untruths used in the name of Dharma. But here is someone like Yudhishtira who tried his best till the end of the war and succeeded in upholding his truth. Yudhishtira also faced many consequences of his dilemmas and choices.

3.1.3 Aparigraha: Finding Abundance in Less

Aparigraha is again another aspect of moral and ethics which is also known as Non-possession which means detachment from the materialistic desires and living a simple life which encourages peaceful life. In Sanskrit 'a' refers to 'non' 'parigraha' refers to the possession. It is rooted from many famous Indian texts like Bhagavad Gita. One should keep their materialistic pleasures aside and focus on living a healthy life rather than a life filled with greed and jealousy. Staying content with what you have in your life is what Aparigraha

teaches you. It also develops a sense of gratitude for the smallest of the smallest things in one's life. It also helps an individual to get rid of unnecessary elements of their lives and focus on the necessary actions in their lives. In today's world, where every other person is ready to compare themselves with others, Aparigraha teaches and minimises the habit of comparisons and frenzy among yourselves.

Also, the qualities of Aparigraha give less importance to the materialistic pleasures that are money or wealth and emphasise more on internal happiness and freshness. Non-possession can lead to a life with greater contribution to the world. For example, it will help in living a sustainable life. Non-possession also highlights the themes of selflessness. An Individual who inculcates and frees himself from the greed and weight of materialistic pleasures and develops the sense of honesty, quality of sharing things with each other and empathy.

Aparigraha just doesn't talk about avoiding the physical materials but it also talks about having a soft corner for the environment and other living beings too. Application and use of simple and ordinary things to survive, staying calm and composed while making decisions and choices falls under Aparigraha. Someone who is a minimalist is a person who lives a simple life and is content with whatever they have is known as Minimalist. Spending on things which are important and not which are fancy. All these qualities present in Aparigraha can help in preserving resources for the coming generation.

In Mahabharata, there are multiple characters who adhere to both the materialistic pleasures and also living a simple life. Duryodhana, being the antagonist of the epic, highlights the qualities of possession in his behaviour. His hunger for the throne of Hastinapur and his greed towards wealth and status showcases his temptations towards materialistic deeds. As a result, it led to the destruction of his family and the kingdom of Hastinapur. The greed and jealousy of Kauravas towards the Pandavas led them to their

downfall at the end of Mahabharata. On the other hand, Yudhishtira and his four brothers lead life in a minimalistic way even after having all sorts of wealth and kingdom. They were happy with whatever they got, for example Indraprastha. When Kauravas took everything in the name of greed, Pandavas were happy to live a simple and ordinary life in Indraprastha and their villagers. Even during their exile, they lead a very ordinary life for their survival.

3.1.4 Cosmic Justice: The Karma Connection

Karma is again a force that is connected to the universe, where it talks about how one's actions and deeds can return back to them in the form of Karma. When an individual does any bad or misdeeds or any kind of negative activities then according to Hindu mythology, all those deeds come back at you in a form of punishment which is famously known as Karma. This principle also falls under laws and it is famously known as Cause and Consequence. It talks about the deeds whether it is good or bad and how the entity makes you realise your mistakes or good work by bringing that back to you in multiple forms. Whenever a person makes a decision, good or bad, then he/she tends to think about its consequences. When you do something bad to anyone, you should be aware of the Karma which is going to hit back at you. Karma also helps in shaping one's decisions and turns their decisions or choices into ethical ones.

In Hinduism, Karma also highlights the concept of birth and rebirth. The principles of Karma also determine the ability of a person for rebirth. These rebirths are based on one's deeds and misdeeds in their previous life. Overall, the cycle starts from the day one person is born, continues till that person dies and based on their deeds and misdeeds, the rebirth takes place. If a person has led a peaceful and ethically valued life, then this will act as a plus point in their further births. The actions of Karma motivates a person to follow the path of loyalty

and responsibility. It inculcates the values of selflessness and increases the qualities of kindness, contentment and simplicity in an individual's life. It also reduces arrogance, anger issues and hatred.

