CHAPTER FOUR

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Preamble to Analysis

In the Mahābhārata, complex and diverse psychological aspects of the human psyche are presented through experiential narratives, emotions, conflicts, and crises, along with the varied ways of coping with them. The epic posits varied multidimensional aspects of human nature. Its essence lies in the quest for meaning and purpose and actions that allay weaknesses and strengthen the self.

In the current research, the aim is to study the interrelations of self and well-being, utilizing the Rogerian framework along with the intrinsic phenomenological approach of the Mahābhārata. Another aspect is to accrue a theoretical base for Indian Psychology and to align the emergent understandings in the field of counselling.

In counselling interactions, I as a counsellor am instrumental in effecting change in another person. Through bringing about different levels of awareness in the counsellees, not only do they gain a heightened perceptiveness of their self-definitions, but I too, as a counsellor undergo a process of self-transformation. The experiences and happenings of one person are not very far removed from what others similarly go through.

The different conceptions of self along with their perspectives for well-being will make an impact in the counselling setting by affording many insights into human nature and contexts. It is not merely the ‘data’ one gathers about the other person but the deeper self-understanding one achieves by thinking in relation to the other which leads toward transformation. Psychotherapy, as expressed by Edwards (2003), often turns to metaphors and myths to grasp and communicate that which is unconscious.

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6 The ‘other’ here is not necessarily another person, but also anything external to oneself, including nature, the five elements of fire, water, space, earth and air. An experiential and dialogical process seems imminent in understanding the nature of self, its ramifications and expositions.
and which eludes verbal definitions. Edwards also emphasizes that depicted characters in narratives portray positive sides of the unconscious, and function as a source of creativity, understanding and healing power. An experiential and dialogical process is imminent in understanding the nature of self, its ramifications and expositions.

The Mahābhārata, inherently phenomenological in nature, is itself used to understand the narratives, descriptions of the characters and their behaviours, and interpretations afforded by the meaning, purpose, and action of the characters, and in understanding self through the other. The phenomenological approach grasps the experiences without theoretical preconceptions, the intention being to clarify and understand what is at issue. The lived experience is the essential aspect.

The material for the study generated by the target set of characters — Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Gāndhārī, and Draupadī — in the Mahābhārata, will be analyzed using the processes of self-concept, self-complexity, and self-enhancement. Well-being of the characters will be analyzed in terms of positivity, engagement, purpose and meaning, optimism and trust, and life satisfaction. These processes are defined below.

### 4.1.1 Self-processes

The self is both a set of organizing processes that bind the personality into a coherent, integrated system, as well as a perceived object that the individual is aware of in her conscious experience. The perception of the self as an object does not entail it being fixed but is more in terms of the self as a stable anchor at any given point of time to which the individual refers his/her current experience. However, the dynamic nature of the self interprets and processes these experiences and absorbs them into the self-conceptions, changing his or her awareness of oneself. McInerney, Marsh, & Craven (2008) consider self-processes as “underpinning human potential” (p.3). The self-processes according to McInerney, et al. include self-concept, self-regulation, self-determination, self-efficacy, well-being, resilience, and motivation and these are dynamic and interacting processes which are aspects of a complex integrated whole. It then may be surmised that the self is a stable yet holistically dynamic and moving process which the individual is aware of at any given time; the process helps to expand through various experiences. The self-processes under focus in this particular
research are those of (a) self-concept, (b) self-complexity, and (c) self-enhancement and these may be considered as measures of transformation and well-being.

(a) **Self-concept** is a totality of attitudes, values, and judgements of an individual relating to his or her behaviour, qualities, abilities, and worth as a person (that is, how one perceives and evaluates oneself). It is the way one knows and understands oneself. The knowing derives from the experience of one's own self and is a relatively enduring cognitive structure. However, the self-concept is not only a state and structure that is perceived as a static anchor on which the individual bases his or her affirmations, denials, or new experiences, but the it is also inherently dynamic. Markus & Wurf (1987) write that the self-concept is dynamic – active, forceful, and capable of change, interpreting and organizing actions and experiences with motivational consequences. Much earlier, Epstein (1973) considered the phenomenological self as the nucleus of personality, with directive and integrative properties, and where the person views oneself as an experiencing, functioning individual. These scholars emphasize the dynamic, processing nature of the self-concept. Rogers (1956) too writes of this dynamic processing nature of the self. He theorizes that the individual gradually reorganizes the self-concept, in the process discovering that the self is the experience and not a structure imposed upon the experience. Marsh & O'Mara (2008, p.87) call the self-concept, “a pivotal end goal as well as a crucial mediating factor in many fields.”

The self-concept draws upon the aspects of (i) Attitude and (ii) Value

(i) **Attitude** is an aspect of self-concept which involves response to a situation. Humans present varied responses across situations. The conceptions about oneself may also vary according to the attitudes presented. These various attitudes to different experiences contribute to a relatively stable, enduring and stable concept across time.

(ii) **Value** – Values guide the actions taken by the individual in response to their different experiences. Demo (1992) says that value is the conception of oneself based on personal experiences and characteristics. The values sought by human beings may be defined from the four goals of human effort or *puruṣārtha*-s as defined in the Mahābhārata – of right action, of wealth, of desire, and of liberation.

b) **Self-complexity** involves numerous spheres of the self-concept, each sphere marked
clearly or differentiated from the others. Linville (1985) defines self-complexity as a "function of two things: the number of aspects that one uses to cognitively organize knowledge about the self, and the degree of relatedness of these aspects" (p. 97, cf. Rafaeli-Mor & Steinberg, 2002). It involves numerous spheres of the self-concept, each sphere marked clearly or differentiated from the others. The individual is aware of the various dimensions. The complexity in self-structure has therapeutic ramifications – being aware of several aspects that one possesses in one’s arsenal, in times of stress, the individual can access different domains to buffer the distress. In other terms, it is a skill base or a repertoire of highly integrated dimensions, each an independent aspect yet connected to the larger whole.

Self-complexity may be further understood through its aspects of (i) Structure (ii) Clarity and (iii) Control

(i) **Structure** – involves stability as well as variability, i.e. each sphere is stable in itself and yet there is enough variability in the structure among several aspects for complexity.

(ii) **Clarity** – is the level of distinctness in a skill or aspect of the person. Each aspect is perspicuous in itself and maintaining boundaries without being fuzzy with other skills or aspects. The greater the clarity and control on more number of traits, the stronger is the complexity.

(iii) **Control** – is directly proportional to complexity exhibited by the person, that is, the clearer the skill domains and the greater the control over each domain, the broader is the self-complexity.

(c) **Self-enhancement** primarily emerged from Rogerian and Maslowian frameworks which accord primacy to the individual's growth strivings and finding meaning. It focuses on the tendency to move toward increasing one's self repertoire. Alicke & Sedikides (2011, p. 4) say that self-enhancement can be viewed as a particular type of motive whose directive function is to elevate self-regard toward a more desired level. These authors also talk of self-protection whose motive and function is to avoid reducing self-regard. This indicates that self-enhancement is positive and moves toward increasing one's self-esteem and at the same time also reduces the negative aspects. Through these processes of the self, one may foray into newer or hidden regions of oneself and discover other possibilities which may in turn be integrated
into the existing self-concept. This leads to an expansion of the self and its perception, again opening new vistas for enhanced action.

Self-enhancement too, as with self-concept and self-complexity, may be studied through its aspects.

(i) **Purpose** – The self has a propensity to move towards a goal which implies purpose. The horizons of one’s self are ever expanding and one moves in a direction which is most congruent with one’s ideas and values. This leads to an expansion of the self and its perception, again opening new vistas for enhanced action in terms of well-being and its parameters.\(^7\)

(ii) **Fulfilling potentials** – Self-actualization is the fulfilling of one's potentials. According to Maslow, human desires are innate and are arranged in an ascending hierarchy of priority or potency, that is, physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs. However, the hierarchy may not apply strictly for all individuals. Some may value self-esteem and self-actualization over belongingness needs.

(iii) **Search for meaning** – Meaning emerges from the movement toward the goals one sets and is an attempt to actualize one’s potentials. The movement is the search one initiates to act toward the desired goals. The efficacy and integrity of goals and self-actualization provide the meaning. Growth, openness, and self-actualization are constitutive of well-being.

Well-being is understood with respect to the experiences of desire, conflict, and grief of the five characters chosen for the study – Yudhīṣṭhira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Gāndhārī, and Draupadī. The themes of desire, conflict, and grief are explored in the following sections in the context of the Mahābhārata’s characters and their primary life incidents. The episodes are analysed with the help of the qualitative approaches described in the earlier chapter.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Parameters of well-being are positivity, engagement, and meaning and purpose. These are similar to Ryff's parameters of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy.

\(^8\) The earlier chapter on Methodology and Approach describes the qualitative approach utilized for this research.
Table 1: Synopsis of Characters, Experiential Contexts and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Yudhiṣṭhira</th>
<th>Arjuna</th>
<th>Duryodhana</th>
<th>Gāndhārī</th>
<th>Draupadī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Desire** | 1) As dice player during incognito exile – (Virāṭa Parvan)  
2) The Mahāprasthānika or final journey – (Mahāprasthānika Parvan) | 1) Winning Draupadī's hand through his competence (Ādi Parvan)  
2) Quest for divine weapons: Pāśupatāstra (Vāna Parvan) | 1) The cause for the dice game – seeking power (Sabhā Parvan)  
2) Casting away the kingdom after the war (Sauptika Parvan) | 1) Thwarting of desire – wedded to blind king (Ādi Parvan)  
2) Children who follow right course of action (throughout the epic) | 1) Inherent in the purpose of her birth (Ādi Parvan)  
2) Justice and a 'righting of wrongs unto her (Sabhā Parvan and thereafter) |
| **Conflict** | 1) The 'lie' on the battlefield (Droṇa Parvan)  
2) The war itself; the conflict between his svabhāva and svadharma, the innate nature and attributed duty as a kṣatriya evident (throughout the epic) | 1) At the beginning of the war (Bhīṣma Parvan)  
2) Inability to rescue the women of Dvārakā (Mausala Parvan) | 1) Intrapersonal conflict due to envy (throughout the epic)  
2) War itself is conflict due to refusal to see other perspectives | 1) Desire for power and simultaneously the path of righteousness (throughout the epic)  
2) Ideal and ought self (throughout the epic) | 1) Staked as a pawn (Sabhā Parvan)  
2) The war and thereafter (Strī and Sauptika Parvan-s) |
| **Grief** | 1) Attempt to pursue right course of action and lack of enough learning (especially in the Vāna Parvan)  
2) The dilemma of the 'lie' on the battlefield (Droṇa Parvan) | 1) Viṣāda at the beginning of the war (Bhīṣma Parvan)  
2) Loss of son and the subsequent oath (Droṇa Parvan) | 1) Lament arising from envy (Ādi Parvan)  
2) Continued lament on the success of the Pāṇḍava-s leading to the Dice Game (Sabhā Parvan) | Blindfolds herself throughout (Ādi Parvan)  
2) Attempts to kill the unborn foetus  
3) The curse on Krṣṇa (Strī Parvan) | Humiliation in court (Sabhā Parvan)  
2) Grief at the end of the war (Strī Parvan) |
Table 2: Matrix of the characters and their respective desires, conflicts, and grief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Yudhiṣṭhira</th>
<th>Arjuna</th>
<th>Duryodhana</th>
<th>Gāndhārī</th>
<th>Draupadī</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desire for</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge; right action</td>
<td>Fame; Prowess; Higher knowledge</td>
<td>Power; Possession</td>
<td>Children following righteousness; Power</td>
<td>Justice; Revenge; Establish the right way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict due to</strong></td>
<td>Choice-conflict innate</td>
<td>Fight justly; Choices in conflict with values</td>
<td>Rigid and limiting</td>
<td>Tom between right and wrong where wrong is linked to the idea of 'mine'</td>
<td>Sure of goals yet dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grief in response to</strong></td>
<td>Loss of peace; seeking of higher knowledge</td>
<td>Loss of victory at every stage</td>
<td>Loss of victory at every stage</td>
<td>Loss of 'insight': self-limiting; Loss of children</td>
<td>Loss of honour, kingdom, children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 Material for analysis

Table 1 gives a synopsis of the characters and the experiential contexts for the themes of desire, conflict, and grief.

Table 2 is a synopsis of the salient expressions of the desires, conflicts, and grief of the target set of characters in the Mahābhārata. The varied responses to their experiential contexts and how and whether they transcend the situations bring out the central aspects of their self and the capacity for transformation.

In the following sections, I will elaborate on each of the themes of desire, conflict, and grief, and attempt to give instances from the life experiences of the characters pertaining to these themes. The analysis will bring out the self-processes of each of the characters. I will discuss the aspect of meaning and purpose toward self-enhancement. The fundamental aspect is that of gaining understanding of the phenomenological experiences and how the narratives may be applied in the counselling realm.
4.2 DESIRE

4.2.1 Introduction

Desire underlies all actions in the Mahābhārata. This innate essence of human nature is brought to fore through various characters, stories, dialogues and experiences. Especially relevant is the Kāma-Gītā (Section XIII) in the fourteenth Parvan, the Aśvamedha Parvan, where Kāma, the God of Desire gives a treatise on the phenomenological nature of desire. In the current research study, the experiential, emotional phenomena and related stories and dialogues of the characters of the Mahābhārata, specifically Gāndhārī, Draupāḍī, Yudhiṣṭhira, Duryodhana, and Arjuna, the nature of desire as a motivator and as constitutive of self and its various roles in the human conative field will be discussed. Desire lies at the core of the emotional experiences of the characters and an attempt to understand the essential and pivotal forces could trace the path to understand aspects of the nature of self. Desire has ‘self-identity’ as its basis and exists as long as ‘self’ exists. Brandom (2007) claims that it is only the motivational characteristic of desire that can be controlled while desire itself cannot be extinguished.

Desire involves cognition – awareness of the object of desire, the longing to attain the object, and the necessary action that will fulfill the desire. The action that desire spurs, either mentally or physically brings a change in the state, from unfulfilled desire to a satiated state. This need to change is the motivator that makes desire function as a mover. Irvine (2007) says that the desires formed by emotions are highly motivated and we typically feel compelled to fulfill those desires arising out of emotions.

4.2.1.1 The Framework of desire

Philosophers such as Aristotle have asserted that desire is the fundamental motivation of all human action. People tend to think, feel, and act in particular ways while in that state of mind. Desire is a specifically human dimension and source of our greatest cultural wealth (Dormer & Davies, 2001). Simply put, desire is a state of wanting something. Linstead & Brewis (2007) describe desire as a lack, and as a free-flowing creative force operating behind the quest for knowledge. One wants to do
something, achieve a goal, accomplish a task, and produce results which are favourable. Ancient Greek thinkers like Aristotle and Epicurus deliberated keenly on the aspect of desire.

While Aristotle concedes that mind and desire are movers, he accords primacy to desire, “It is manifest, therefore, that what is called desire is the sort of faculty in the soul which initiates movement” (De Anima iii 10, 433a31-b1). In his De Anima (De Anima i 2, 405b11; i 5 409b19–24), Aristotle states that animals acquire locomotion because of their desire and any progressive motion is the result of this desire. Actions such as foraging and hunting for food, escaping from enemies or performing a natural activity associated with the animal are all motivated by desire.

Epicurus makes a close connection between pleasure and desire. He considers pleasure as desire-satisfaction and pain as desire-frustration. He further classifies desires into categories of 'natural and necessary desires,' which are innate to humans and necessary for life, 'natural but non-necessary desires,' such as craving for luxury food, and “vain and empty” desires which include a wanting for wealth, fame, etc. which have no natural limits.

4.2.1.2 Classification and typology

In a psychological framework, desires arise from the body structures, such as desire for food. Fernández (2007) classifies conditions such as appetites, cravings, yearnings, longings, etc. as 'urges' – those which arise due to organismic needs. Each of these, as Epicurus states, falls into particular categories, those which are necessary for life, those that are luxuries, and those which are vainglorious and only seek satisfaction for objects which have no limits.

Silverman (2000, p. 2-4) discusses the functions of desire as Plato described in his Symposium - those of desire for another human being (eros), for friendship with another human being (philia), for a kind of intellectual companionship (nomos), and for harmony and unity with the world of ideas (theoria). The Platonic experiential phenomena contrast with the cognitive-oriented Aristotelian desire functions of knowledge and action. Desire confirms and evaluates action – good actions and bad actions are valued as such based on the desires that motivate them. Finkelstein (1982) surmises that desire itself becomes the determinant of human value.
Western philosophers have written on desire from various perspectives yet show a consistency on the conception that it is a lack of the object that gives rise to desire. Descartes in *The passions of the Soul* defines desire as futural, that desire is not present but is a longing for what is absent (cf. Schrift, 2000, p.174). Other philosophers such as Spinoza and Nietzsche talk of desire as the essence of being, as the striving or the *conatus* by which each thing strives to persevere in its being; and as the value that we impose that makes the object desirable or good. We desire an object not so much for its intrinsic worth but the object becomes good because we 'desire' it. Freud's Oedipal complex fundamentally talks of desire for possessing the mother and fear of the father. Lacan (cf. Roudinesco, 1997, p.106) in his collaborative project with Kojève, *Genesis of self-awareness*, intersperses the concepts of “I as the subject of desire,” “desire as the revelation of truth of being,” and the “ego as the site of delusion and source of error” with themes concerning origin of madness.