In the famous epic, Mahabharata, the principles of Karma or the 'Karma yoga' had played a major role in shaping the destiny of many supreme and also the minor characters. Characters have faced adversity and also prosperity due to their actions and deeds. Characters like Arjuna, Yudhishtira, Bhishma who remained content with what they had, didn't face the harmful rays of Karma. Whereas, characters like Duryodhana, Dushasana, rest of the Kauravas and also their father, Dhritarashtra too faced the Karma of their disastrous deeds. Kauravas and their father have given enough stress and have done enough injustice towards them throughout the epic that as a result their entire kin and kingdom was destroyed. Duryodhana faced an evil death by the hands of Bheema and their father Dhritarashtra, had to bear the loss of his hundred sons at a time which is the worst scenario for any father.

Even the characters like Dushasana faced death as the karma of his actions during Draupadi's humiliation as he was the one who tried to harm the dignity of Draupadi. And as a result, Dushasana faced his death by the hands of Pandavas and eventually Draupadi completed her oath by washing her hair with Dushasana's blood after her humiliation. Not just them, but Ashwatthama's struggle for death also is an example that even if you get rid of your misdeeds then karma will come at you in your next birth. Lord Krishna cursed Ashwatthama that he won't be able to receive his death even if wants to as a result of his cruel act of trying to kill a child who is still in the womb of a woman.

3.1.5 The Sacred Code: Unveiling Dharma

Dharma is one of the most important and vital principles of morals and ethics as it basically covers all the aspects of ideal human nature. Dharma means one's responsibility and

duties towards their important things in life. It can be anything, family, friends and other important things. Dharma means Righteousness which helps in living a high ethical life which will bring harmony and prosperity in life. Following dharma helps an individual in attaining spiritual knowledge by calming their minds which can help them in performing their duties accurately. One should adhere to their given dharma with honesty and sincerity in order to uphold the essence of Dharma. For example a doctor has to deal with multiple responsibilities for example curing patients, checking upon the welfare of hospital and other things. A doctor's Dharma is to cure the patients and take care of them. Every individual has got different Dharma based on their situation, status, gender and age. One should fulfil their given and expected duties accurately and with sincerity. Everyone has got their own way to deal with the concept of Dharma. Dharma contains the laws of morals and ethics which help in upholding the Truth and the righteous behaviour. Everyone has different Dharma based on their status and social class and everyone has to adhere to their dharma in order to live a peaceful and balanced life. Adherence to dharma can bring harmony and discipline in the lives of people.

With the help of Dharma, one can attain the spiritual knowledge which can help in getting Moksha at the end of their lives. There are many forms of Dharma but the important ones are Personal Dharma that is Dharma of a specific person. Your personal dharma can be your responsibilities towards your family and work and for the society. Everyone is born with their own Dharma in life which is also called as Sva-dharma that is self dharma. The next Dharma will be Eternal dharma that is dharma related to the universe. This dharma is not just based on one's individual or personal dharma but covers the entire universe. It is something beyond the boundaries of society. For better functioning and other things, one must adhere to their sva-dharma to maintain the balance in the universe and harmony in the world. Lord Vishnu,

who is one of the supreme gods in Hinduism maintains this Dharma related to the universe for the betterment and smooth operations of the universe.

In Mahabharata, most of the characters have prioritised their dharma over all the other things. Characters have majorly followed their personal Dharma. Every character has got their own Dharma and their own way to deal with it. Starting with Yudhishtira's dharma to adhere to the principles of truth to Bhishma's oaths and ethical decisions for the betterment of the kingdom of Hastinapur. Although both the characters faced multiple consequences and difficulties in upholding their respective dharma, they didn't step back from their principles and stayed committed to their dharma and as a result, although many things went wrong but their Dharma remained firm and as a result the injustice of Kauravas was defeated and there was beginning of new era that is 'Kalyuga'. Dharma played a major role in shaping everyone's destiny, directly or indirectly based on their decisions and choices in the name of dharma.

3.1.6 Asteya: Finding Freedom in Non-Stealing

Asteya is another principle of morals and ethics where it talks about the act of being honest. It originally comes from Vedas where it talks about the acts of non stealing. This concept is much more beyond the stealing of materialistic pleasures like wealth and property and other valuable things. Like the other principles too, Asteya supports staying content with whatever we have in our lives. We should be thankful and show some gratitude towards the things we possess. It basically says that everything that is present in this universe, all those things belong to the divine entity and if you try to steal something which is not ours then this will result in destruction and imbalance of the universe. We shouldn't be asking for extra or something that doesn't belong to us. We shouldn't expect or desire more than we deserve. Something which belongs to us will come back to us. Through this, we tend to show gratitude

and appreciation towards the things that belong to others which can help in building strong relationships and will develop trust which can be handy for a society to work. As a result, it also leads an individual to be more honest and sincere towards others.

Nowadays, people are following unfair paths to get early success but adhering to Asteya will teach an individual to be more fair and respectful towards others. Deceit is something which will completely vanish if adhered to Asteya. This will eventually help the world and society to be more respectful and sincere towards each other. Nowadays when everyone is trying to steal the credit of someone else's work, Asteya teaches us the importance of being respectful and loyal towards others' materials and works. A person who adheres to Asteya always stays motivated towards their dreams. It increases the qualities like mutual respect among each other and also helps a person to be aware of their things. A person starts to love himself/herself by staying content with what they have rather than comparing your things with others. This further also in self development and upgrades a person morally. As a result, adherence to Asteya helps an individual to stay committed and passionate rather than the acts of stealing. This can also help in balancing the harmony of the universe.

The epic Mahabharata also highlights the consequences of not adhering to the principles of Asteya. In Mahabharata, characters like Duryodhana, Dushasana and all the other Kauravas are some of the major examples of stealing things that belong to others, that is Pandavas. Characters who remained content with what they have are the Pandavas during their exile of fourteen years. During their exile, they led an ordinary and simple life. Whereas the Pandavas tried to steal their rights on the throne of Hastinapur and eventually leading to their downfall highlights the consequences of their stealing. Kauravas also faced their punishments of Draupadi's humiliation in the court of the kingdom, Hastinapur when they tried to misbehave with the wife of Pandavas. This resulted in their downfall in the end of the

battlefield of Kurukshetra war showcasing the harmful and painful consequences of trying to claim something which doesn't belong to you.

3.2 Moral and Ethical Dilemmas and their Complexities in Mahabharata

3.2.1 Arjuna's Crossroads: Navigating Ethical Quandaries in the Mahabharata

The warrior Arjuna was born to Kunti, the mother of Pandavas. He was gifted with the supreme qualities of archery and since his childhood he was getting trained to become one of the greatest warriors of their time. Due to his birth in the Kshatriya community he was born with the abilities of warrior ship and courage. Being a Kshatriya, his first duty is to serve for the Kingdom as a warrior without getting involved in any kind of emotional turmoil. But at the end of the Mahabharata, there are a lot of examples where we see warriors like Arjuna facing a lot of moral and ethical dilemmas due to their family members and other personal desires. Being a warrior, he had to stay committed to his Dharma.