Deleuze & Guattari (2004, p. 28) consider desire, and the object of desire, as being the same. They also look at desire in terms of capitalism and with a connection to the market production. Desire is a machine and the object of desire is another machine connected to it and the product is removed from the process of producing – a schism develops between the act of producing and the product, creating a residue in the subject. The most extended theory is the 'belief-desire' theory which holds that human behaviour invokes the concept of belief and desire in a substantive way (Stich, 1978). Desire has been treated in its various dimensions by the several mentioned philosophers and scholars. However, these above theories and conceptions of desire do not directly bear upon the study of the Mahābhārata characters and their contexts. The phenomenological approaches, instead, provide a keener perspective to the understandings of desire and are the approaches applied in this research. The phenomenological approaches provide a self understanding. In Sokolowski's words, “phenomenology helps us to think about the first and final issues and helps us to know ourselves” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 209). In the following paragraphs are presented the tenets of a few phenomenological theorists who eschewed empirical methodologies and tried to grasp the essence of human nature and self.
4.2.1.3 Desire and self

According to Jenkins (2009), Hegel states that self-consciousness is desire in general. Hegel's concept of desire establishes relations of interdependence between subjective capacities regarded as essential to consciousness and those relegated to inessential status. Schroeder (2000, p. 58-9) further explains that Hegel's idea of desire is interpreted as transcendence, that is, desire is reaching out to the 'other' It is not the satisfaction of the ego, and happiness is commensurate with need and not desire.

Hegel's ideas on desire and self are elaborated by Butler (1987) in her book 'Subjects of Desire.' Butler discusses Hegel's work, 'Phenomenology of Spirit'. Hegel considers the desire to exist as the most fundamental desire. The subject is essentially defined through what one desires. Desire is the incessant human effort to overcome all differences with the other and absorb these into the self as immanent features. The idea being that desire indicates a lack of something in oneself and which is found in the Other. The pursuit of this 'lack' is movement through time and experience which is 'being' and 'becoming'; it states categorically that movement is the crux of the self. Thus desire which is an impetus, a creative force, is crux of the self. It is the means by which we continually make new connections to produce something new, something more powerful than we were before. Actualization happens to the extent one confronts what is different from oneself and thereby discovers a more enhanced version of oneself. The negative or the lack becomes primary and the subject must undergo the loss of identity repeatedly to realize the fullest sense of self. Butler (1987, p.9) writes that desire is an interrogative mode of being and that in satisfying a desire we answer the question of being; it is the fundamental modality of human existence and the endeavour to persist in one's being.

In Carl Rogers' conception, the purpose of each individual's life is to permit herself or himself freely to be the changing, fluid process which one is, moving toward acceptance and an “is-ness” of self (Rogers, 1961, p.181). The desire is to be continually engaged to strive to be oneself, to develop and grow through insights into one's feelings and behaviour. The human's phenomenal field includes all experiences available at a given moment that are both conscious and unconscious and part of this field differentiates to form the self. Since the self is only a portion of the phenomenal field, it seeks to extend and become a complete self. This reaching out is the desire to
actualize and fulfill the potentials. This indicates that one's desire is to actualize potentials, reach within to be the authentic self that one is, and adapt, develop and become the essential being.

Das (1924, p.21) claims that emotions are desires to perpetuate a situation if pleasurable and escape if painful. Das however defines emotion as a desire along with the cognition involved in the attitude of one jīva (self) towards another. He considers emotion as a form of motion – a motion towards an object, or away from it, in the mind. Desire is action oriented to incrementing knowledge of the self for knowing is an act which expands oneself and therefore closer to the inner core and all action that ensues from desire leads to reflection and self-knowledge.

Ricouer links ethics to our most basic desire to ‘be’ and the effort to exist (Vanhoozer, 1990, p. 126). Approaching from a Darwinian perspective, or even a Maslowian hierarchy, the fundamental desire is perhaps the desire to survive rather than the possibility as Ricouer claims, of a “regenerated freedom”; a moving toward a sense of meaningfulness of existence which is the basis of creation. This deep Ricouerian thought, however, ties in closely with the Indian idea of the “desirelessness” as expressed by Framarin (2006) of desire, niṣkāma-karma- an injunction to act without desire; for the well-being of all, for dharma.

### 4.2.1.4 Desire in the Indian tradition

Desire spans an inclusive, comprehensive spectrum in Indian thought. Kāma is considered the foundation and basis of all action. The Nāsadiya Sūkta in the Ṛg Veda (X.129) contains the verse referring to the beginnings of desire.

\[
\text{kāmas tadagre samāvartatādhi manāso retāḥ prathamman yadāsīt} \\
\text{sagto bandhym asātī nirāvindan hṛdi pratīṣyā kgvavō maṅśā} ||4||^9
\]


The physical and spiritual energies are connected to the cosmic elements and

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^9 In the beginning desire descended on it - that was the primal seed, born of the mind. The sages who have searched their hearts with wisdom know that which is kin to that which is not (Nāsadiya Sūkta, Ṛg Veda, X.129.4).
the human body is considered sacred moving in a right relation with itself toward an integrated understanding. The sexual force or energy is raised to a spiritual level but only when it operates within the bounds of dharma does it elevate a person to deep understanding and fulfillment.

Desire or kāma features as one of the four main ‘human aims’ or ‘human effort’ of life or ‘puruṣārtha’ the other three being dharma (righteousness), artha (earning through righteous means), and mokṣa (liberation). One of the earliest mentions of the puruṣārtha is the laudatory verse from the Mahābhārata, praising its all-encompassing encyclopedic nature -

\[
dharme cārthe ca kāme ca mokṣe ca puruṣarṣabha |
yadihāsti tad anyatra yannehāsti na tat kvacit ||
\]

In regard to dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa, O Best of Men, what is here may be elsewhere, but what is not here is nowhere else (Ādi Parvan, 62.53).

Desire is an innate, single-minded force for action and knowledge. Kāma or desire is accorded a central role in creation in Indian thought and myth. In the Mahābhārata, desire (kāma) is the foremost of human effort (puruṣārtha).

4.2.1.5 Dimensions of desire

The relation between desire and emotions and between desire and time is discussed in the following section

(i) Desire and emotions

Emotions are discussed in detail in the treatise on dramaturgy by Bharata, the Nāṭya Śāstra. The dramaturgy treatise expands on various emotive aspects of desire. This work explains in detail the bhāva-s – the performative actions of emotions and rasa-s – the emotional responses evoked in the audience. The bhāva-s are of sthāyi-bhāva-s, stable underlying emotions and vyabhicāri-bhāva-s, evocative, but transient and dynamic responses. Although these various responses are highly stylized and emphasized on stage, the responses and the emotions themselves are universal and subtle nuances are described in an attempt to grasp the nature of the characters.

The characters in the epic may be described in terms of emotive aspects and their innate nature of their desires. Yudhiṣṭhira, Gāndhārī and Draupadī could be
emoted as having *manaḥkāmanā* (fulfillment of wishes in the mindful and psychological realms), *ākāṅkṣā* (all-encompassing desire), and *samīhita* (a well-developed wish).

Arjuna’s desire is *manoratha*. The mind is like a chariot taking us to the desired object or objective. Arjuna’s strong desire also speaks of *trṣṇā*, an unquenchable thirst to achieve one’s goals. The *sthāyi-bhāva* or stable emotion for Arjuna is *vīra*. The precursors or correlates to this are *śakti* (capability), *dhairyā* (mental stability), *śaurya* (physical prowess), *dhyāna* (a tendency to reflect), *asaṁmoha* (non-deluded), *atyāga* (not quitting), *vaiśāradya* (mastery over a situation), *apramāda* (not committing major blunders), *uthīta* (awake and arising). All of these also speak of a self-complex character, one who is focused on his goals and employs heroic paths to achieve these.

Duryodhana’s desire is marked by envy and the strong urge to obliterate the *Pāṇḍava-s*, a negative depleting way of living. Duryodhana is characterized by *amarṣa* – the feeling of being humiliated. He forces action to remove humiliation using anger and courage (*raudra –vīra*). This treatise classifies *amarṣa* as a *Vyabhicāri-bhāva* – the actions portrayed on stage. *Amarṣa* leads to an *utsāha* (a negative enthusiasm) which leads to a semblance of *vīrabhāsa*, a shadow experience of heroism, courage and bravery, in contrast with *vīra* shown by Arjuna. Duryodhana’s acts stemming from his envy and anger lead him to actions which are non-heroic – his lament expressing how much the *Pāṇḍava-s* have and that he does not possess the same quality of possessions; and this leads to him coveting their wealth and taking unheroic measures to do so through strategy and cheating rather than fighting like a warrior.

(ii) **Desire and time**

The question of what is time draws attention to various sphere of operation – past, present, future as well as a sense of timelessness and eternity. Time streams by and so does the movement of the being through the thread of time. This apparently continuous stream has discrete moments. Ricouer in his *Time and Narrative* (Vol I, 1984) is emphatic on the point that “speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond” (p.6). The narrative with its plots, goals, and causes, are brought together within a temporal unity of a whole and complete action (p. ix). The unfolding narrative inheres the desires of the characters.
and their fulfillment. Desires also seem to change across time or their fulfillment is in the future. Would the nature of a person also change across time attuned to the desires?

The Mahābhārata characters' desires tie in with the expression of their innate natures. Time seems to play an eternal role in the fulfilling of desires. Butler (1987) analyzes that desire motivates to absorb those 'substances' that are external into the self and expand one's self. Thus desire is a pursuit of identity, of self-knowledge, and an ethical congruence with ourselves connected with the cosmic order, ṛta or a universal symphony of time. Desire plays out variedly in the epic.

The Pāṇḍava-s abide their time for thirteen long years to finally fight for their rights and seek justice. Duryodhana and his allies seemingly rule the kingdom yet are anxious at every stage, of the Pāṇḍava-s returning strengthened and routing them. Time is drawn in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's life neither satisfying nor letting him reign in peace but torturing him every moment in the form of his conscience. Arjuna spends long years in penance to obtain complex and sophisticated weapons for a war that is in the future. Draupadī waits the exile period counting down to the day when obsequies can be paid to the violation of her person. Yudhiṣṭhīra utilizes the time in the forest to connect with himself and his inner potentials as well as strategize future courses of action. For Gāndhārī, time is drawn out in the dark labyrinths of the palace, standing still or galloping toward a catastrophe.

Time also changes the nature of desire. At the end of a holocaust, Duryodhana no longer desires to rule. He 'gives' away the kingdom – was it his to give away – and if he could give away then the destruction should have been averted. Thirteen years pass by without any change in Duryodhana's desire for the throne but eighteen days change his desires from vital to futile. Arjuna continues with his desire for fame and acts upon this even after the war. He meets his match in Babhrvāhana (his own son), and against the plunderers of Dvārakā. His desire unabated, the incidents shake his self-esteem. The Gāṇḍīva no longer works its magic and his identity too faces a threat. Gāndhārī's desire is rendered meaningless with time – although she knew that the right course of action brings victory, her personal desires remain unfulfilled throughout. Toward the very end, however, she removes her blindfold and opens up to the essence of her being.
A central quality in creation and phenomenal experience, desire is a deep and powerful force that does not perish, nor is completely satisfied it at best only transforms. Macy (1975) considers desire as the urge to remedy the sense of one's own incompleteness, a felt need for something, a wanting of something which is not yet in existence or not yet a part of oneself. As a consequence it constantly gives rise to an action-potential. Bhawuk (2008) determines that desire has a cognitive and affective component and draws these out from the Bhagavad-Gītā, in an attempt to show “how indigenous psychologies can contribute to universal psychology.” He tries to show how cognition and emotion are related in the context of desires. In Bhawuk's model, “the self interacts with the environment to develop cognition, emotion, and desire, and how the person performs actions to achieve the desire leading to positive and negative affects.” He accords great importance to the concept of desire, “because it captures both cognition and emotion.”

Ancient Indian texts have referred to the six passions of the human mind as the Ari-ṣad-varga-s or the inner enemies. The sextet comprises kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, and mātsarya and is said to cause suffering and misery and kāma or lustful desire is the first. Desire leads to anger (krodha) and greed (lobha) and gives rise to infatuation (moha), pride and arrogance (mada) and jealousy (mātsarya).

The Bhagavad-Gītā (Sw. Sivananda, 1969), II. 62-63 states:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmāḥ, kāmāt krodho'bhijāyate} & | \\
krodhād bhavati saṁmohāḥ, saṁmohāt smṛti-vibhramaḥ & | \\
smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-nāśo, buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati & | |
\end{align*}
\]

“From attachment desire is born, from desire anger rises. From anger comes delusion; from delusion loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from destruction of discrimination one perishes.”

Desire rides the thread between the concrete and abstract; it cannot be destroyed as long as the bodily form exists but can only transform. Desire exists long before and much after the body ceases to exist. The only path to traverse to conquer this is through the method Desire itself suggests. The more one indulges in sense enjoyment and desires, the more it appetizes, for desires are never appeased by gratification.
In a sense, kāma is blind and therefore it is necessary that it is regulated by dharma (Krishan, 1989). Krishan in the same article also elaborates on the Puruṣārtha-s and their interrelated nature. Dharma and artha are mere means to realize kāma and uncontrolled pursuit of unlimited wants and selfish desires can lead to conflict in society and its disintegration. He concludes that tṛṣṇā or craving is antithetical to loka-saṅgraha (well-being of all) and śreyas or happiness and welfare is best achieved by all three (dharma, artha, kāma) together.

4.2.1.6 The Mahābhārata and desire

The Mahābhārata says that the state of being addicted to worldly objects is mṛtyu (perdition) and the absence of that feeling is śāsvata (the eternal spirit). And these two forces are unseen but present in the spirit of all creatures, and wage war with each other (Aśvamedha Parvan, XIV.13)

The Mahābhārata inquires into the nature of human beings and their foundational motivations. Among the four action-oriented goals of human life, dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa, kāma is said to be the prime mover of all beings. In the epic, kāma or desire is given critical importance. The various desires of the characters lead them to feel, think and act in their different situations forming the course of the experiential narratives.

Kāma is known by various names – the beautiful, the inflamer, the lustful, the desirous, the happy, the wanton, the destroyer, the deluder, the one who bewilders, the destroyer of peace, the teacher of the world, the origin of desire, the erotic and the desirable (Badrinath, 2007a, p. 297). Bhīma in the Vana Parvan (33.36) ascribes a sensuous nature to the idea of kāma

\[
\text{indriyāṇāṁ ca pañcānāṁ manaso hṛdayasya ca} \ni \\
\text{viṣaye vartānāṁ yā prītir upajāyate} \i \\
\text{sa kāma iti me buddhiḥ karmanāṁ phalam uttānāṁ} \i
\]

(Vana Parvan, III. 33.36)

“The pleasure, the joy that arises at the time of the physical senses and the mind and the heart enjoying their natural objects, is in my opinion, kāma, and the best product of all.”

The Śānti Parvan (254. 1-3) enumerates the attributes of kāma and likens this
fundamental force to a potent tree:

Growing in the heart of man from the seed of confusion, kama is a many-hued, brilliant, strange tree. Anger and ego are its two main trunks. Ignorance is its root; it is watered by ambition; carelessness is the water; finding fault with others its leaves; the demerit of one's previous life its sap; sorrow its branches; anxiety its twigs; and fear its buds. Longing is the climber that covers it from all sides. The roots of this giant mighty tree are widespread.

Badrinath (2007a, p.299) states that the Mahābhārata through its various situations, incidents and dialogues conveys with conviction the nature of desire, its tentacles spreading invisibly, sparing none except those who have mastered the art of severing the very roots of desire. The act of sundering the roots is no mean feat and can only be achieved when one is in harmony with the self and transcends to the highest spiritual energy, a psychic force. In the Aśvamedha Parvan of the Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa talks to Yudhiṣṭhira on emancipation and quotes Kāma – the 'God' of desire – on the nature of desire the Kāma Gītā\(^{10}\). At the very beginning does Kāma (desire) announce the means by which 'he' may be destroyed – that none can destroy him without resorting to proper methods (Agarwal, 2002, p. 203-4). Yet, this pronouncement is not heeded or understood by almost anyone. Desire calls for a yogic discipline, tapas, a yoking of mind and body through rigorous discipline. The proper methods in question rebuff the success of suppression of desire by resorting to violent austerities (tapas).

\begin{align*}
atra gāthāḥ kāma-gītāḥ kīrtayanti purā vidaḥ | 
śṛṇu sankirṭyaṁāṇās tā nikhilena yudhiṣṭhira ||
nāhaṁ śakyo 'nupāyena hantuṁ bhūtena kenacit|| (XIV. 13.11-12)
\end{align*}

Instead, Yudhiṣṭhira is advised to channelize his desire in the direction of

---

\(^{10}\) Kāma says (in the Asvamedha Parva, cf. Ganguli (2008) “No creature is able to destroy me without proper methods (Yoga, subjugation of desires); knowing my power, if one strives to destroy me by prayers, I delude him that I am the subjective ego within him; desire insidiously takes the form of delusion – one is deluded by pride or ahamkara, hubris. One pursuing a powerful wish is deluded by reaching limits to his desire. One wishing to appear as self-righteous through prayers, is confronted with his own ego; if one wishes to destroy by sacrifices and presents, I deceive him by appearing in his mind as most virtuous among mobile creation; if one wishes to destroy by mastering Vedas and Vedangas, I overreach by appearing as soul of virtue among immobile creations; if man whose strength lies in truth, desires to remove kama – by patience I appear as his mind and therefore he does not perceive my existence; if man of austere religious practices desires to destroy by asceticism, I appear as asceticism and therefore he does not know me; A man of learning desires to attain salvation by destroying me – I frolic and laugh in the face of such; I am everlasting without a peer – no creature can kill or destroy me.”
dharma to attain what is well for him.

tasmāt tvam api taṁ kāmaṁ yajñair vividha-dakṣiṇaiḥ
dharmam kuru mahārāja tatra te sa bhavisyati|| (XIV. 13. 18-19)

The profound teaching imparted to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gītā contains the destructive implications of giving in to one's desires, yet the characters under study, depict their desires in various ways and several consequences of these actions are seen.