In the chapter 1 of Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna is completely devastated to see his family, teachers, guides and friends fighting against him in the Kurukshetra war. His denial and hesitancy to fight against his own family members and teachers highlights his inner turmoil and dilemmas during the Kurukshetra war, even though he knew it was for the greater good. He was totally confused about the thing where he has to fight against Adharma and for that he has to defeat his own clan and family. So for him, it was a defeat at the end of the war even if he wins the battle. His constant questions to himself and contradictory thoughts forced Lord Krishna to interfere and he eventually guided him to fight against them, which was required from him as a warrior. The reason Arjuna faces a lot of difficulties in choosing between his family or duty and responsibility as a warrior is because he was so much attached to each of the people on the other side. Bhishma who guided him and protected him throughout his childhood, Guru Dronacharya, who was his favourite martial teacher and

someone who played a pivotal role in shaping his archery's journey. And also many other characters who are bound to fight against Dharma. He was in a constant dilemma whether to fight or surrender but at the end, Lord Krishna, who was his charioteer, guided him to stay committed to his act of performing dharma accurately. He advised him that certain things are bound to happen and they should be done for a greater good. And in order to bring justice in the world, Adharma has to be defeated to set an example for the future generations. Arjuna's dilemma to harm the people he loved the most was a constant inner turmoil that he carried with himself till the end of the war. But he also knew that his duty as a warrior of Kshatriya is much greater than his familial bonding. The Bhagavad Gita also consists of Arjuna's constant questions to Krishna about his difficulties. For example in chapter 2, Arjuna asks Krishna, "How will I fight against Bhishma and Dronacharya, who are worthy of my worship?" This question is highlighted from Bhagavad Gita 2.4. The way Arjuna is trying to seek an impactful answer from Lord Krishna is also an example of his inner turmoil. He cannot even think of harming his own people and specially the ones who made him capable of fighting in a war. To fight against someone he loved so much and respects so much further leads to his inner conflict to fight against his own family.

Krishna's views on wisdom and spiritualism also plays a major role in shaping Arjuna's inner conflicts which helped him in focusing on his main goals. Lord Krishna played an important role as an advisor to Arjuna and guided him till the end of the war. The way he helped him in getting over the inner conflict while defeating Karna. His philosophical wisdom and words helped him to overcome the conflicts inside him. Not just him, eventually Bhishma, Guru Dronacharya and other members from the Kauravas side also gained the knowledge from him which helped them to shape their destinies. Krishna's advice to stay detached from the personal outcomes and stick to the karma is one the greatest advice a warrior can receive. The idea where one should perform their duties and responsibilities

correctly without getting attached to his personal outcomes or without thinking about the end result is also known as 'Nishkama karma' in Sanskrit, which is also known as actions that are based on selfless acts. Lord Krishna's advice not to stay attached to the outcomes or consequences of the work you're doing and only staying committed to the karma helped Arjuna to fight against his rivals, that is his family, with a clear mind. He explained to Arjuna and everyone that thoughts are something which will keep growing if we let them grow. If we stay detached from the end result, it will help one individual to focus on the present thing which is in their hands. Krishna's spiritual advice to Arjuna that even if the body diminishes, the soul remains eternal. So if the love for people is eternal and pure then the love won't disappear even if the body dies. This advice by Lord Krishna, helped Arjuna to overcome his attachments and brought a much more clear focus in the battlefield.

And finally in the end, the warrior Arjuna adheres to his principles of Dharma that is to serve in the battlefield for justice and greater good. He agrees to Krishna's advice and guidance and tells him "Karishye Vachanam tava" which basically means he will listen and will do what is required and expected from him. He finally realised his duty as a Kshatriya warrior and his decision to fight against the injustice and defeat the ones who are in support of injustice regardless of who they are facing shows his courageous thoughts and bravery to accept something which is very sensitive to his heart. He finally realises his sense of responsibility towards the greater good and betterment of the world. Even though he was facing constant dilemmas, he decided to just listen to his guide, Lord Krishna and carry forward.