4.2.2 The characters

Desire takes different forms in the characters of the Mahābhārata. The target set of characters yearn for success, seek to satisfy their ego, to avenge their hurt pride, and to tread the just and the righteous path. Desire rouses each one to act in ways to achieve their specific but limited goals and in the process the nature of the desire indulged in spreads various consequences too.

The characters of Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Gāndhārī, and Draupadī express their desire in various forms and take consequent actions too. These desires may be – desire for objects, desire for relations, desire for ethical action. These categories may also be linked to the operational mode of action and personality, the tri-guṇa-s of sattva, rajas, and tamas11.

Desire for objects is material, tāmasic in its orientation. Duryodhana values and seeks material objects, and in another vein so does Arjuna in his quest for weapons. Arjuna expresses most strongly the desire to be the best archer and exhibits more strongly the rājasic qualities in his conquests to forge alliances and relations with other families and houses of power.

Yudhiṣṭhira too operates in the relational mode but with a view to not spoil relations. He wishes to keep his relations smooth and peaceful and maintain cordiality – this is thwarted by the tāmasic qualities of others who frustrate the peace-keeping intentions of Yudhiṣṭhira. Yudhiṣṭhira's desire to follow the right course of action

11 Sattva, rajas, tamas are the tri-guṇa-s described in detail in the Bhagavad-Gītā in the XIVth chapter, verse 5 (cf. Sw. Sivananada, 1969). The three are described as purity, passion, and inertia and detailed characteristics of each guṇa or quality follow in the subsequent verses.
relates to a sāttvic pursuit. Yudhiṣṭhira also unfolds himself as one with a desire for self-inquiry (ātma-jñāna). His various situations and predicaments right until his ascent to heaven displays this quest for self-knowledge.

Desire is expressed in several ways through the characters in the epic – through action, through violence, anger, and other sentiments.

Table 3: Links between the tri-guṇa-s and desire for actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guṇa</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sattva</td>
<td>Ethical action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajas</td>
<td>Relations, Alliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamas</td>
<td>Objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Characters' desires and the self-processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Desire/Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yudhiṣṭhira</td>
<td>sāttvic (harmonious, pure, calm, steady) path, self-enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arjuna</td>
<td>growth, openness, actualization, purpose, meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duryodhana</td>
<td>negative responses, achieves mastery and competence in (mace-fighting) skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gāndhārī</td>
<td>thwarted desires, self-limiting, life-snuffing responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draupadī</td>
<td>increment in learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yudhiṣṭhira – desires and seeks the right course of action and seeks to act toward these fulfilling and meaning-making situations

Arjuna – desires fame and prowess and higher knowledge. Desire motivates him to expand his skills and knowledge of increasingly complex weapons and other domains of music and dance.

Duryodhana – desires supremacy of position and subordination of others. He is driven by envy and seeks recourse in 'usurping'

Gāndhārī – desires for power through her progeny yet tries to seek the right means.

Draupadī – desires justice. Her desire also acts as a force to keep the Pāṇḍava-s focused on their purpose and meaning.

The characters express their desires through their experiential situations in various modalities, moving in their quest to gain coherence, unity and cogency of self in their own ways.

In the following sections, I will consider each of the characters – Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Gāndhārī, Draupadī – in their experiences expressing their individual desires and how the desires interrelate with the self-processes, and how well-being may be evinced and understood through the experiential narratives.

4.2.2.1 Analysis of primary life incidents

In this section, the target set of characters and their primary experiential contexts of desire are analysed utilizing the qualitative approaches described earlier. The self-processes of self-concept, self-complexity, and self-enhancement are analyzed in the light of desire for the characters in an attempt to gain an understanding of the self and how this may be related to psychological well-being.

(i) Yudhiṣṭhira

Context 1 In the Virāṭa Parvan, Yudhiṣṭhira goes incognito as one who is skilled in throwing dice.
The disguise donned by Yudhiṣṭhira is remarkable. This is the very act which brought about the loss of the Pāṇḍava-s' entire empire and brought on humiliations and led to their exile. Yet, he chooses to disguise himself as one who entertains with dice. The question arises as to whether Yudhiṣṭhira is seeking the 'other’ self here. Through the disguise does he desire for a more 'perfect' self? Is he attempting to atone for his appallingly low game skills?

Even here, Yudhiṣṭhira moves toward self-enhancement and gaining knowledge. While in the forest exile, he seeks to strengthen that weak aspect of him, by learning the art of playing dice from Sage Bṛhadaśva. It is with this invigorated skill that he participates in King Virāṭa's court. However, is it a weakness or desire that drives Yudhiṣṭhira to prove his dexterity and proficiency in dice playing? It is a complex question to answer given the circumstance that even when Draupadī rushes into Virāṭa's court seeking protection, Yudhiṣṭhira chides her for disturbing the dice game in progress. These 'anomalous' incidents raise doubts in the understanding of Yudhiṣṭhira's quest for self-enhancement and following the right course of action. A deeper reading reveals the sagacity of Yudhiṣṭhira.

Sage Nārada portends that Yudhiṣṭhira would be the cause of unimaginable destruction and to avert disaster, Yudhiṣṭhira decides to retain peace at any cost by controlling his actions and to avoid any confrontation. This resolve and the innate desire to follow the 'right course of action' lead him to accept the dice challenge even though he knows that foul play is at hand. And he willingly becomes a pawn to the cheating game – only to avert war and maintain cordial relations.

However, the question of why he staked Draupadī remains unanswered and has been speculated upon through the ages. And ultimately, he cannot avoid war too, yet his foresight and wisdom are visible throughout the negotiations in the Udyoga Parvan. Here, Yudhiṣṭhira does not meekly give in to his uncle Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s two-toned message. He instead sees through his uncle’s ploy and is steadfast in his resolve to receive justice. The message he sends back through Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s messenger, Sañjaya, is courteous, polite and at the same time clear as to the Pāṇḍava-s' rightful and just claims. Here, too it is not revenge that Yudhiṣṭhira seeks but justice and he is

12 The other self is the different aspect Yudhiṣṭhira seeks to fulfill in his self-concept. He realizes he is a weak dice-player and during the forest exile he seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by mastering the art of dice-playing from Sage Bṛhadaśva.
willing to compromise on the logistics of settlement, trying to avoid war. But he does not compromise on the underlying righteousness, *dharma*, and of being returned their rightful kingdom. Compromise too is full of character and Yudhiṣṭhira stands steady on *dharma*. Justice is a complex and intricate concept. Amartya Sen contrasts *nīti* and *nyāya* where *nīti* includes organizational propriety and behavioural correctness, and *nyāya* is a comprehensive concept of realized justice. *Nyāya* is “inescapably linked with the world that actually emerges, not just the institutions or rules we happen to have” (Sen, 2009, p. 20). Justice too could be linked to *dharma*. Yudhiṣṭhira attempts to be in right relation with himself.

**Context 2** In the Mahāprasthānika Parva, Yudhiṣṭhira, the other Pāṇḍava-s and Draupadī begin their final journey.

The Pāṇḍava-s install Arjuna’s grandson, Parīkṣit, on the throne and proceed to the Himalayas for their final journey. They are followed by a dog. As each of them fall to ‘death’ beginning with Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira keeps walking his ‘path’ accompanied by the dog. In answer to Bhīma's queries as to why each of the Pāṇḍava heroes fall to the ground, Yudhiṣṭhira names the “fatal flaw” each bore in themselves. However, on being met by Indra, the Lord of the Gods, and told that he cannot enter heaven with the dog, Yudhiṣṭhira refuses to abandon the dog. He mentions that he has never abandoned anyone who has been devoted to him citing it as a sin to forsake one who has been dutiful and faithful.

\[
\text{bhakta-tyāgaṁ prāhur atyanta-pāpaṁ;} \\
tulyaṁ loke brahma-vadhyā-kṛtena| \\
tasmānāhaṁ jātu kathaṁcanādya; \\
tyakṣyāmy enaṁ sva-sukhārthī mahendra|| \]  
(XVII.3.11)

It has been said that the abandonment of one that is devoted is infinitely sinful. It is equal to the sin that one incurs by slaying a Brahmana. Hence, O great Indra, I shall not abandon this dog today from desire of my happiness. Even this is my vow steadily pursued, that I never give up a person that is terrified, nor one that is devoted to me, nor one that seeks my protection, saying that he is destitute, nor one that is afflicted, nor one that has come to me, nor one that is weak in protecting oneself, nor one that is solicitous of life. I shall never give up such a one till my own life is at an end (Ganguli, 2008).

Yudhiṣṭhira desires the right course of action. Throughout the epic he is examined, evaluated and tested for his wish to follow the ethical course of action in
the form of a yaksa, a weasel, a dog and through various challenging situations. Each situation brings to fore Yudhiṣṭhira's adherence to dharma and expression of his innate character.

Yudhiṣṭhira desires the most to reach his 'ideal self'. Self-enhancement is crucial to him – to look within and reflect upon the goal he wishes to attain. His essential being is that of righteous action. Righteousness walks with him throughout – here as a dog, and at no moment does he abandon this deep virtue. His journey to heaven in his mortal form speaks of the radiance of righteousness that Yudhiṣṭhira bears within him and that which he desires to attain in its fullest potential. The Rogerian ideal self is most present in Yudhiṣṭhira's desire to enhance himself to the highest potential.

(ii) Arjuna

Arjuna, the third Pāṇḍava, achieves supreme skills in archery and weapon-science. Arjuna does not stop with whatever knowledge he gains but desires to conquer the frontiers of this knowledge base. He desires to explore the horizons of each field of knowledge and strives to achieve mastery in various domains such as music and dance and other arts. This warrior attempts to actualize his potentials and expands his skill base.

Context 1 Winning Draupadī's hand in marriage through Arjuna's competence and skill.

In the Ādi Parvan, Arjuna disguised as a Brāhmaṇa enters the contest to win Draupadī's hand in marriage by passing the complex test set up to obtain the most skilled and courageous warrior for the bride. All the kings present at the contest, fail in their attempts to pass the test and Arjuna takes up the challenge. His confident demeanour and quiet radiance draws blessings and he effortlessly strings the bow and shoots at the revolving fish on the ceiling while looking at its reflection in a pool below. Arjuna's desire to win the most beautiful bride in the kingdom is superseded by his desire to exhibit his prowess and skill. The desire to expand and prove his skills is very strong in Arjuna. It is also commensurate with his desire to forge relationships. These alliances are with houses of power and influence. Drupada, Draupadī's father is a powerful and determined king – he performed long and rigorous penance to obtain a son who will obliterate Drona and also received a daughter, famed for her
unparalleled beauty, for the specific purpose of humbling an entire empire. Such a daughter was sought for her hand by many a king and prince and yet it was with Arjuna in mind that Drupada devised such a complicated and complex test. Arjuna's earlier victorious encounter with Drupada established his famed status as an accomplished warrior. Although Arjuna went in disguise, his desire for fame and his desire for a strong future paved his successful path.

**Context 2** The quest for divine weapons, and the powerful *Pāśupatāstra* during the thirteen-year forest exile.

During the Pāṇḍava-s' thirteen-year forest exile (Vana Parvan) Arjuna is restless and seeks permission to go away to other regions for gaining higher order weapons and the *Pāśupatāstra* (one of the most powerful weapons in the universe) from Lord Śiva. Arjuna does rigorous 'tapas', a force of concentration, until Śiva appears. The Lord however appears in disguise and a battle ensues, a test by fire, where Śiva gains the upper hand but proclaims Arjuna worthy of being granted the Pāśupata.

Arjuna then proceeds to Indra's kingdom (svarga or heaven – region of higher attainments in all respects) where he spends his time learning various art forms (music, dance, etc.) and becomes skilled in these. Arjuna strives for excellence. His desire to be the top ranking warrior motivates him to seek higher and more complex weapons. The target or goal is set as the inevitable war that will ensue in the wake of the end of exile. Examining Arjuna’s desire in a phenomenological light, leads us through the portals of self transcendence and an insight into the understanding of the character.

Arjuna's desire propels him to seek knowledge. The thirst for knowledge extended beyond expanding his complex skill base (which also involves the cognitive and emotional facets as moulded by the fine arts that he learns) to the highest form of knowledge of self and self-transcendence. This is emphatically brought to us through the teaching of Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Arjuna's self-identity is tied with his mastery and skill set of warfare and weaponry. He has a deep self-complexity. This means that he has several areas of skill sets in which he is proficient; for instance, warfare, and the arts. Warfare involves several self-aspects such as archery, wielding other weapons (mace, javelin, etc.), the
art of driving and riding a chariot, and others. Each of these aspects is tied in with the overall skill base such that they coalesce to present a complex set. Similarly, the arts involve music, dance, choreography, complicated rhythmic learning, etc. These too are related aspects of a complex skill set and integrate into the self-concept. Arjuna has a deeply structured skill base in weaponry as well as the arts. Each of these complex skill sets with a deep structure, control, and clarity of the different skills enhances one's self-concept.

Arjuna's self-concept is nurtured by the deeper knowledge that he gains widening his skill sets. This learning is integrated into his organized gestalt of attitudes, values and judgements. As he becomes more and more proficient by getting control of the highest and subtlest types of weapons, his self-esteem and self-respect in terms of competency, achievement, and freedom increases. He moves forward with coherence and integrity, that is, his goals and actions have a high correlation in the situation as well as across situations and time. Insight into the essential nature of all experience is key to spiritual freedom. Boorstein (1994) states that insight demonstrates the possibility of using an intellectual understanding about one's own dynamics to make constructive life changes. Arjuna's strength, valour and his moral courage are validated through the combat with Siva, the lord himself. The combat preceding the bestowal of the powerful divine weapon provides Arjuna a sphere to assess his capacities and take the leap forward toward a higher zone.

The lived experience is the essential aspect where understanding is achieved by means of dialogue. Thus, combat and war, are also different forms of a “dialogue”. Several such dialogues are presented in the Mahābhārata along with verbal conversations. Each such instance offers an expanse for self-inquiry and insights so that one is empowered with incremental knowledge of the self.

While these two life incidents have been analyzed in the context of desire, one of the most crucial experience in Arjuna's life will be taken up in the section on Conflict. Here, Arjuna goes through a crisis on physical, emotional, and spiritual planes and seeks the highest form of knowledge to resolve the crux of his existence and this knowledge he receives in the form of the divine song, the Bhagavad-Gītā.
(iii) Duryodhana

Duryodhana desires supreme possession and power. Desire however motivates him to self-defeating actions and incites anger, envy and greed in him. These limit the self and restrict well-being.

**Context 1 The cause for the Dice Game**

Duryodhana is intensely jealous of the Pāṇḍava-s' success in converting an arid land into a wealthy kingdom. The envious feelings fester from a much earlier time when he realizes he is no longer heir-apparent to the throne. He colludes with his friends and uncle and browbeats his father into inviting the Pāṇḍava-s, empire-builders and successful conquerors, to a dice-game. The dice are loaded and cast on Duryodhana's behalf by his cunning uncle. The game is masterminded to defeat the Pāṇḍava-s and humiliate them at every turn. The final humiliation comes in the form of dragging the empress, Draupadī to the game hall where she is insulted, physically and emotionally. And by humiliating their queen and spouse, Duryodhana seeks to avenge his own envy.

The strong desire to attain the symbol of power is thwarted at every step for Duryodhana. This desire leads to an equally strong attachment to the vestige of power. Greed leads to anger at being thwarted in his desires and this anger leads to violence in thought, feeling and action. The Bhagavad-Gītā (II. 62-64) speaks of this cycle of desire, attachment, anger, greed, and the destruction of discrimination and hence the destruction of all – the destruction of the coherence and strength of self.

Social psychologists have noted that positive value created by matching desired end states can be achieved through indirect means as well (Higgins, 2007, p.456). People who are made to feel insecure or uncertain about whether they have the kind of identity they want to possess will engage in activities or present themselves in ways that are traditionally associated with being that kind of person, a kind of “symbolic self-completion” (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982, cf. Kruglanski & Higgins, 2007, p. 456). People whose personal identity fails to meet their standards of excellence will act to enhance the value of the groups to which they belong in order to possess a social identity that does meet their standards (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Value itself is a psychological and a motivational experience (Higgins, 2007, p. 466), which
has direction and strength. The directedness of a value is the purpose of a desire-for and the strength is the force with which one pursues the desired objective.

**Context 2** Duryodhana casts away the kingdom after all his kinsmen, and kith and kin have been slain on the battlefield at the end of the Kurukṣetra war.

\[
\text{ekaś ced yoddhum ākrande varo 'dya mama diyate|} \\
\text{āyudhānām iyain cāpi vṛtā tvat-sainmate gadā||} \\
\text{bhrāṭṇāṁ bhavatāṁ ekaḥ śakyāṁ māṁ yo 'bhimanyate|} \\
\text{padātir gadayā saṁkhye sa yudhyatu mayā saha|| (IX. 31. 26-27)}
\]

Duryodhana hides in the lake after all his brothers have been slain and his entire army routed, overcome with desire to rest. He claims it was not out of fear for his life, nor out of grief but only because of fatigue.

Duryodhana's desire after the Kurukṣetra war abates and he casts off the kingdom literally throwing it at Yudhisṭhira claiming that he does not want to rule a barren land; that he has ruled in its heyday and at the kingdom's best period and now he does not wish to continue over a land which is a river of blood and gore and none left to rule over. He loses interest in that for which he fought a cataclysmic war and then when the final hour of reckoning arrived, Duryodhana proceeds to make a long speech to Yudhisṭhira telling him that he is giving Yudhisṭhira the kingdom and that he has no more interest in ruling the kingdom. Bruckner (2011) argues for concurrence – that desire and conditions for its satisfaction must coincide so that satisfaction of the desire contributes positively to the well-being of the desirer. When one gets what one wants and as one wants it, it leads to positive feelings and well-being. However, the converse occurs in Duryodhana's case – there is a mismatch of desires and time. He fights a cataclysmic war to fulfill his desires but at the end he is defensive and does not take any responsibility for his actions. His sole virtue seemingly is that of dying on the battlefield and therefore attaining 'heaven'.

**(iv) Gāndhārī**

**Context 1** Gāndhārī's desires seem to be thwarted from the very beginning when she discovers that she is wedded to a blind king and a proxy king too.

The princess of Gāndhāra dreams of being a queen in the Kuru clan but these are shattered from the very outset. As a mode of following the right path of action,
Gāndhārī decides to blindfold herself and here itself her desire to 'see' is curbed. The curbing of her desires further occurs when Gāndhārī's desire to produce an heir-apparent to the Kuru throne is frustrated by the birth of Yudhiṣṭhira to Kuntī, the crowned queen of emperor Pāṇḍu. The desire for power is manifested in her frustrated attempt to abort the growing foetus within her when she hears that the heir is already born.

**Context 2 Desire for children who follow the right course of action**

Gāndhārī's sense of dharma and right course of action also urges her to desire these qualities in her children. However, her eldest child, Duryodhana, although imbued with strong qualities, curbs and quells right action and favours indiscreet behaviour.

Although throughout the epic Gāndhārī tries to instill the sense of rightness in Duryodhana and expresses much maternal love toward Yudhiṣṭhira, the desire for power and the constant conflict between the right course of action and her maternal instincts is continually present. She is told to abandon her eldest child for he brings ill-omens, but the maternal desire does not permit Gāndhārī to do so. She is again conflicted in trying to protect the empire from the portents of Duryodhana, the right deed for the good of the kingdom – a kind of 'hatred' for being responsible to bring forth such an issue, and the desire to love her child. Parker (1995) comments on the conflict between love and hate that spurs mothers to struggle to understand and know their babies better (cf. Conrad, 2009). Maternal ambivalence serves as a lens to mothers' awareness of their children's agency and desires. Mothers and infants begin life as physically and psychologically separate but interconnected beings. This interconnectedness, Gāndhārī tries to project in various situations during the dice-game and also during the “peace” negotiations – by trying to instill in Duryodhana a sense of fairness and largeness of heart – which he thwarts and disregards vehemently. Gāndhārī may be said to possess desires for objects and relations and to a measure, desire for ethical action. These desires are however, not pursued, not acted upon to their fullest or the sincere actions and efforts are ineffectual.

Even though Gāndhārī forcefully expresses her view on the right course of action, she is not able to effect any change in the perspectives of son or husband – Duryodhana or Dhṛtarāṣṭra. She is only effective in her entreaties to Draupadī to
desist from cursing her progeny after the humiliations in the hall of dice and in this manner fulfills her maternal desires of seeking their welfare.

(v) Draupadī

Context 1 Draupadī's innate desire is inherent in the purpose of her birth. She was born of a sacrificial rite as a lustrous beauty endowed with Śrī or prosperity and well-versed in scriptures and dharma. She was born with the purpose of being married to the greatest archer in the world, the Pāṇḍava Arjuna.

\[
yajñasenasya kāmas tu pāṇḍavāya kirītīne|
krṣṇāṁ dadyām iti sadā na caitad vivṛṇoti sah||
so 'nveṣamāṇah kaunteyān pāṅcālyo janamejaya|
dṛḍhaṁ dhanur anānamyaṁ kārayāmāsa bhārata|| (I. 187. 8-9)
\]

Yajnasena always cherished the desire of bestowing his daughter on Kiriti (Arjuna), the son of Pandu. But he never spoke of it to anybody. And, O Janamejaya, the king of Panchala thinking of Arjuna caused a very stiff bow to be made that was incapable of being bent by any except Arjuna.(Ganguli, 2008, p. 370).

\[
teśāṁ hi draupadīṁ dṛṣṭvā sarveśāṁ amitaujasām|
sanpramathendriya-grāmaṁ prādūrāsīṁ mano-bhavah||
kāmyaṁ rūpaṁ hi pāṅcālyā vidhātrā vihitam svayam|
babhūvādhiṁ anyābhīḥ sarva-bhūta-manoharam|| (I. 193. 12-13)
\]

The Pāṇḍavas all cast their eyes upon the princess of Panchala. And the princess of Panchala also looked at them all. And casting their glances on the illustrious Krishna, those princes looked at one another. And taking their seats, they began to think of Draupadi alone. Indeed, after those princes of immeasurable energy had looked at Draupadi, the God of Desire invaded their hearts and continued to crush all their senses. As the ravishing beauty of Panchali who had been modelled by the Creator himself, was superior to that of all other women on earth, it could captivate the heart of every creature (Ganguli, 2008, Section CLXLIII p. 381).

Desire overpowers all the brothers to obtain the beautiful princess. Pleasure and sexual pleasure have been given great importance in the Mahābhārata – an experiential understanding and not merely an intellectual (Badrinath, 2007a, p. 296) one. Self-awareness and understanding is a primary aspect of this pleasure. Although
most sexual pleasure is considered lustful, Badrinath (2007a) keenly considers it to be a holistic experience. He also views it as a unity of mind and body, constituting prāṇa or life-force.

Yudhiṣṭhira realizes the potent force of this energy when he quickly surmises that all of their attraction for Draupadī could be divisive to the Pāṇḍava-s' unity. He immediately and judiciously suggests a way out of the conundrum and declares that all of them marry Draupadī.

Sexuality plays a very important part in Draupadī's humiliation by Duryodhana and Karna with their jeering comments and indecent and lustful gestures. In a way the sexual import paves the path to destruction for Duryodhana did not abide by dharma. The Anuśāsana Parvan (46.5-7) states (cf. Badrinath, 2007a, p. 310):

\[
\begin{align*}
pūjyā lālayitavyāś ca striyo nityam janādhīpa|| \\
striyo yatra ca pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ | \\
apūjitāś ca yatraitāḥ sarvās tatrāphalāḥ kriyāḥ|| \\
tadā caitat kulam nāsti yadā śocantī jāmayāḥ| \\
jāmī-śaptāni^{13} gehāni nikṛttānīva kṛtyayā || \\
naiva bhānti na vardhante śriyā hīnāni pārthiva||
\end{align*}
\]

“Let women be honoured and pleased always. Where women are honoured, there the gods reside; where they remain not honoured, there nothing can bear fruit. That family does not survive where the daughters-in-law lament. The homes that are cursed by them are destroyed as if by a malevolent ghost; bereft of fortune, those homes do not prosper.”

It is perhaps this truth that Gāndhārī knew in her right relation with herself, and thus implores Draupadī to forbear the curse she is about to utter to bring about the destruction of the Kaurava-s. To uphold the progeny and the kingdom and the continuation of vital life, desire, within the dharma is essential and cannot be unduly flouted.

**Context 2** Draupadī desires for justice and a 'righting' of the wrongs done unto her.

---

^{13} jāmī is defined as ‘navodhā-duhitā-snuṣā’ - Kullūka Bhaṭṭa’s commentary on Manusmṛti 3.57 cites Medhātithi and Govinda Rāja who say that the term refers to newly-wed woman, daughter, daughter-in-law etc. He also cites Amarakośa according to which it refers to sister and to worthy women (jāmīḥ svaśr-kuśastrīyōḥ).
The desire for “justice” is designed to act as an impetus and a conatus to the Pāṇḍava-s, keeping their focus alive. Throughout their forest sojourn, they were reminded by Draupadī through words, gestures, arguments, dialogues that their focus and purpose was to seek justice for the humiliations imposed on them. This united stand impels Arjuna to seek new weapons, new skills, new learning; Yudhiṣṭhira moves toward steadfastness – a gathering of inner resources through forgiveness, humility, compassion, truth, sacrifice, and self control – moving toward and acting in dharma. Bhīma sharpens his resolve and also accrues renewed strength. The twin brothers hone their learning and wisdom – (Yudhiṣṭhira always consults Sahadeva before making decisions). Draupadī herself increments her learning and follows the tenets of her dharma as a treader-of-the-same-path (saha-dharmacārinī) as her husbands. Her dialogues with Yudhiṣṭhira and with Kṛṣṇa, and her absorption of wisdom from sages in the forest make her a keen follower of dharma and righteous conduct. However, throughout the exile, Draupadī is subject time and again to the same tribulations and humiliations that she faces in the Kaurava court – the abduction by Jayadratha and the lustful pursuit by Kīcaka in Virāṭa's kingdom. Through these acts of lust and craving, the Pāṇḍava-s are reminded repeatedly of their mission – to seek justice for the wrongs they have undergone and receive their due share by rightful means. The adherence to dharma and truth is not abandoned throughout the exile.

4.2.2.2 Desire and the processes of self and well-being

Desires manifest in different forms in the characters and motivate them to action. These actions give us a sense of the self concept, self-complexity, and self-enhancement of the characters and a measure of their well-being from the orientation toward positivity, engagement, optimism and trust, purpose and meaning, life satisfaction.

Yudhiṣṭhira's desires move him toward self-enhancement, the ethical course of action and the sāttvic path. He seeks knowledge and steadfastness and attempts to arrive closer to his innate nature and self. 'Yudhiṣṭhira' meaning one who is 'steady-in-war' demonstrates sagacity and foresight in moving toward the set goal and purpose. The steadiness is built into his self processes – complexity of skills is diverged through his psychological resources of capability for compassion, sacrifice,
forgiveness, lessening of anger, self-control, truth, and dharma. Cultivating and following these, he has control and clarity of his resources which increase his self-complexity. At the same time he is adept at warfare as well as exhibits insights into strategic planning right from the period of incognito exile, through peace negotiations and during the war. His responses to situations – attitude – point to a strong self-concept. He garners great self-respect and is known as Ajātaśatru – one who has no enemies (lit: one whose enemy is not born). Yudhiṣṭhira views the positive aspects in a situation and engages meaningfully with the various characters. He develops and maintains positive relations with various characters and has dialogues which lead toward self-enhancement and resolution of conflicts.

Desire moves Arjuna to strive toward purpose and meaning. He is engaged with his self such that he moves in a synergic flow toward his goals. Arjuna goes forth with an attitude of growth, openness, and actualization of potentials. Optimism and trust, i.e. reliance on one's abilities and self-esteem, giving the ability to move beyond challenges come through in Arjuna later in the Virāṭa Parvan too when he fights the Kaurava army as Brḥannalā, (the eunuch disguise). He moves forward with maturity signifying a satisfying fulfillment and actualization of potentials. At another crucial juncture, the beginning of the Great War, however, Arjuna critically fails to wield his weapons when most required.

Duryodhana's desires driven by envy and greed lead him to respond negatively in situations showing low attitude. His mastery and competence levels are not commensurate with his desires – he resorts to playing dice instead of fighting a war as a kṣatriya should; even in the dice play he does not take charge but 'wins' through a proxy player. His self-respect thus is at ebb. Duryodhana, in trying to fulfill his desires, does not act toward increasing his skill base, instead employs laments, suicide threats and takes decisions which have less value (seeking the Yādava army in contrast to asking for Kṛṣṇa's help). He does practice his mace-wielding skills and gains greater skill in that area. He fights in the war but is goading the experts and his preceptors and accuses and emotionally taunts them for not doing their 'best'. These behaviours portray a lower self concept. His desires do not allow him to act toward self-enhancement. He moves toward objects and material possessions instead. Ethical and right courses of action are not subscribed to. His desires move him toward negative actions, and do not lead him to engage meaningfully with his goals. His
actions follow a mistaken path despite the counsel of great preceptors and sages. Even though his desire to banish the Pāṇḍava-s is fulfilled to a degree, his life satisfaction dips toward the low end – he constantly wishes to humiliate them during the forest exile (ghoṣa-yātra) and when that fails, he feels humiliated and wishes to commit suicide. Toward the end he expresses the futility of a kingdom where his friends and brothers are no more and attempts to 'give' the barren kingdom to Yudhiṣṭhira. This is an empty act of dāna. However, for having fought in a battle and losing his life in the field, he attains heaven. Yet his life was filled with limited goals and lower-order purposes and his focus on coveting and greed and anger limits his self-expansion.

Gāndhārī's desire for righteous progeny is thwarted. Her attitude and response to situations take a life-snuffing turn rather than a life-giving force. She attempts to abort her foetus out of frustration of not being able to bear the news of Yudhiṣṭhira's birth elsewhere. Her competence and mastery over a situation too are not of a high order where her words though full of rightness and ethical import, are ineffectual and unheeded. She is regarded and esteemed highly, ironically, by the Pāṇḍava-s but her own son and husband do not heed her presence which they use only to assuage their weaknesses and guilt. Gāndhārī follows the dharma of the pativratā but chooses not to take a proactive part in the relationships. Instead she limits herself by blindfolding to an extent where her desires fall short of proper focus and direction. She tries to engage herself and move with purpose, however, these attempts do not carry her toward fulfillment of her desires.

Draupadī exudes self-confidence and a powerful aura that attract myriad kings and princes who desire her intensely, but lustfully. Being the subject of desire, Draupadī also faces several critical situations. Her responses to situations – especially with reference to the highly complex question of whether she has been staked before or after Yudhiṣṭhira lost the wager – are clear and purposive. Her self-concept is in the high range: she is skilled in the texts and learning, and possesses keen debating dimensions on matters of complex ethical issues; she is imbued with a natural beauty and grace which she invests in her relationships with all her husbands. She projects her sexuality into each of her relationships and seeks fulfillment in the intellectual, ethical, physical, beauty, skill, and wisdom domains in each of her husbands. However, as she discourses to Satyabhāmā, the consort of Kṛṣṇa, she asserts that her unswaying path of dharma is the key to happiness and contentment. Her skills also lie
in playing the role of sairandhrī to the queen of the Matsya kingdom where she is adroit in hair-styling and dressing. She assumes the various roles that she is required to with ease and poise and grace. In each of the roles however, Draupāḍī establishes her strong sense of identity. Even as sairandhrī, she specifies her boundaries and seeks to operate within them. Her dialogues on forgiveness take a standpoint toward revenge, a seeking of justice and righting the wrongs done unto her. She argues with Yudhiṣṭhira about the 'soft'-ness of being forgiving and advocates “manliness” instead. However, Yudhiṣṭhira speaks against anger and for being calm to be able to think clearly and plan ahead. Draupāḍī's desires also move toward the sensual and material – when she craves for the heavenly and fragrant Saugandhikā flowers. Despite her constant expression of her humiliation in court, Draupāḍī believes and trusts her valorous husbands to achieve their goals and fulfill her purpose too. However, her life-satisfaction is a varying dimension with the achievement of her goal.

4.2.3 Summary

Desire is that vital force through which a being moves forward to fulfill one's potential. Dormer & Davies (2001) opine that desire is a way of naming the possibilities of who we might be. There is a reciprocity, a mutualness in desiring and acting toward the desire, one opens up the possibilities of alternative perspectives moving toward the 'ideal self' and wholeness.

In the study of characters of the epic, each individual is driven by this desire to be more powerful than before. Arjuna desires to be more powerful in skill of arms and arts, Yudhiṣṭhira desires to move forward in his knowledge and in ethical course of action, Gāndhārī desires to transform her son(s) by her ascetic merit and following dharma, Draupāḍī desires to gain justice, and Duryodhana desires to accrue power by wrestling the kingdom from the Pāṇḍava-s.

The characters demonstrate varying shades and hues of desire. To take Arjuna's desires to a slightly different degree of depth, we find that Arjuna's desire is also to seek the highest wisdom, to be the epitome of human, to act in the right path with the noblest of purposes. This quality of nobility, ārya, he wishes to cultivate to the highest degree. Nataraja Guru (2008) analyzes that Arjuna is not going to be satisfied with anything short of the highest wisdom (p.115) for only such a quality can 'cure' him of his agony of the spirit. The feeling of being trapped and the inner conflict
can only be resolved or dissolved through a strong desire to expand one's frontiers of knowledge of oneself. One can 'be' and 'become' through realization alone and not by following steps to a do-it-yourself kit. These may only be guidelines to mark a path but cannot by themselves produce a desired outcome.

svadharmam api cāvekṣya na vikampitum arhasi|
dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat ksatriyasya na vidyate||
yadrcchayā copapannam svarga-dvāram apāvrtam|
sukhinah ksatriyāh pārtha labhante yuddham idṛśam|| (BG, II. 31-32)

The svadharma is the right expression of the essential character and the utmost virtue one can wish to attain. “A man is true to his svadharma when he does not wilfully and abruptly break away from his own previous nature and nurture” (Nataraja Guru, 2008, p.138). “The door of heaven opens before a warrior who is a true ksatriya without any exertion or active seeking on his part” (Nataraja Guru, 2008, p.139) and the vital energy or desire may be said to make life move forward (p.142). Badrinath asserts that desire leads one on a forward moving, purposive goal-oriented avenue, disha or direction (Badrinath, 2007a, p.322) – where the goal is also to attain a state of highest expression of oneself and slaying those aspects which are negative, self-limiting, causing harm to others and as a consequence greater harm to oneself.

The importance of purpose and direction is brought out by Nataraja Guru (2008, p.155) through the verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā

karmany evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana|
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmanī||(BG, II. 47)

Nataraja Guru analyzes it as a cautioning counsel, “to avoid any considerations extraneous to the situation, or to avoid allowing any outside or third factor to interfere with the normal course of action” (Nataraja Guru, 2008, p.155) or dharma. Other interpretations say that desire for the fruits of action is to be discarded. Action done with expectations of fruits or fulfillment of goals brings bondage. If one does not thirst for them, one is purified and through this purity attain knowledge of the self (Sw. Sivananda, 1969, p. 47), thereby breaking re-birth cycle. Bhagavad-Gītā (II. 70) states

āpūryamānām acala-pratiṣṭhaṁ, samudram āpah praviśanti yadvat|
tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī||
“He attains peace into whom all desires enter as waters enter the ocean which filled from all sides, remains unmoved; but not the man who is full of desires.”