3.2.2 Conscience Chronicles: Yudhishtira's Inner Battles in the Mahabharata

Yudhishtira who is the eldest son of King Pandu and Queen Kunti known for its unmatched commitment to dharma that is to speak truth and be honest even during times of

difficulties. He is also the eldest brother of Pandavas however it was later revealed that Karna, the son of Surya Deva, is the first son of Kunti making him the eldest son of Kunti and eldest brother of Pandavas. But throughout the course, the love and affection as a eldest son was given to Yudhishtira. Despite being almost perfect compared to all the characters from Mahabharata, it experienced a lot of dilemmas whether it is moral or ethical. Yudhishtira was a person who stayed firm on his oath to speak truth and be honest and people who are very honest and humble towards everyone usually have to face the rays of consequences more compared to others.

Yudhishtira too faces a lot of criticism and sufferings due to his tendency of speaking truth even when the situations appear challenging. In Yudhishtira's life, there came many incidents and examples where he was highly appreciated for his unmatched commitment to dharma and loyalty towards the people he loved and also towards his enemies. He has always used an example of how an ideal person has to be in the world to make it a beautiful place to live. But since everything comes with a consequence, Yudhishtira too had to face the consequences and impacts of his decisions. If there are good people then there are also bad ones who are ready to destroy the beauty of innocent ones which leads to their destruction. It's always the people with a good heart, who want to bring positivity to the world, suffers the most for being too good or too honest. Yudhishtira is a perfect example to discuss this.

One of the prominent examples from Mahabharata is the famous Dice game introduced by the Kauravas and Shakuni in order to destroy the Pandavas and their wife, Draupadi. The entire set-up was built to destroy the Pandavas economically and emotionally too. When the invite comes from the Kauravas for the Dice game, despite knowing and realising that there's something beyond just a dice game, Yudhishtira being a person who adheres to the principles agrees to the invitation. Even after knowing everything, Yudhishtira decides to play the Dice game with Shakuni in which they have to put their wealth and kingdom at

stake. Yudhishtira faced moral dilemmas before the start of the game and was confused whether he did a right job by participating in the game or not. Despite having many ethical dilemmas, he chooses to participate and puts his wealth, kingdom and even the great Indraprastha on the line. He knew very well that once he opted for the game then he won't be able to withdraw from the game till it gets over. His duty being the eldest brother and king of Indraprastha forces him to move forward in the game and he keeps playing until the game completely destroys him and his family. Shakuni keeps winning each and every time and after a point Yudhishtira and the other Pandavas realise that the game is fixed so Arjuna and other Pandavas ask him not to continue the game. But Yudhishtira's commitment to his Dharma doesn't allow him to withdraw from the fixed game and he keeps playing. This shows his unparalleled commitment to truth and his duty.

He faces moral dilemmas between his duty or personal gains and he eventually opts for committing his duty. For him everything came behind honour and self respect. And as a result and outcome, the Pandavas finally lost the game and their wife Draupadi was also humiliated in front of all the men. And as a result, they were punished by 14 years of exile. Adding to that, they also had to make sure that they don't get caught during their 14th year or else they might have to repeat all their thirteen years again. Also, Yudhishtira had also made many sacrifices to uphold the Dharma and one of the examples from that is his sacrifice during the Rajasuya practice where it highlights how he respects the gods and their deities. He respects all types of Gods and his love and affection is not just based on caste or social group. According to him, he shouldn't bow down to lord Krishna as he thinks he is his friend and he too holds an equal position compared to him. Although other members of Pandavas bow to Krishna, Yudhishtira refuses to bow due to his Dharma. But eventually he was in a double mind whether to listen to his Dharma or Krishna.

Yudhishtira being the most honest and sincere person among all the other members of Mahabharata, gets caught in a moral dilemma where he had to lie in order to win the battle. Yudhishtira had taken an oath that he would never lie to anyone regardless of any difficult or challenging situations. Due to his commitment to truth till his last breath, he suffers and experiences a lot of moral and ethical dilemmas. One of the famous incidents from this is the conversation between him and Guru Dronacharya regarding his son, Ashwatthama. Lord Krishna and Arjuna had decided to play a trickery on Dronacharya and Ashwatthama. They spread a rumour that Ashwatthama died in the war and Dronacharya comes running to the Pandavas to see his son. Krishna and Arjuna were sure about this trickery but Yudhishtira being an honest person seemed reluctant to follow the plan. When Dronacharya asks Pandavas about his son, he doesn't believe them and because of that Dronacharya asks Yudhishtira about his son since he knew that Yudhishtira won't lie to him. Yudhishtira's silence during the question highlights the dilemmas he faced during that time whether to answer honestly or to lie in order to win the battle. Yudhishtira eventually answered the question of Dronacharya by saying that 'Ashwatthama died in the war'. Listening to this Dronacharya breaks down and starts crying loudly. But Yudhishtira didn't mention about his son Ashwatthama, he actually mentioned an elephant named Ashwatthama which he doesn't clarify to Dronacharya while answering. And due to this, Dronacharya eventually surrendered himself and was killed in the war by Dhrishtadyumna. This is how Yudhishtira was able to hold his identity as an honest person and also lead to Dronacharya's death in the war. This is one of the famous examples of Yudhishtira where he suffers between choosing his Dharma or his duty as the leader of the war.

Also, after the war was announced, Yudhishtira faced a moral dilemma in facing his own family members and brothers despite their bad deeds. Like Arjuna, Yudhishtira too was caught in a confusion of facing his family in the war. He expresses his reluctance to fight

against his own clan in the war although it's for the greater good. Yudhishtira seemed totally confused one night before the war and consulted Krishna for the solution. His reluctance to fight against his family and brothers showcases the element of ethical and moral dilemma. Eventually, lord Krishna like Arjuna, advised him not to stay focused on the current situations even if they are difficult and challenging but to shift his focus on the betterment of the world.

3.2.3 Karna's Quest: Trials of the Soul

Karna, the son of Surya Deva and Kunti's official first son, who was gifted to Kunti as a reward by the Surya Deva himself. Karna is considered as one of the famous tragic heroes during the era of Mahabharata who went through a lot of difficulties and hardships since his childhood and he carried baggage till his death at the Kurukshetra war. Karna's ethical and moral dilemmas played a crucial role in shaping his life throughout the epic, Mahabharata.

The problems and difficulties in Karna's life begin from his childhood when his mother, Kunti abandons him in the river Ganga since she didn't want any son during that time and also Karna was given to her by Surya Deva as a gift and he wasn't a part of the Kuru kingdom. Since it was impossible for Kunti to raise him as his normal child, she abandons him in the river in a basket. Although Kunti was gutted to abandon him, she had to do that since he was not a part of Hastinapur. Later, a couple found him in the river and they adopted him without any hesitation. He was adopted by a charioteer and his wife which gave him a new birth as well as new parents. Karna's journey from being an ordinary person from a village to one of the greatest archers of all time along with Arjuna can be considered as a remarkable journey. But while following his dream, he also had to sacrifice a lot of things and faced a lot of difficulties in decision making which eventually led to his downfall.

Karna was a great warrior who was also considered as a major threat for the Pandavas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra war. He had all the qualities a perfect Archer must possess. He

goes down as equally skilled or can be considered as the greatest archer, alongside Arjuna, in the history. Despite being so skilled he was always kept below Arjuna due to his identity as charioteer's son. He just wanted people to recognize his abilities and skills without interfering into his family background. He faced a lot of difficulties in accepting that despite having all the skills, he will never be recognized by the people. But since he was too firm on proving himself in front of the whole world, he kept practising and kept participating in competitions despite numerous insults. He was so firm to prove himself that he decided to participate in the war against the Pandavas. Although, his initial motive to participate in the war is to protect Duryodhana from the Pandavas. Duryodhana hires him and builds friendship with him due to his ultimate powers. Karna participates in the war as a protector of Duryodhana but deep down he also wanted to prove himself in the war that he is better than Arjuna in archery. But due to Duryodhana's friendship he always found himself in a double mind or dilemma of whether to protect his friend or to prove himself as it was the only chance for him to tell the world that he is better than everyone else. So he constantly found himself in a moral dilemma of whether to protect his friend since he had promised him that he will protect Duryodhana at any cost or to prove himself. The way Karna wanted to defeat and openly challenge all the Pandavas showcases his determination to prove himself in front of everyone.