The sage who abides and rests in his own self or svarūpa is not affected though desires of all kinds enter from all sides. The sage attains liberation but not he who longs for objects of sensual enjoyment and entertains various desires (Sw. Sivananda, 1969, p. 60).

Thus Arjuna, in his quests for fame, relationships, exhibits high value toward these by operating on his strong self skills and principles, whereas Duryodhana does not demonstrate the same ethical vigour toward his desired object. The object of desire itself, in Duryodhana's case is based on usurping and even the means he adopts to satisfy his desires are devious and unbefitting that of a Kṣatriya warrior.

Desires can never be satisfied completely nor do they perish but lend a force which is vital to life so that one acts according to dharma, in the right course of expressing oneself, to become and be the congruent self. Since desires only transform in their contours and do not ever get fulfilled, they in their potent form lend to conflict – conflict which could be social, familial, political, geographical, interpersonal and intrapersonal.
4.3 CONFLICT

4.3.1 Introduction

Conflict is an essential and innate part of human nature and life. We are constantly challenged by critical and conflicting situations in our experiential realms which cause agony as well as provide opportunities for us to examine our lives and our own place in it. In the case of a psychological conflict, there is greater incompatibility of desires: a conflict of trying to approach two or more desirable situations at the same time or a conflict of avoiding two or more undesirable outcomes. This has been termed 'approach-approach' and 'avoidance-avoidance' conflict in social psychological literature.

Conflicts are not already present and existing but emerge in the context of interaction (Erman, 2007), both between and within people. These two are interdependent, bringing to fore our own conflicting values while interacting with others – reflecting on how we view ourselves and others. It is a dialogical process claiming that deliberation is constitutive of moral conflict and which involves cognitive processes of self-interpretation. Conflict involves incompatibility of differences, either between what each person considers as being in accordance with his or her desires and values or between each of their own internal values and desires. If desires are on opposing beliefs, conflict arises. Wong (1992) claims that even though the same principles may be applicable for both parties in the case of interpersonal conflict, the boundaries drawn by each are different and these differences activate the conflict. It is thus not 'what' but a question of 'by how much' is each away from the other. Schick (1988) analyzes that conflict is not simply a matter of the present conditions but also is complicated by the fact of expectations of future actions on behalf of the persons involved. Thus, what the persons expect or anticipate as outcomes or results also contribute to the conflict situation. If unfavourable outcomes are expected the conflict may become more intense and greater resources may be required to resolve the situation. This could also lead to a blocking of personal and psychological energies which prevent a resolution and a moving forward.

Conflicts and the processes of resolution have been important for the development of the personal, cultural, and social aspects of human lives and for
survival and bringing new changes (Leininger, 1975). This restructuring helps in 'seeing' openings which were until then clouded and obscured. While emotional reactions and responses are respected, cognitive appraisals open newer perspectives to allow us to restructure our self-constructions. Restructuring and re-visioning also helps in looking at different aspects of ourselves which were hidden to conscious thinking. These processes help in assimilating these different dimensions into the awareness of our self-structure – leading to an increased base of concept and complexity. The challenge is to utilize unfavourable conflict situations through creative resolution so that one may move in positive and peacefully cooperative directions and goals. Conflicts may be social, cultural, familial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In addition, conflicts may also occur under duress of resource allocation and uses.

These actions toward different people and even within themselves are played out through the different characters of the Mahābhārata. Matilal boldly states that dilemmas, like paradoxes can only be resolved or dissolved but never solved (Matilal, 1989, p. 1) and goes on to discuss the moral dilemmas that present themselves in the Mahābhārata. Alberson (1957) analyses that much of great literature arises and emanates from some dilemma which plunges the individual into a deep abyss and from which one emerges to a fuller understanding of the potentialities of one’s character.

In the Mahābhārata, aspects of conflict play out in the form of the characters' situations, events, predicaments, and ironies – questions of Yudhiṣṭhira's position while staking Draupadī as a wager in the Dice Game, the conflict of values during the battlefield when he utters the 'lie'; Gāndhārī's conflict arising out of her desire for her son's welfare and that of acting according to the 'right' principles; Arjuna's conflict at the beginning of the war, and others which categorize as interpersonal and intrapersonal along with social and familial.

Although for the purpose of the study, primary incidents have been identified, as Matilal expresses, “the epic as a whole presents a moral philosophical thinking of the Indian tradition” (Matilal, 1989, p. 4), containing within it moral values, moral conflicts and dilemmas, and difficulties of practical wisdom.
4.3.2 The characters

The characters under study implicated in their life situations present a range of conflicts – each impacting the self and thereby the well-being of themselves and others.

Table 5: Conflict and self-processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Process Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yudhiṣṭhira</td>
<td>lowered self-esteem yet moving toward enhancement; approach-approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arjuna</td>
<td>enhanced purpose and growth; approach-avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duryodhana</td>
<td>self-limiting, feels 'defeated'; avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gāndhārī</td>
<td>consolidating right-ness; avoidance-approach – conflict between ideal and ought self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draupadī</td>
<td>strength of character; approach-approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yudhiṣṭhira** – his conflict plays out in the desire to follow the righteous path and the actions he takes during the course of the epic. The conflict he faces could also be considered as a sattva-kṣatra conflict where the kṣatriya code of conduct is in conflict with his natural inclination for following the righteous path.

**Arjuna's** intrapersonal conflict is at the crux of the Mahābhārata, giving rise to the Bhagavad-Gītā. He faces an 'existential' crisis and suddenly refuses to fight.

**Duryodhana's** conflict seems to arise in the context of gaining what the Pāṇḍava-s have built for themselves, along with divesting them of their possessions – material, psychological, and spiritual.

**Gāndhārī** is torn between the right action and wanting her children to possess the power of the kingdom.

**Draupadī** undergoes several conflicts of different natures – physical, psychological, emotional – and though she is certain of her desire to see the end of the Kaurava-s, finally, she is in dissonance regarding the outcome of the war.
(i) Yudhiṣṭhira

Conflict for Yudhiṣṭhira occurs in many episodes in the Mahābhārata and the most apparent one occurs in the Droṇa Parvan, during the war, when Yudhiṣṭhira is asked to 'lie' to Droṇa regarding the death of his son, Asvatthāman.

"Meanwhile, O monarch, Govinda, knowing that Drona, that foremost of warriors, was capable of sweeping all the Pandavas off the face of the earth, became much distressed. Addressing Yudhishthira he said, 'If Drona fighteth, filled with rage, for even half-a-day, I tell thee truly, thy army will then be annihilated. Save us, then, from Drona. Under such circumstances, falsehood is better than truth. By telling an untruth for saving a life, one is not touched by sin. There is no sin in untruth spoken unto women, or in marriages, or for saving king, or for rescuing a Brahmana.' While Govinda and Yudhishthira were thus talking with each other, Bhimasena (addressing the king) said, 'As soon, O monarch, as I heard of the means by which the high-souled Drona might be slain, putting forth my prowess in battle, I immediately slew a mighty elephant, like unto the elephant of Sakra himself, belonging to Indravarman, the chief of the Malavas, who was standing within thy army. I then went to Drona and told him, 'Asватthaman has been slain, O Brahmana! Cease, then, to fight. (Ganguli, 2008, Drona Parva, CXCI)

Fearing to utter an untruth, but earnestly desirous of victory, Yudhiṣṭhira distinctly utters that Asvatthāman is dead, adding indistinctly the world elephant (after the name). Before this, Yudhiṣṭhira's car is at a height of four fingers' breadth from the surface of the earth; after, however, he utters that untruth, his (vehicle and) animals touch the earth. Hearing those words from Yudhiṣṭhira, the mighty car-warrior Droṇa, afflicted with grief, for the (supposed) death of his son, yields to the influence of despair.

Dharma is considered to be derived from the root which means, “the support or basis of all that there is” (Bhatnagar, 2005, p. 16) which has both ontological and ethical imports. Dharma is mainly concerned with 'ought to do' whereas ṛta is a cosmic order. In a sense, as Bhatnagar (2005) argues dharma refers to reality or its character, or its basis or support in some sense, and to action or desirable action on the other. Thus, dharma leads to action, tending toward right action, and actions could result in future conflicts which may be further resolved through right action. Right
action, occurs when one moves away from selfish desires and selfish actions, to ensure that energy is not expended only for a single, trivial cause. In this case, Yudhiṣṭhira gives in to his desire for victory and “lost” the battle – the battle in Yudhiṣṭhira's context being loss of self-esteem and value – a value for his self as well as a comedown in his value system.

The war situation is Yudhiṣṭhira's biggest conflict that he exhibits. Even after the war, and emerging 'victorious' Yudhiṣṭhira is beset by conflict and wishes to give up his kingdom and rule and enter the forest. The forest is Yudhiṣṭhira's space for growth and expansion of self. Here Yudhiṣṭhira seeks and obtains knowledge which is primary in his processes of self-reflection, attaining a state that is his epithet – 'Yudhiṣṭhira' as one who is steady-in-war. The steadiness is one accrued through knowledge, a knowledge of the self which gave him balance in his personal, psychological and spiritual life.

This balance stands Yudhiṣṭhira in great stead throughout the exile and incognito period and most importantly during the war. Yudhiṣṭhira's conflicts lead him to seek higher thought planes. These alternate levels of thinking and seeking, bring about transformation in his skills – such as when he learns the art of playing dice from sage Brhadāśvva during the exile. Perspectives which make him keenly aware of his own capacities and lead him to 'see' his inner self. In the Yakṣa Praśna episode, in answering the Yakṣa's remarkable progressive series of phenomenological questions, Yudhiṣṭhira consolidates his experiential learning and, understands him-self. His knowledge leads to an expansion of self and augments psychological well-being, developing his resources and potentials to higher degrees.

(ii) Arjuna

Context 1 A seminal life situation and context in the Mahābhārata and in Arjuna's character is that of the beginning of the great war.

Arjuna's request to Kṛṣṇa to position him between the two armies is itself an expression of the conflict that will pull him in different directions.

\[\text{senayor ubhayor madhye ratham sthāpaya me 'cyuta}|| (I. 21)\]
\[\text{yāvad etān nirīkṣe'ham yoddhu-kāman avasthitān}\]
\[\text{kair mayā saha yoddhavyam asmin raṇa-samudyame}|| (I. 22)\]
“In the middle between the two armies, place my chariot, O Kṛṣṇa, so that I may behold those who stand here desirous to fight, and know with whom I must fight [also, to know who are to fight me], when the battle is about to commence.”

This is the beginning of Arjuna's confusion. Nataraja Guru (2008, p. 72), talks of the increasing disturbance of Arjuna as he surveys the battlefield and begins to display physical, psychological and emotional weaknesses. The war being a response to fight for dharma, to teach that violence against dharma will be punished – although it is ironical that violence would be quelled by more violence. Although the ideals of ahiṁsā and ānṛśaṁsyā are propagated, to promote peace, violence and cruelty are resorted to. But seeing all his kinsmen, Arjuna loses all courage to fight and casts down his bow. Agrawal (p. 134, 1989) has put forth that an intuitive moral system does not resolve the conflict that Arjuna is facing but that a critical assessment is in order. Menon (2008) analyzes Arjuna's predicament as a representation of a mental crisis that is pan-cultural.

How then did Arjuna suddenly view the situation differently? Part of it comes from the innate nature of Arjuna: he belonging to the kṣatriya lineage, a warrior, must fight for regaining the kingdom which was usurped unlawfully. But seeing his “own” people in the opposition camp prevents him from raising his bow and drawing the arrow. The cosmic view of mortality as it were, as he surveys the entire battlefield, sends Arjuna into a state of shock. The uncertainty of the outcome and the meaninglessness of the entire situation overpowers the hero warrior and he “weaves an intellectual defence...to cover his fragile torn inside” (Menon, 2008, pp.163-185). Arjuna argues for tradition, respect for elders, and most importantly a breakdown of values and then chaos in society. In effect, his response to the conflict is for the 'larger good' to preserve the world order as it were. However, the entry into war was also to preserve – a preservation of right against the wrong. Here suddenly Arjuna becomes “inclusive” and owns the other with the self, whereas earlier the whole scenario has been of exclusion as epitomised by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's question of “my sons and the Pāṇḍava-s.”

\[ dharmakṣetre kuruṣṭetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ \]
\[ māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva kim akurvata saṅjaya|| (BG. I. 1) \]

The inclusivity however seems to be a self-limiting one where Arjuna cannot
at this stage see beyond the structure of the context he is placed in at the moment. How does Arjuna resolve this predicament, which has been considered to be a conflict of desires, if at all? The desires to gain the empire, and the people, kith and kin, and to avoid bloodshed where the killing of one's own would also lead to a loss of part of one's own self. This self-sloughing would lead to an incomplete person. In Rogers’ approach, a conflict arises within the personality between the natural organismic valuing process and the alien conditions of worth of an external source. The human's natural tendency is to actualize oneself, a constructive striving to reach our potentials, move toward and become a holistic organismic being. Conflicts occur when one is not functioning fully, to the highest potential that one is capable of. Thus conflicts are an unnatural state of the human organism and a distorted awareness of one's condition leads to destructive behaviours. The destruction here is to the self and the thwarting of movement toward the larger process of connecting with the depths and heights of the self; a fragment in the wholeness and thereby one's well-being.

Kṛṣṇa's 'counselling' presence brings forth different points. The Gītā narrative, “is a transpersonal process with the potential for transforming Arjuna, presenting him with a new and lasting transphysical and trans-social identity” (Menon, 2008, pp. 163-185) and a “dialogue paving the way from depression to self-realization.” (Menon, 2008, pp. 163-185). Kṛṣṇa's cosmic vision expands Arjuna's vision. This expansion leads to a re-orientation of the mind, seeing different perspectives and one's place and position in the world-order and with respect to society, family, kingdom, and most importantly with regard to duty, values, and truth.

Sw. Krishnananda in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā says that the problems of human life are a sort of illness, which cannot be rectified by a purely human way of understanding, as this human way of thinking itself is the cause of human problems. So there is a necessity to lift up from the human outlook of life and visualize the whole of life from a standpoint which is way superior to the 'human way of thinking'. It is this superior outlook that Kṛṣṇa tries to provide to Arjuna so that he may view his self in a holistic manner and resolve the “trivial” predicaments to reach the horizons. Agrawal (1989, p. 141-142) analyses, that as long as our knowledge is limited to an empirical understanding of the world, the ultimate significance of our ethical position is screened. Our actions also follow this mental outlook. However, as our view expands and knowledge accrues, it leads to a greater nearness to the truth.
Truth brings us closer to our own core and inner self, a psychological and spiritual augmentation and evolution, which dispels all doubt regarding what moral standpoint to stake upon. The resolution of conflicts occurs in our emotions and we 'see' the pure self dispelling all conflict. Building virtue leads to knowledge, which removes erroneous notions of self and reflects truth, and this transforms resolving conflict.

Context 2 Conflict also occurs in other situations – during the Svayaṁvara, during the dice game and in the Mausala Parvan when Arjuna is unable to rescue the women and when his all-powerful Gāṇḍīva slips out of his control and his inexhaustible quivers empty out.

“Then Arjuna endeavoured to string his large, indestructible, celestial bow with some effort. He succeeded with great difficulty in stringing it, when the battle had become furious. He then began to think of his celestial weapons but they would not come to his mind. Beholding that furious battle, the loss of the might of his arm, and the non-appearance of his celestial weapons, Arjuna became greatly ashamed. The Vrishni warriors including the foot-soldiers, the elephant-warriors, and the car-men, failed to rescue those Vrishni women that were being snatched away by the robbers. The concourse was very large. The robbers assailed it at different points. Arjuna tried his best to protect it, but could not succeed. In the very sight of all the warriors, many foremost of ladies were dragged away, while others went away with the robbers of their own accord. The puissant Arjuna, supported by the servants of the Vrishnis, struck the robbers with shafts sped from Gandiva. Soon, however, O king, his shafts were exhausted. In former days his shafts had been inexhaustible. Now, however, they proved otherwise. Finding his shafts exhausted, he became deeply afflicted with grief.”(Ganguli, 2008, Mausala Parva, VII, p.13).

Arjuna goes through another psychological crisis, an intrapersonal fissure. His self-esteem, self-image, self-regard fracture due to his inability to perform a seemingly “simple task” of rescuing the women of Dvārakā. It is a moment in Arjuna's life which forces him to stop and re-look at himself. This revisiting of the self-in-crisis is one of conflict between what was and what he is confronted with now. The self is fragmented and not whole and mastered anymore. Not only is this a conflict and crisis but also a situation of grief. The desire to be the best and a sense of worth of having achieved it to a degree, but finally discovering that there are further frontiers to be conquered is a case of sudden awareness that he is less than fully functional. The knowledge of his lack of knowledge leads Arjuna to go to Vyāsa, since Kṛṣṇa has already renounced his body and life, and lament on his critical situation.
“The death of the wielder of Sarnga is as incredible as the drying up of the ocean, the displacement of a mountain, the falling down of the vault of heaven, or the cooling property of fire. Deprived of the company of the Vrishni heroes, I desire not to live in this world. Another incident has happened that is more painful than this, O thou that art possessed of wealth of penances. Repeatedly thinking of it, my heart is breaking. In my very sight, O Brahmana, thousands of Vrishni ladies were carried away by the Abhiras of the country of the five waters, who assailed us. Taking up my bow I found myself unequal to even string it. The might that had existed in my arms seemed to have disappeared on that occasion. O great ascetic, my weapons of diverse kinds failed to make their appearance. Soon, again, my shafts became exhausted. That person of immeasurable soul, of four arms, wielding the conch, the discus, and the mace, clad in yellow robes, dark of complexion, and possessing eyes resembling lotus-petals, is no longer seen by me. Alas, reft of Govinda, what have I to live for, dragging my life in sorrow?” (Ganguli, 2008, Mausala Parva, VIII, p. 15)

Vyāsa wisely assuages the grief-stricken Arjuna by putting the onus on time as the root cause of all the crisis and grief that is experienced. These wise words are taken up by Yudhiṣṭhira who decides that it is time for the Pāṇḍava-s to renounce the desire to rule an empire and set forth on their final journey - the final journey being one more on the quest for self and realization.

Does transformation occur in Arjuna's self upon being soothed by Vyāsa? Vyāsa opens up different ways of viewing the situation and to that effect triggers the Pāṇḍava-s' final quest. Shulman and Stroumsa state that, “personal transformation need not go as far as turning oneself into a god, or de-volving oneself into a demon or an animal, or even switching gender. It may mean, at root, a substantial reorganization or restructuring of the self – in some sense, the same self that forms the point of departure. Space for transformation is, in other words, firmly present within self” (Shulman & Stroumsa, 2002, p. 12-13).

(iii) Duryodhana

Context 1 Duryodhana's intrapersonal conflicts confine to being overwhelmed by his uninhibited envy toward the Pāṇḍava-s and his anger against being forced to share what he considered his possession – the Kuru kingdom. The jealousy which Duryodhana projects toward the Pāṇḍava-s, inflame his desire to act against them all the time. Duryodhana's lament about the prosperity and popularity of the Pāṇḍava-s is strong enough to plot against his cousins and send them to 'certain' death several times. Even earlier, during the skill display of the young princes, Duryodhana seizes
opportunity to score against Bhīma and the others by crowning Karṇa the king of Aṅga kingdom. This crowning ceremony takes place with a confidence that he naturally owns the kingdom and is free to dispense with and give whatever he wishes to whomsoever he pleases. His even earlier plots and schemes of poisoning Bhīma and throwing him bound hand and foot into the river, as also his expressing strong resentment for the Pāṇḍava brothers, fuel the burning rage, and desire of consolidating his security – both physical and psychological.

Context 2 The lac house is another plot to strengthen his presence as a prince and heir to the throne. Duryodhana overbears upon his blind and doting father to bend to his will and makes his father accede to his schemes of targeting the Pāṇḍava-s and driving them away from what he considers to be his territory. In a sense, it is a geographical and familial battle that he wages and participates in. Boundaries, especially territorial ones for a king and his heir are extremely important for any measure of a secure state and rulership. The psychological security is closely tied in with the empire state lines. The state boundaries can only expand while the personal boundaries are drawn in tighter to give a cohesive rulership. Neither Dhṛtarāṣṭra nor Duryodhana however, try expanding the existing kingdom, but only try to gain by willful means what is at best a shared property. Dhṛtarāṣṭra rules by proxy and Duryodhana is only next in line to Yudhiṣṭhira, the heir-apparent, by virtue of the order of birth. Instead of expansion of borders and horizons, the father-son duo set their limited sights on what is already there and what belongs to others. In contrast are the Pāṇḍava-s who build an empire solely on their capabilities and skills and outlook and this too is coveted by Duryodhana. At the Rājasūya performed by Yudhiṣṭhira, Duryodhana’s jealousy burns him to the core.

Even when war is imminent and peace missions are being attempted, Duryodhana only wishes to hold on to his 'possessions' and not be inclusive. He conspires to imprison Kṛṣṇa, the peace-ambassador of the Pāṇḍava-s.

"Duryodhana said, 'O Grandsire, I can, by no means, live by sharing this swelling prosperity of mine with the Pandavas. Listen, this, indeed, is a great resolution which I have formed. I will imprison Janardana who is the refuge of the Pandavas. He will come here tomorrow morning; and when he is confined, the Vrishnis and the Pandavas, aye, the whole earth, will submit to me. What may be the means for accomplishing it, so that Janardana may not guess our purpose, and so that no danger also may overtake us, it behoveth thee to say.'
The resolution of conflict may come about with inclusion and transformation. The challenge of transformation is universal in human existence - transformation of body, mind, spirit and engages the whole person (Canda, 1988). Until the very end and even at the very end, Duryodhana refuses to acknowledge the Pāṇḍava-s. The act of war itself is a conflict. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, Sw Krishnananda says that any kind of confrontation or opposition is a battle and that even our personal existence is a kind of battle, a tremendous movement. Throughout his association with the Pāṇḍava-s, Duryodhana only opposes them, battles them, wages war, and each time he is 'defeated' he feels “defeated”. Duryodhana is defeated in his missions of trying to destroy the Pāṇḍava-s and each time he is foiled in his own plans His dialogues with his father, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, are self-limiting, with Duryodhana lamenting on the success of the Pāṇḍava-s and then proclaiming a death wish – threatening his father with suicide if his self-serving schemes are not endorsed (Menon, et al., 2010). Duryodhana seizes on the weaknesses of his father and the helplessness of his mother and the blind loyalty of his coterie to indulge in his selfish interests and actions - blocking the opportunity for growth.

(iv) Gāndhārī

Context 1 The primary conflict in Gāndhārī seems to be that of desiring her sons to be the heirs to the throne and that of truth and rightness to prevail. This intrapersonal conflict also manifests outward as an interpersonal one with her husband, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and her son, Duryodhana. Gāndhārī tries to place dharma, righteousness, above everything else but she is torn - between the security of her sons and husband and the desire to witness her 'own' on the throne.

"Dhṛtarāṣṭra said, 'This evil-minded son of thine, O Gāndhārī, is resolved to sink in misery. Envious, wicked-souled, and vain, he setteth aside the words of all his superiors.'

"Gāndhārī said, 'Thou covetous wretch that disregardest the commands of the aged, abandoning thy father and myself and giving up prosperity and life, enhancing the joy of thy foes, and afflicting me with deep distress, thou wilt, O fool, remember thy father's words, when struck by Bhimasena, thou wilt bite the dust.'

(Ganguli, Udyoga Parva, LXIX)

Here she cautions and chides Duryodhana on his irreconciliatory attitude and
behaviour, yet she also does so out of fear as much as out of a sense of duty. There is a tendency to avoid a situation and thereby stem conflict, rather than approach the context positively in order to resolve it keenly. Maher (1964) attempts to explain that conflict is induced by the steeper gradient for avoidance than that of approach which is because of the learned drive – fear. Solomon, et al. (2000) studying fear and behaviour hypothesize that awareness of mortality harnesses a potential for paralyzing terror, which is assuaged by shared cultural beliefs which give the individuals a sense of security that they are a part of a meaningful universe, a self-esteem, that buffers anxiety. The fear that her son is treading the path of pride and defeat, and her own sense of dharma and righteousness is a conflict that Gāndhārī has to resolve or dissolve so that she may judiciously move toward contentment. Psychological equanimity is propounded as being attained or restored by bolstering self-worth by engaging in culturally valued beliefs, and venerating those holding similar values and ideals and berating or converting those who are different.

**Context 2** The conflict is also, as Carver and others put it, between the ideal and ought selves (Carver, et al., 1999) which are the value systems or self-guides that people employ in the way they represent their self and the manner on which these representations influence their affective experiences. The authors argue that approach and avoidance tendencies could be applied to the ideal and ought self-guides, as per example that one could promote an 'ought' but avoid punishment, or promote an 'ideal' and prevent failure too. Surmises by Markus et al. are quoted where emphases are laid on feared selves - where the person pursues an ideal yet fears possible qualities that one does not want to accept. The 'oughts' provide positive self-structures which are incompatible with the feared self. The dharma and righteousness that Gāndhārī pursues is a positive psychological resource.

**(v) Draupadī**

Draupadī, princess of Pāṇcāla, empress of Yudhiṣṭhira is staked as a pawn and wagered as an object in a gambling match in a bid of helpless, addictive behaviour by Yudhiṣṭhira. That Yudhiṣṭhira who is 'steady-in-war' is prone to a vice which weakens his very core where he loses balance in all the senses of the term, is an issue that Draupadī cannot bear. Her dignity and self – physical, psychological, emotional, physiological – are humiliated. She is forced to appear in the sabhā in a mode which
strips her of her status not only as a queen but also of a woman. She is further humiliated with lewd remarks and gestures in an esteemed court and is subject to vile words. The greatest humiliation however, in her view, is from her own husbands who remain silent and helpless in the face of their wife being wronged. Her husbands who have earned the highest laurels as warriors and the eldest who is an emperor commanding other kings. Draupadī's conflict is physical, psychological, familial, social, one of dharma, and legal. She raises the issue of whether she was lost in the game first or did Yudhiṣṭhira lose himself first. This question is greeted by silence by the elders – the apostles of dharma – and then Bhīṣma, the Kuru eldest, can only evade the question by saying that dharma is too subtle and that the question must be directed to Yudhiṣṭhira himself who is epitome of dharma.

"The kings present in that assembly, from tear of Duryodhana, uttered not a word, good or ill, although they beheld Draupadī crying piteously in affliction like a female osprey, and repeatedly appealing to them. And the son of Dhritarashtra beholding those kings and sons and grand sons of kings all remaining silent, smiled a little, and addressing the daughter of the king of Panchala, said,— O Yajnaseni, the question thou hast put dependeth on thy husbands — on Bhima of mighty strength, on Arjuna, on Nakula, on Sahadeva. Let them answer thy question. O Panchali, let them for thy sake declare in the midst of these respectable men that Yudhishthira is not their lord, let them thereby make king Yudhishthira the just a liar. Thou shalt then be freed from the condition of slavery. Let the illustrious son of Dharma, always adhering to virtue, who is even like Indra, himself declare whether he is not thy lord. At his words, accept thou the Pandavas or ourselves without delay. Indeed, all the Kauravas present in this assembly are floating in the ocean of thy distress. Endued with magnanimity, they are unable to answer thy question, looking at thy unfortunate husbands.”(Ganguli, 2008, Sabha Parva, LXIX)

These evasive tactics by all elders and silence of her own husbands, leaves Draupadī further vulnerable and her conflict and emotions escalate. She is further taunted and goaded by the Kaurava-s who ask Arjuna, Bhīma, and the twins to claim that Yudhiṣṭhira is not their lord and that then she would be freed. This situation is only resolved by ill-omens at the appearance of which Gāndhārī and Vidura entreat Dhṛtarāṣṭra to intervene who finally speaks and grants Draupadī boons. Draupadī, as a boon, seeks the freedom of emperor Yudhiṣṭhira, and then for a second boon the freedom of the rest of the Pāṇḍava-s along with their weapons and arms and wealth. Draupadī shows remarkable self-control and cites dharma – she of her stature can only seek not more than two boons. By refusing the third boon, Draupadī remarkable
achieves the restoration of the entire empire and her husbands' freedom which they lost in the warped game of dice.

'Dhritarashtra said,−'O blessed daughter, let it be as thou desirest. Ask thou a third boon, for thou hast not been sufficiently honoured with two boons. Virtuous in thy behaviour, thou art the foremost of all my daughters-in-law.

Draupadi said,−'O best of kings, O illustrious one, covetousness always bringeth about loss of virtue. I do not deserve a third boon. Therefore I dare not ask any. O king of kings, it hath been said that a Vaisya may ask one boon; a Kshatriya lady, two boons; a Kshatriya male, three, and a Brahma, a hundred. O king, these my husbands freed from the wretched state of bondage, will be able to achieve prosperity by their own virtuous acts!'" (Ganguli, 2008, Sabha Parva, LXX)

Draupadī even in her vulnerable state shows trust and her faith in her husbands' skills and virtues to build on their strengths. Her strength of character shows through in the manner of her freeing her husbands with dignity and self-respect, showing a sensitivity for loss of self-respect (having just lost her own). Further through the epic, Draupadī faces other humiliating situations which are similar to the ones in the Kuru court and these situations lead to a strong resolve for revenge in Draupadī and she is unwavering in that resolve until the end of war. In this aspect, Draupadī is conflict-free, strong in her own sense of self and purpose.

4.3.3 Summary

The characters in dialogue with their situations and with other personae are in various conflicts and the manner of their resolution and dissolution of their respective conflicts display several modes of being. These modes show many repertoires, self-limiting to transforming capacities. Yudhiṣṭhira − through his experiences of omitting the truth on the battlefield and through the very decision of having entered the battlefield − is a little closer to understanding the various angles of dharma which he seeks to follow and practice the righteous path in his life. The war brings out many conflicts and the post-war experiences stimulate Yudhiṣṭhira further in his quest to understand and pursue the path of righteousness and dharma. The teachings of Bhīṣma (Śānti Parvan and Anuśāsana Parvan) in the art of statesmanship and kingly duties emphasize the sattvic qualities of dāna and empathy along with the rājasic directions.
The phenomenological approach suggests that the text contains within itself instructions for the way of the truth. As readers and listeners we have to find the meanings of the text(s) for ourselves. Figuring out the truth is an exercise of difficulty, but a phenomenological one for, to “know” the truth one must know the self – one can know the truth when one knows the self. Ganeri suggests, “there is a right and wrong way to take hold of the truth and the truth wrongly seized will bite the one who grasps it” (Ganeri, 2007, pp. 39-60). Ganeri goes on to say that wisdom is being 'receptive to truth' and allows truth to permeate and affect every aspect, one's beliefs, hopes, ideals, stories s/he tells herself/himself, concerns for self and others, and one knows that the possible ends for which truth is a means are limitless and indeterminate.

Truth is not merely abstract but is a propensity of beingness. Compassion as Ganeri (2012, pp. 39-60) again points out is not mere duty but it is to be open to the truth of another and accuracy and sincerity form the wellsprings of truth and self. In a psycho-experiential context, the integrity, congruence, genuineness and authenticity form the truth and the self. The practice of truth is founded on the ontological 'steadiness' – sthitaprajñatva. Self-enhancement and finding meaning and purpose incline along the development and honing of the subtle and inclusive qualities of altruism and empathy and compassion, leading to congruence and coherence of self and thereby well-being. However, conflict as an experiential situation leads to grief, and transcending grief brings out the nuances of human potential.
4.4 GRIEF

4.4.1 Introduction

The Mahābhārata is in a sense, a tale of woe, lament, death, loss, and grief and portrays sorrow and grief in its many forms – that of a king, of a righteous man, of a mother, of a woman, of a father; and through sentiments such as envy, fear, anxiety, etc. The salience of the narrative is projected through the characters. They demonstrate how they endure and withstand grief, and cope with their experiences in characteristic manners. Different aspects of grief, some of the coping methods, and the building of the self and well-being through the transcending of grief will be discussed using the experiential emotional phenomena of the characters of the Mahābhārata, specifically Gāndhārī, Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira, Duryodhana, and Arjuna.

4.4.1.1 The framework of grief

Grief is a universal emotion. The finitude of one's life, possessions, relationships, etc. calls attention to the limited time available to fathom the nature of life and death and humans have been trying to understand this powerful yet mysterious emotion and what causes it. The experience of grief draws attention to a boundary, a limit to our experience of ourselves as beings in the world in relation to other persons and things. The experience of sorrow brings to fore this boundary of our existence. Our being is incomplete, to be yet accomplished; there is a sense of unfinished business (Long, 2006) and we are aware of our essence only through the process of becoming.

Grief is a process through which a range of behaviours and emotions in the behavioural, psychological, social, cognitive, and philosophical dimensions are exhibited. Fear and loss are pervasive in grief. Loss may be related to people, possessions, a loss of meaning leading to existential angst, and as Rando points out, the painful loss of self (Rando 1984, ch. 2). Part of the process of grief also involves coping with it - crying, verbalizing emotions, withdrawing, swearing, plunging into work, taking up difficult to accomplish tasks, and many more. Grief changes one as few other experiences can. “I realize that grief not only hits hard, it strikes deep, unsettling, breaking apart, shattering once what was stable and sure.... and then a
watch and wait for meaning to emerge and wholeness to form from within this journey into grief” (Del Rosario, 2004).

### 4.4.1.2 Physical, physiological, and psychological aspects

People who grieve may have crying spells, some have trouble sleeping, and a lack of productivity at work. Physiological and brain studies portray a reaction of stress in the various cortices of the brain that are affected in a grief state and that these cortical areas affect the emotional states and reactions of the person grieving.

Ambivalence and guilt also underlie the process of grief. Kubler-Ross (1969) enumerates the stages of grief as: denial, disbelief, numbness; anger, blaming others; bargaining; depressed mood, sadness, and crying; acceptance, coming to terms - these are not necessarily passed through in a linear format but one may go in and out of these stages in any order and sometimes even for several years. While these may be considered as stages and phases that people go through, more fundamental and overarching emotions and themes form the substratum of grief. Fear and loss are primary and pervasive during grief. Sometimes people may succumb to complicated grief whose symptoms include impairment in global (psychological) functioning, mood, sleep, and self-esteem (Bower, 1995).

In this research, aspects of grief and its transcendence will be examined with the view to understand the nature of this complex experience and its importance in building the self and thereby well-being.

### 4.4.1.3 Classification and typology

Terms related to grief such as bereavement, and mourning typify the different responses people have toward grief although they have been used interchangeably in similar contexts due to the same experiences that one undergoes in both situations. While bereavement is more of a social response, mourning is a cultural response to grief. Historically, mourning is derived from the psychoanalytic theory, as a wide range of intrapsychic processes, conscious and unconscious, that are prompted by loss (Bowlby, 1980, cf. Rando, 1984). Freud (1917) described it as a “profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity.”
In the Indian perspective grief is a wide spectrum. *Duḥkha*, i.e., grief or sorrow has been exemplified in many ways. Monier Monier-Williams Dictionary (1992) lists the synonyms of grief as *śoka, kheda, duḥkha, santāpa, kleśa, manyu, viṣāda, mano-duḥkha, manas-tāpa, mano-vyathā, udvega, paritāpa, anirvṛtti, mano-vedanā*.