Not just on the battlefield, his quest for acceptance and respect started in his childhood. When her mother, Kunti abandons him in the river, he is adopted by a couple from the village of Hastinapur. When he grew, he started realising that people won't be appreciating him due to his identity as a charioteer's son. He wanted to be recognized by the people but not at the cost of his parents who adopted and took care of him. He knew if he tried to go against the traditional norms by trying to compete in competitions, his parents would have to listen a lot. So he was in a constant dilemma whether to choose his skills or his parents. But somehow his parents supported him to become the warrior he is now. But despite this, there were people

who criticised him due to family background and his upbringing. This behaviour by the people, forced him to become the version of himself that he didn't want to be. He became rude and arrogant to the people who criticised him and also people who loved him. When he goes to Dronacharya to learn martial arts and Archery, he was completely denied by Dronacharya saying that he only teaches to the royal kids. He was also humiliated by the hands of Dronacharya. This discourse between him and Dronacharya forced him to hide his identity and portray him as a Kshatriya in front of Parashurama, who guides and teaches him archery. He was in a constant state of confusion as he faced a moral dilemma while learning Archery from Parashurama as he knew that he was doing wrong. He was learning Archery and at the same time he was also traumatised by the fact that he lied to his guru. Despite this, he kept going with constant internal conflicts. This inner turmoil highlights his concerns for being truthful to him and others too. Eventually he discloses his identity as a charioteer's son and not Kshatriya, which forced Parashurama to curse him.

Also, his confusion between choosing what is Dharma and what is trap or adharma has always been a part of conversation. Although, Karna got all the sympathy from the readers and audience due the injustice that was done to him by the people of Mahabharata. At the same time, he was also criticised for his misdeeds and adharma he performs in the name of loyalty and friendship. As we all know that he was fully committed to Duryodhana, his friend who supported him when no one did. His commitment to Duryodhana despite knowing that he is performing unjustified actions and things highlights his fear that he will not be recognized by the people. Although he was honest and truthful to his friend, Duryodhana, he kept quiet in many of the instances where people wanted him to speak. His loyalty towards Duryodhana forced him to ignore the injustice despite being against injustice. He knew if he went against Duryodhana then everyone would abandon him like his mother. One of the notable examples from this is his silence during the humiliation of Draupadi despite being

against injustice towards her. He was a part of the dice game and everything happened in front of him. Even though he wanted to raise his voice against the injustice occurring in the court, he kept quiet due to his lower position and a charioteer's son. This scene highlights his ethical dilemma in choosing what is right and wrong. He lets the injustice happen in front of his eyes and ends up insulting Draupadi which was the beginning of his downfall. Due to being on good terms with Duryodhana, he ends up insulting Draupadi and questioning her identity for being in a marriage with five husbands.

Also, as discussed, Karna's involvement with Duryodhana despite knowing his performing injustice to everyone is considered as a reason for his downfall in the war. The reason Karna remained loyal to him is because Duryodhana supported him when nobody did. In one of the competitions where every Kshatriya had to perform and showcase his skillset, Duryodhana supported Karna when he tried to participate in the competition despite not being a part of Kshatriya. Although, Duryodhana did all these to strengthen his army but for Karna that was the life changing moment. Although Karna stayed committed to his dharma and stayed honest with everyone, he also stayed loyal to his friend Duryodhana despite his misdeeds. Although he was a friend of Duryodhana, he also had soft corners for all the Pandavas and Kunti and even the other great warriors of the kingdom. But due to his involvement with Duryodhana, Pandavas used to criticise him and Karna always used to find himself in quest or dilemma of choosing his loyalty towards his friend or his duty as a honest warrior. His participation in the war against the Pandavas despite knowing that Pandavas are fighting for justice also highlights his ethical dilemma. He supports his friend and returns the favour by protecting him. But deep down the line, he knew that he was fighting against justice and supporting unrighteousness.