The various terms express different nuances of grief – *śoka*, sorrow expressed especially on the loss of one’s near and dear; in the Mahābhārata especially expressed by Gāndhārī upon the loss of her children; *duḥkha* is the sorrow of pain that Duryodhana goes through; *manyu* is grief from anger and heart-burn that Draupadī expresses; *mano-vyathā*, the grief that arises from mental conflict typical of Yudhiṣṭhira; *udvega* is the grief arising from anxiety and agitation of Arjuna and many other shades of grief and sorrow which are discrete points yet form a continuum.

**4.4.1.4 Self and coping with grief: wellness or pathology?**

In grief, the self suffers from an immunity shock and learning is impaired in this state. How can we transcend this negativity and move toward strength? To classify grief as healthy may sound contradictory, yet such a response at optimal levels may be necessary to prevent a breakdown in the organism.

Grief is a state which calls for a complexity in coping skills to prevent the individual from sinking into a pathological reaction and building a resilient structure. Resilience is a universal phenomenon that prevails in humans preventing despair from taking charge. It is “the process of, capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, p. 426 cf. Yates & Masten, 2004). It is not merely the ability to use our cognitive capacities but also involves growth and expansion as a result of the negative experience. The self-concept and coping mechanisms are critical for taking such actions that move the individual toward a meaningful striving. One with a weak self-concept gives in to the grief and may move toward depression and other depleting energy states. Tolstikova et al. (2005) in a study show that the failure to find meaning in the death of a loved one, and an impaired self-reference mechanism, and death anxiety play a significant role in both trauma and complicated grief.

Changing the way an event is interpreted can allow an individual to regulate emotions so that thoughts of the event no longer generate negative emotions. When
such an action is no longer possible, grief turns to the pathological and may result in clinical depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, or other clinical syndromes and conditions which involve a breakdown in the self structure and experience. In such situations, the person no longer has control over her actions, choices, decision-making processes, emotions, etc and suffers disorganization and incoherence in the personality.

Typical of the loss-oriented approach to grief over the loss of a loved one, Gross (1999) considers that grieving is crucial, necessary, and unavoidable for successful adaptation. This process of constructing a series of accounts about the loss gradually provides the loss with meaning and eventually produces a changed viewpoint of the self and the world (Archer, 1999).

The periods of transition are vulnerable periods and transcending grief brings strength and maturity, a psychic harmony in the personality. The self is subject to interpretations of experience, and is not an objective fact to be established. Phenomenologically approaching, knowledge of oneself is a composite which is a discourse of the subjective, intersubjective and objective. The self establishes an intimate, and possibly ethical, relation between past and future as one embarks on the present work of grief. One gains wisdom and knowledge through the self.

Grief can move a person forward or be regressive. The transcendence of grief is considered to enhance the self in positive measures expanding one's well-being in the process. The different types of grief and their coping offer a repertoire of responses which move one toward flourishing or depletion.

4.4.1.5 The Mahābhārata and grief

The Mahābhārata says:

\[
\text{santāpād bhraśyate rupaṁ santāpād bhraśyate balam |}
\text{santāpād bhraśyate jñānam santāpād vyādhim ṛcchati ||} \quad (V. 36. 44)
\]

“Sorrow destroys one's form; sorrow destroys one's strength. Sorrow destroys knowledge and awareness; and sorrow leads to illness.”

\[
\text{śocato na bhavet kiñcit kevalaṁ paritapyate |}
\text{parityajanti ye duḥkhaṁ sukhaṁ vāpy ubhayam narāḥ ||} \quad (III. 216. 27)
\]
“Anxiety and worry do not help; they only increase one's pain. Only those who transcend the duality of 'pain' and 'pleasure', or 'suffering' and 'happiness' are truly happy.”

And Sañjaya in the Stree Parva (Ganguli, 2008) counsels a bereft Dhṛtarāṣṭra on the nature of overcoming grief through the self –

“It behoveth thee not to give way to grief. The man who indulges in grief never wins wealth. By grieving one loses the fruits one desires. Grief is again an obstacle to the acquisition of objects dear to us. The man who gives way to grief loses even his salvation. Kill thy grief with thy intelligence, and bear thyself up with the strength of thy own self.”

4.4.1.6 Types of grief portrayed

The most pervasive kind of grief is that of the loss of children. The Mahābhārata depicts this loss in a most emphatic and poignant manner through the characters of Gāndhārī, Draupadī and Arjuna. In the course of nature, parents expect their offspring to outlive them, and the death of a child causes grief that never entirely heals (Levin, 1998). Parents grieve not only for the child, but for the loss of an anticipated future, and a sense of continuity in their lives.

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, however, an intense scrutiny and analysis of an existential grief is presented; as well as a phenomenological substantiating of the fundamental capabilities for transcending such a state.

Through the engagement with the characters’ and our own emotions, we become aware of our own state of being, what was, what is, and what can be attained by engaging with our self and emotions. A phenomenological engagement orients us toward an understanding of the self through our consciousness.

4.4.2 The characters, grief, and coping

Grief has many voices in the text. The characters exemplify various types of grief and their several ways of coping with it across situations. These responses to grief lead them to disabling as well as enhancing self-affirmations and well-being.
The epic’s expression of grief is brought out through Gāndhārī’s śoka. She surveys the battlefield and mourns each warrior drawing out the pathos and agony of death. Gāndhārī is angry and blames Kṛṣṇa for not preventing the war, has crying spells, and later slowly comes to terms and acceptance of the carnage and loss.

Table 6: Grief and self-processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Self-processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yudhiṣṭhira</td>
<td>increased learning and knowledge; self-enhancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arjuna</td>
<td>movement toward purpose; growth, environmental mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duryodhana</td>
<td>lament; mastery to a certain extent in skills acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gāndhārī</td>
<td>loss on all fronts; low positivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draupadī</td>
<td>focus; meaning and engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yudhiṣṭhira is greatly concerned with the right kind of knowledge and right course of action and his grief is one that arises from various forms of mental and emotional conflict – mano-duḥkha, mano-vyathā, mano-vedanā.

Arjuna is beset by udvega, agitation and anxiety at the beginning of the war. Through the course of the war he experiences severe loss and copes by plunging into work and taking up unconventionally challenging tasks.

Duryodhana’s grief arises from envy; he swears, gets angry at the ‘unfairness’ of having to give up his position of heir-apparent and does not concede to any peace offers.

Draupadī is synonymous with manyu - the anger expressed for seeking justice to the ‘wrongs’ and humiliation she is subjected to. She presents various reactions to her grief – such as berating her many husbands as none protect her in distress and
mournning the death of her children (and consoled by Gāndhārī – a mother’s grief is shared by both).

The characters and their primary life incidents have been taken up for analysis to understand in greater detail the process of grief, its transcendence, and their relation with self and well-being.

4.4.2.1 Analysis of Primary life incidents:

(i) Yudhiṣṭhira

Yudhiṣṭhira, ‘one who is steady-in-war’ is the eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers. Arjuna describes him (Ganguli, 2008, Virata Parva, LXX) as an embodiment of virtue, as one who has foresight and energy, who is steady in morality and self-control and capable of restraining his anger, one who is truthful and abstains from injuring another. Known by the epithet of ‘dharma-rāja,’ he constantly seeks the ‘righteous path’ (dharma) and tries to live by the ideals of the righteous principles. This quest also forms the framework for his grief. In his incessant quest for the righteous path and the truthful Yudhiṣṭhira undergoes several situations which cause him grief - trying to seek the higher knowledge and not succeeding to his satisfaction, the prospect of war, the loss of peace, destruction.

\[
\text{kīṁśvid ekapadaṁ dharmyaṁ kīṁśvid ekapadaṁ yaśaḥ} \\
\text{kīṁśvid ekapadaṁ svargyaṁ kīṁśvid ekapadaṁ sukham} \]
\[(3. 297. 50)\]

“Liberality is the highest refuge of virtue; gift, of fame; truth, of heaven; and good behaviour, of happiness. ”

Duty, Yudhiṣṭhira says, is refraining from injury while the controlled mind brings no regret.

\[
\text{mānaṁ hitvā priyo bhavati krodhaṁ hitvā na śocati} \\
\text{kāmaṁ hitvārthavān bhavati lobhaṁ hitvā sukhi bhavet} \]
\[(3.297.59)\]

“Pride, if renounced, makes one agreeable; wrath, if renounced leads to no regret; desire, if renounced, makes one wealthy; and avarice, if renounced, makes one happy.”

120
Context 1 Yudhiṣṭhira always attempts to pursue the right course of action and the right knowledge. During his forest sojourn, Yudhiṣṭhira is unhappy at his lack of enough learning and constantly seeks the company of sages and wise men to expand his knowing and learning. His is an existential and intellectual grief. The idea of following the right code of conduct and right course of action impel him to exercise himself in positive actions, and be regarded as the embodiment of righteousness. His grief also provides him with a sagacity to take the right actions and decisions. Yudhiṣṭhira's grief propels him to take actions which are subtler, of higher order. His grief provides him with an impetus to expand his knowledge and his self.

Context 2 The 'lie' that Yudhiṣṭhira utters on the battlefield

In the Droṇa Parvan, upon the urging of Kṛṣṇa, Yudhiṣṭhira deviates from the righteous path and misleads Droṇa into believing that his son, Asvatthāman is dead. While this act is a conflict within himself, the act of having to utter the 'mis-truth' causes great grief to Yudhiṣṭhira. Scholars have given several interpretations of the "lie" of Yudhiṣṭhira and in the process also have discussed how truth may be operative in our lives.

Yudhiṣṭhira operates with high coherence and well-integrated responses. His grief also allows him to expand his skill base – in the playing of dice, which he learns from a master while in exile. This skill base is of the utmost value to him and his brothers when they enter the incognito period of their exile. His skills gain in clarity and control and thus the complexity also diversifies. The new experiences meld into the organized gestalt and his self-concept increases in stability and broadens the horizons of his self.

(ii) Arjuna

Arjuna, the third Pāṇḍava, is a highly skilled warrior. He is considered invincible by his teachers and elders alike. His skill extends beyond weapons to music, dance and other art forms. He is known by several epithets some of which are Savyasāci (ambidextrous), Gudākeśa (one who has conquered sleep), Bībhatsu (one who shirks from performing an ignoble act), Parantapa (scorcher of foes), and others each describing a noble quality. Even though he fought valiantly in the Great War conquering his opponents and achieving victory, Arjuna was beset by grief from the
beginning of the war. He is deeply affected by the destruction and annihilation especially of his kith and kin, and seeks Kṛṣṇa’s counsel throughout.

**Context 1** The Gītā begins with Arjuna’s *viṣāda*

Arjuna’s *viṣāda* is described through physical, physiological, and psychological terms, derailing his very identity as that of an intrepid and skillful warrior. Arjuna upon seeing the entire array of armies gives way to his emotions.

\[
\text{sīdanti mama gātraṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati} \\
vepathuṣ ca ṣārīre me roma-harṣaś ca jāyate | \\
gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt tvak caiva paridahyate \\
na ca šāknomya avasthātuṁ bhramatīva ca me manaḥ ||(BG I. 29-30)
\]

“My limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stand on end. The (bow) Gandiva slips from my hand, and also my skin burns all over; I am unable to stand and my mind is reeling, as it were.”(Sw. Sivananda, 1969)

Arjuna projects the classical symptoms of one in anxiety, agitation, fear, distress, shaking and trembling (*udvega*) and summons his defense system to protect his ego.

In the next verses (I. 32-35), he declares his depleted desire for victory, kingdom, pleasures, power, dominion; depression, with a loss of interest, and hopelessness in material pleasures and in life itself - a severe withdrawal from his duty and work and decreased interest in life. He discards fame, power, steps back from the higher status, and questions the root purposes of his identity itself (primarily that of a warrior).

The ego attempts to limit a danger situation to an indication, to a signal. Arjuna here is withdrawing at a critical juncture. He pointedly mentions corrupted womenfolk, degraded social values, of accruing sin, or destruction of family values, etc.? (Sw. Sivananda, 1969, BG I. 41-45). Sri Aurobindo (1970, p. 54) surmises that it is not compassion but an impotence full of weak self-pity, a recoil from the mental suffering which his act must entail on himself, echoing the Gītā verse

\[
\text{kłaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitattvavypapadyate} |\\
kṣudraṁ hṛdaya-daurbalyaṁ tyaktvotiṣṭha parantapa || (II. 3)
\]
“Yield not to impotence, O Partha. It does not befit thee. Cast off this mean weakness of the heart. Stand up O scorcher of foes!” (Sw. Sivananda, 1969)

‘Anxiety’ according to the Gītā is the agitation of the mind because of this fear. Vega denotes speed; udvega is the speed or agitation of the mind. This suggests turmoil and chaos which debilitating calm thinking and thereby fruitful action.

Fear is triggered mainly to motivate one to escape or avoid threatening situations. Epstein (1972) argues that fear is essentially a coping emotion that is associated with attempts to handle threats to physical or psychological integrity. When the coping mechanism fails and a situation becomes uncontrollable, fear turns into anxiety. The bulk of Arjuna's distress is presented in the Viṣāda Yoga through his emotional turmoil, physiological reactions and his defense systems at impending crises.

Arjuna’s anxiety and grief portend this. The dread that one can be annihilated at any point of time is an existential threat. This threat of nonbeing or nonexistence implies the loss of one’s self.

Context 2 Arjuna’s oath

Taking another example in Arjuna: upon hearing of his beloved son Abhimanyu’s uncharacteristic demise he takes an oath to slay Jayadratha, the Sindhu king (Droṇa Parvan). The oath is a terrible testimony to the intense emotion coursing through Arjuna. The oath is not a fledgling vow but one that has consequences if unfulfilled by the next sunset, for Arjuna swears to kill himself if he is unable to slay the Saindhava. Added to the grief of Abhimanyu's death is also the impending grief of the vow he has sworn to remaining unfulfilled; so much so that this will lead to his perishing. Here Arjuna transforms his grief into a mission of action. Elaborating on this concept, Fingarette (1984) says that action is not merely accidentally causing things to happen; it is an exercise of human power, purposefully making actual.

Action is purpose executed. We are in bondage to karma, the common human disposition being to strive to impose our own purposes on the world. To suffer is to be acted on rather than to be the actor, and as a consequence to be disappointed, frustrated, defeated, and pained. Arjuna came to appreciate that suffering need not mean weakness or misery, and perfect suffering is the condition of perfect participation. The teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā are directed toward the
enhancement and transcendence of the self and Arjuna is the recipient of this profound teaching imparted on the battlefield gaining knowledge in the process. The potentials of an 'enlightened' sufferer, such as Arjuna, are both multiplied and enhanced. It is not merely the purpose and teleology that is prevalent but knowledge too has an impact, where knowledge is not mere information of the world as described but a deep experiential knowledge of the self.

(iii). Duryodhana

Ill-omens concur with Duryodhana’s birth as the eldest Kaurava. These portentous forebodings seemed to have taken shape in Duryodhana’s personality and thinking patterns. He displays jealousy of the Pāṇḍava-s from an early period by poisoning Bhīma; feelings of rivalry are projected into hostility and enmity. Duryodhana continues his hostility by plotting the death of the Pāṇḍava-s in the Lac House episode. Duryodhana is described as having a charisma and royal splendor, yet his jealousy of the Pāṇḍava-s’ wealth and prosperity knows no bounds and he is consumed in its flames. His envy leads to the ill-fated Dice Game where the objective is again to humiliate and possess their valuables. In fact, though he is unconscious of it, he envies the Pāṇḍava-s’ values more than their valuables.

The greatest humiliation is one he directs toward Draupāḍī. He is not satisfied by sending the Pāṇḍava-s to exile but wants to humiliate them further in their exile in the forest. He views his subsequent rout as a final humiliation and prepares to end his life. His self-sense appears to be very fragile. During the war, his confidence slowly erodes as the great warriors in his army start falling and he greatly grieves when Kaṁga falls. His final battle leaves him in a renounced state where he sees the futility of ruling a kingdom devoid of his friends and only filled with destitute people.

Context 1 Duryodhana’s lament

Duryodhana's grief emanates from his envy (Menon, et al., 2010). Envy, a pan-human phenomenon, is one of the most dangerous impulses implying hostility and thereby leading to aggression and violence capable of destroying societies (Foster, 1972). This is none truer than in the case of Duryodhana where his envy and his father’s ‘blind love’ led to the destruction of the entire dynasty. Envy manipulates behaviour moving toward a loss of self-control; it is a desire to acquire something that someone else possesses. Most often, envy affects the quality of our psychological
well-being. In his commentary on the Gītā, Sw. Sivananda (1969, IX.1) says knowledge of the self can only dawn in a mind which is free from all forms of jealousy. Mātsarya (malicious envy), Īrṣyā (jealous of others’ prosperity or happiness), and Asūyā (envious or indignant over the merits of another) are varieties of envy and is a modification of ignorance. It can be eradicated by an inquiry into the nature of the self and cultivating nobility, tolerance, magnanimity and forgiveness.

\[ idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmy anasūyave | \]
\[ jñānaṁ vijñāna-sahitam yajjñātvā mokṣyaste 'subhāt || (IX.1) \]

“I shall now declare to thee who does not cavil, the greatest secret, the knowledge combined with experience (self-realization). Having known this thou shalt be free from evil.”

Duryodhana is enveloped by ignorance and the flames of his envy are fanned by his supporters who agree to his every wild whim and fancy. His schemes are self-aggrandizing and leave no space for the expansion of the self. He expresses his grief when he says that his heart is being pricked by cruel thorns and due to which he cannot sleep and implores that he be removed from this grief.

\[ vinidra-karaṇaṁ ghoraṁ hṛdi śalyam ivārpitam | \]
\[ śoka-pāvakam udbhūtaṁ karmanaitena nāśaya ||(I. 141.24) \]

The ‘grief’ or śoka Duryodhana expresses compels him to resort to destructive tactics. The grief and envy of Duryodhana takes shape in the form of a plot to kill the Pāṇḍava-s and their mother in a lac house which would be set aflame.