3.2.3 Shackled by Vows: Bhishma's Inner Turmoil in the Mahabharata

Bhishma was majorly known for his unparalleled commitment and ability to fight any great warrior without any fear. He was considered as someone who is an almost unbeatable and undisputed warrior. He was also known for his ultimate commitment and oaths he had taken for the safety of Hastinapur and other required aspects. He was known for his commitment and loyalty towards the throne of Hastinapur. It was a selfless act of serving the throne till he died. He was so powerful that he had all the rights over his own death, that is he has the right to choose his own death. But while adhering to these principles, he also got caught into many ethical dilemmas while choosing between two equally important things with equal moral impact and importance.

Bhishma faces his First moral dilemma which kind of tears him apart between two equally important things. When his father Shantanu, who was the king of Hastinapur during that time, ends up marrying Satyawati, a fisherman's daughter. Durbto this act of his father, he takes an oath that he will never compete for the rights of becoming the king of Hastinapur instead he will serve the throne of Hastinapur without becoming the king. In other words, he decides to be a 'Brahmachari' whose work is to only serve the kingdom selflessly regardless of the situation. As a result of this oath, he ended up hurting many people including his loved ones that is Pandavas. Initially he took the oath to ensure the security of the kingdom but later the Kauravas and the king of Hastinapur, Dhritarashtra uses him as their protector from the unrighteousness activities they are doing. The reason he took the oath is for his father. If he had not taken the oath then his father would have been in trouble as he had to pay the price. But Bhishma also knew that he had to become the next king of Hastinapur in order to bring justice and peace in the kingdom. But because of his father he found himself in an inner conflict whether to choose his father or the security of Hastinapur. This was the first dilemma that occurred in Bhishma's life where he eventually chooses his father and takes an oath that he won't be asking for the rights of king but he will serve the kingdom as a servant that is

‘Brahmachari’. He was in a constant state of dilemma to choose between two things and he found a solution that suits him. His oath helped his father to marry Satyawati. Being a respectful son, he did what was good for his father and his kingdom by eventually putting himself in a situation where he had to silently serve the throne of Hastinapur without having any major right to say.

As already discussed, Bhishma can be seen as a great personality with a sense of familial bonds. He was a great family man who went through a lot of struggle and sacrifices to protect his family. But due to his oaths and other responsibilities forced him to follow the path of his dharma which ended up hurting his loved ones and his family. One of the examples from this is his attachments with the Pandavas and Kunti. Since Pandavas were the sons of Pandu and his nephews, he had a different kind of love and affection towards them. Despite having all the love and care towards them, he ended up supporting the Kauravas in the battlefield of Kurukshetra war. Despite of knowing that Pandavas are fighting for justice and rights of common people, he had to be the protectors of Hastinapur that is the Kauravas as he had promised and taken oath to serve and protect the throne of Hastinapur at any given situation even if it against his morals. Despite having all the love and care towards the Pandavas, he fought against them in the war highlights his moral dilemma to fight against his own family and loved ones. Although he tried to support the Pandavas even before the war and during the war. He showed his sympathies and empathy towards the Pandavas and highlighted his dilemma between choosing his family or his duty. Even though he was firm on his decisions and dharma, he tended to show care and support towards the Pandavas in many moments.

He defended Pandavas when they returned from exile and showcased his concern for them. He also gave the blessings to Arjuna and the other Pandavas before the beginning of the war, completely showing his support for the Pandavas from heart.