Context 2 The lament II

The more intense lament happens when Duryodhana visits the Pāṇḍava-s at Indraprastha. He laments his misfortune at having to see the Pāṇḍava-s possessing all splendour and glory and being praised by all.

Duryodhana is possessed by the ‘I’, ‘me’, and ‘mine’(Menon, et al., 2010). His sorrow is overridden by jealousy. In the Sabhā Parvan, he laments starkly upon seeing the splendour and glory of the Pāṇḍava-s, “I am a sinful wretch because I eat and dress beholding the prosperity of the foes… A man is a wretch who is not filled with jealousy at the sight of his enemy’s prosperity.”
Jealousy is the overriding factor in Duryodhana’s lament. The concomitants of jealousy are described vividly – stomach burn, burning day and night, drying like a shallow tank, heartburn, and so on (Menon, 2010). He behaves in a regressive manner and gives scope for his instinctual impulses to surge forth. One can conjecture in the light of Freud’s principles that the ego and the reality principle take a back seat and the pleasure-principle of the id takes over.

“I shall throw myself upon a flaming fire or swallow poison or drown myself in water. I cannot live… I am incapable of acquiring such royal prosperity... I am thinking of self-destruction…the sons of Dhritarashtra are decaying and the sons of Pritha are growing day by day. I am deeply grieved and filled with jealousy.”

In addition to jealousy and hatred of the Pāṇḍava-s, Duryodhana seems to be overcome by feelings of insecurity as well. Farrell (cf. Purshouse, 2004) analyzing the predicament of Shakespeare's Othello claims that a jealous or envious subject may feel a “diffuse but very intense feeling of agitation, or even something like the feeling associated with fear, presumably a kind of insecurity.” Duryodhana argues that compassion and contentment are destructive of prosperity; he however fails to recognize those afflictions of ignorance, pride, attachment, hatred, and a clinging to possessions (avidyāśmitā-rāga-dveśābhīniveśāḥ kleśāḥ, Yoga sūtra, II.3) as ones which destroy the balance and equilibrium of a person.

Duryodhana takes action to dispel his grief, yet this is a negative action. His own self is served here while visibly and prominently harming the other. His actions do not lead him to expand his sense of self, nor increase his skill base or move toward actualization. Greve and Wentura (2003) surmise that in certain cases all kinds of self-defense, and reality negotiation, result in self-deception. Arjuna too takes action on the battlefield (his oath to slay Jayadratha); this too is a negative action, yet the negativity is not initiated by Arjuna himself, rather it is a response to a course of events on the battlefield. Duryodhana actively engages in an unfavourable and detrimental course of action.

Duryodhana's self-concept initially appears to be high. He assumes the ‘heir-apparent’ role but his sense of self weakens with his intense envy and hatred. As the Bhagavad-Gītā II. 66 says,

*nāsti buddhir ayuktasya na cāyuktasya bhāvanā |
“One with an uncontrolled mind cannot have spiritual intelligence, one devoid of spiritual intelligence never meditates on the Ultimate Truth and for one who never meditates on the Ultimate Truth there is no peace and for one destitute of peace where is happiness?”

Duryodhana is beset by a lack of understanding of oneself, a tendency to confuse feelings, thoughts and perspectives with others’. His grief and subsequent actions present coherence in their own peculiar way- that of consistency of purpose or motive.

(iv) Gāndhārī

Gāndhārī known as rājaputrī yaśasvinī, 'glorious princess,' from the distant land of Gāndhāra is wedded to the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra belonging to the Kuru family of Hastināpura. As a mark of respect and in keeping with the tradition of a wife not transgressing her limits in the presence of her husband, she voluntarily 'blindfolds' herself and remains blindfolded throughout. Her character is described by Subbayya (1977) as pativratā śiromani, gurusāra dhīrabuddhi, śānticittā - one who is the epitome of pātivratya, wise and knowledgeable and one who is peace-loving. Yet, as circumstances evolve and unfold, her blindfolding causes severe trouble in more ways than one and frustration overpowers her. She possesses a position and a stature, but Gāndhārī does not effectively use it to control the destructive behaviour of her family. Gāndhārī does speak forcefully and vociferously at critical junctures in the epic although she does not actually prevent the war.

Her primary life incidents - marriage with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the voluntary blindfolding, the prolonged pregnancy, her wrath at not delivering the ‘heir’ to the Kuru throne, and the pronouncing of the curse upon Kṛṣṇa can be analyzed in the framework of her desire, conflicts, and sorrow to understand her development of self and well-being.

Context 1 Gāndhārī upon hearing that the man she is to be married to is blind, in deference, chooses to blindfold herself and remains so throughout.
“Gāndhārī came to hear of Dhṛtarāṣṭra who was blind. Her parents had desired to give her away to him. And then she took a piece of cloth and folded it multiply and covered her eyes, in order to be faithful to her husband, O King.”

The meaning(s) of this act and others must be interpreted in the context of the person, the given physical context, the experiences, and the relationship. Is Gāndhārī's action of blindfolding out of anger, despair, revenge, hostility, love, sympathy or social norms? It is likely that all of these feelings course through Gāndhārī when she weds the blind king. A young maiden endowed with virtues and beauty suddenly finds herself married into a world of darkness.

This choice of action, at a critical juncture in Gāndhārī’s life has important ramifications for herself and for other key characters. Choosing to remain 'blindfolded' involves precluding the options of 'seeing' the world as is happening and excluding the opportunities of increasing one's self-awareness – a willful blindness that occludes insight. It is as if Gāndhārī drapes the veil of the deep, dark unconsciousness around her. Receding into darkness, she confines her awareness. Possessing the faculties, yet not developing these to augment agency could limit the possibilities for self-enhancement.

Context 2 Gāndhārī’s attempts at producing the heir-apparent too are thwarted through a combination of events. Having conceived, Gāndhārī fails to deliver a child even after two years. Here, Gāndhārī's frustration is unbounded and takes the shape of gross physical violence to herself resulting in an abortion of a hard mass of flesh like an iron ball.

Power and position affects all in the royal household and Gāndhārī too has competitors in Kuntī and Mādrī, for power and influence, and the ability to produce the heir. Based on Freud's view that aggression is the “primordial reaction” to frustration, social psychology theorists, Dollard, et al. (Miller, 1941) forwarded the frustration-aggression hypothesis. It suggests that violence and frustration may be correlated. Intrapersonal conflicts leading to frustration may also trigger aggressive behaviours, resulting in unfavourable outcomes for the person and others in her social context. Gāndhārī's frustration is evident in her behaviour, aggression turned toward...
herself and harming the foetus(es) too. The grief of bearing the womb for two years and yet not delivering, the thought of never being able to be a mother (desire to be a mother- *mātrtvā-kānkṣā*), and the grief of not producing an heir and thereby preserving the kingdom in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's lineage, is starkly present in Gāndhārī's actions. For her, it is a personal loss and a loss of power, position and status, which could have assuaged her 'blind' life.

A different lens is required to examine the aspect of a prolonged pregnancy. Is it possible for a human being to carry a pregnancy for so many more months than is normal? Could this incident be examined in the light of a temporal frame, in an experiential framework? The narrative form is one of the ways by which we organize an inchoate life of experience (Crites, 1971), connected with questions of personality and a fundamental structure of the experience of time (Ree, 1991, 2003). The narrative forms the consciousness rather than being among the objects of one’s consciousness. Gāndhārī’s movement through the narrative of grief may also be construed as a ‘lived experience’ of her own consciousness through time. Her dismay and sorrow upon hearing that Kuntī has delivered a male child, may have affected her perception of time and its unfolding.

Context 3 The curse of Kṛṣṇa

It is not her decision for war yet Gāndhārī is the one who is suffering the deep loss. She has lost all her sons. It is a terrible tragedy and futility of the war where all the womenfolk are bereaved of spouses and children, leads her to console them. In grief there are no rivals or enemies or usurpers of one's rights, and Gāndhārī moves beyond her personal space to reach out to the others especially Draupadī. She consoles Draupadī and they grieve together.

Although Gāndhārī spoke of the right action, the loss of progeny (*putra-śoka*) renders her traumatized. Even a strong character in the wake of loss of her children loses equanimity and Gāndhārī being one whose strong desire to attain motherhood, succumbs to a severe emotional outburst. She is affected by the ravages of war and directs her ire toward Kṛṣṇa and curses him with the annihilation of his race. The curse depletes her ascetic merit and results in further depletion of the strength of her self-concept.
(v) Draupadī

Draupadī, the princess of Pāñcāla, wedded to the five Pāṇḍava brothers is aggrieved. Her grief stems from unique set of circumstances – even though she is the Empress of the kingdom, she is humiliated in the open court, dragged by her hair and insulted, with all the elders looking on silently. Nāthavatī anāthavat (Karve, 1931, ch.6) – she bewails her fate as the one who is 'many husbanded yet husbandless.'

Context 1 Draupadī's humiliation

Draupadī, epitomizes the woman’s self and represents the emancipation of women. She is sullied in the 'Sabhā' or court by the acts of Duryodhana, Duḥśāsana, Śakuni and Karṇa. The Sabhā derives from sabhya or civility or of civilized peoples.

\[
na \ sā \ sabhā \ yatra \ na \ santi \ vrddhā \\
na \ te \ vrddhā \ ye \ na \ vadanti \ dharma \ |
\]

\[
nāsau \ dharma \ yatra \ na \ satyam \ asti \\
na \ tat \ satyam \ yacchalenānuviddham || (II. 67. 52)
\]

"That is no assembly which has no elders, and those are not elders who do not know dharma; that which doesn’t have Truth is no dharma; [and] that which is ridden with deceit is no Truth."

The irony of Draupadī’s predicament is highlighted by the location of her severe humiliation. That a woman must be molested and violated in a space meant for civilized people, foretells of severe cracks in the very fabric of civilization. Her grief expresses itself in the form of humiliation, insult, anger, and most importantly addresses dharma – what is right, and what is the truth. Her grief is only intensified when silence greets her question. Her agony at being violated and exposed to 'incivilities', her fury at being abandoned by her great warrior husbands – presents a woman whose very self is torn asunder and Draupadī seeks revenge. Revenge more for the mar on her selfhood than her physical violation. The grief translates into revenge.

Context 2 Draupadī’s grief knows no bounds at the end of the war when all her children are murdered and she only sees futility and meaninglessness. Yet she seeks Aśvatthāman's forehead jewel as a punishment. Her seeking of revenge from the beginning only reflects the inordinate sense of justice that she wishes prevails.
Through her grief, she acts to seek justice and restore truth and goodness. This restoration of order, *dharma*, and truth is a continual process in the *Mahābhārata*, more pronounced and prominent in the women characters.

The woman is viewed as the ‘flow of life,’ the flow being feminine (Badrinath, 2007b, p.6), a continuous process, whose experiences which are emotional, psychological and spiritual speak of the established truth order moving toward a universal reality. This connectivity is beyond the uttered speech, it is a lived experience. Gāndhārī, Draupadī, Kunṭi, Sāvitrī, Damayantī, and several other women characters in the epic perceive the experiential truth in their challenging lives and endeavour to restore the disturbed order.

Through each character's expression of grief, we begin to get a glimpse of the multitude of human experience, the principles which offer the avenues for self-enhancement, and well-being.

### 4.4.2.2 Re-examining the narrative for grief, self and well-being

The characters in the *Mahābhārata* grieve in various ways through their varied transitions. To transcend grief and enhance one's self, of paramount importance is the choice to act. Action is a purposeful execution of human will and power and not an accidental occurrence of events. Texts such as the *Amarakośa* and *Nāṭya Śāstra* (the treatise on dramaturgy) give terms and descriptions for grief, including nuances of the types of grief. In addition, the *Nāṭya Śāstra* offers coping mechanisms and expressions for grief. The character displays different behaviours such as searching for help (*sahāya-anvesāṇa*), thinking of strategies (*upāya-cintana*), loss of enthusiasm, perseverance, sighing, etc (*utsāha-vighāta*). *Manyu* is derived from *manyate-* which means to comprehend – a state where one comprehends her miserable state. The *Mahābhārata* portrays various modes of human choice in coping with grief – the natural state expresses through cognitive abilities and capacities synthesizing emotions and reason giving rise to a unified whole. This holistic idea is also stated by Griffith (2001), who emphasizes the possibility that the painful journey through mourning can connect one to something larger than oneself.

**Yudhiṣṭhira** grieves for the right action. He chooses to act in ways that lead him to open different doors to expand his knowledge.
In a similar situation of loss of child, Arjuna chooses to act, drawing upon his potential skills and energizing himself, whereas Gāndhārī chooses to act by uttering a curse and thereby depleting her personal energy.

Duryodhana grieves through his envy. He limits his choice of actions to feed the negative energies and does little to expand his self.

Gāndhārī shows bereavement reactions. She goes through phases of denial, anger, bargaining, a depressed mode and later accepting the inevitable. Her anger especially comes to fore in her curse of Krṣṇa and in the charring of Yudhiṣṭhira's toenails. Gāndhārī chooses to mourn and expresses her grief in a mode of loss of energy rather than synergizing toward a positive accumulation of her psychological facilities.

Draupadī seeks revenge. Her grief leads her to act in ways that keep the Pāṇḍava-s' purpose alive. Her presence throughout their exile keeps them focused on their goal and goads them to work toward augmenting their skills such as Arjuna seeking divine weapons and accruing other complex skills. Draupadī acts as a 'therapist' trying to provide facilitative psychological climate for the others to develop and hone their potentials.

4.4.2.3 Self processes, characters, and well-being

Grief can move a person in any direction. We have seen that in Gāndhārī and Duryodhana, grief is associated with negative self-affirmations, leading to destruction. In the other characters, Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, and Draupadī, their mechanisms to cope show creative and sustainable ways of living. Using the self and well-being parameters, tentative conclusions have been drawn for each character relating to the meanings they experience in their life situations. Through their individual processes of grief, the characters submit to varied levels of engagement, positivity, optimism, and purpose and meaning. Personal grief and loss may give way to moments of potential spiritual transformation.

Yudhiṣṭhira presents a high attitude and value even in his grief situations. He shows high integrity during psychological transitions and is consistent in his responses. His grief in various situations motivates him to look for answers and gain knowledge in those spheres. He integrates his learning and expands his self-concept.
Yudhiṣṭhira's complexity may be viewed in terms of his psychological strengths. His foresight and sagacity in responding to diverse circumstances leads to the safety and well-being of all around him. He displays constant endeavours toward actualizing his potentials and earns the blessings of the higher beings and of those in the human world. Yudhiṣṭhira's self-concept, complexity and enhancement potentials are high.

Yudhiṣṭhira engages with the situation at hand; he seeks positive actions which allow him to consider different perspectives and how to overcome them. He deals with setbacks with maturity and coherence and engages with others with trust. Yudhiṣṭhira views the larger horizon and is inclusive. He acts with empathy, tolerance, and fortitude and considers the well-being of others before his own.

Arjuna's responses to situations on the other hand are positive – his attitude is consistent and he is effective in curbing the negative situations. His values are high; even in his grief he fulfills his vow of slaying Jayadratha and he exhibits high competence, achievement, and freedom.

His self-complexity is very high and he utilizes his skill bases to actualize his potentials. Even in adverse circumstances (being cursed with loss of manhood) he sustains his sense of self and moves beyond the situation. Arjuna reaches the pinnacle of his potentials and varied spheres of expertise. His existential grief is assuaged and transcended. He acquires various types of knowledge in different fields and moves toward actualizing his potentials. His self-enhancement potential is high. Arjuna takes positive action and meets challenges drawing on his strengths and converting these challenges into opportunities. His focus and engagement with any task at hand enhance his skill base and augment his self-complexity and self-concept. Arjuna acts in attunement with his personal energies and moves forward holistically, bringing a sense of meaning and purpose to his being.

Duryodhana responds to situations but they are negative. He takes action, where the action is self-serving and not attuned to the well-being of anyone other than himself. He insists on gratifying his obstinate desires and is uncaring about any other in his circle. He excludes and thus restricts his growth and expansion. His value strength is low and his grief stems from envy, a negative energy source. Duryodhana shows low competence, achievement and freedom portraying low self-respect. His
self-concept remains the same throughout with hardly any scope for improving the level at which it stands.

Duryodhana's skill base is restricted to the wielding of the mace and using his emotions to blackmail the king. His favourite stance is to threaten his father with suicide and thus fulfills his wishes. His complexity is limited unlike that of Arjuna and he takes no steps to widen his horizons. He restricts himself and sets his sights only on objects within his visual range (Indraprastha) and does not assert any measures to look beyond. His grief limits his potentials and he does not transcend the state.

Duryodhana is trapped in his negative perspective viewing every situation from its dark contours. His vision too is limited even though he is not physically blind. He focuses on need fulfillment and goal achievement and values hedonic pleasures (Vittersø, et al. (2010) instead of being oriented eudaimonically, i.e. finding meaning and purpose in the process. He appears dissatisfied at all stages mainly due to a lack of higher engagement with himself and an inability to move beyond his selfish goals.

Gāndhārī seems to respond to situations only by arriving on the scene after the deed is done and then tries to stem the rot. Responses to situations – attitude – are in the retrospective leaving little scope for positive effects. Gāndhārī does not speak against the atrocious act of her sons and her brother but arrives in the sabhā when Draupadī threatens to 'curse' the Kuru clan and pleads for forgiveness on behalf of her sons and her lineage. Her values have a strong base - Gāndhārī is possessed by the 'right' (dharma-yuktām) and she is considered as one whose vision is dhārmic (dharma-darśinīm). Dharma to her, gives an insight into the future and therefore one should follow dharma to chart the course of action to be taken.

In terms of self-respect, Gāndhārī has high competence but low achievement and freedom. She is accomplished in ascetic merit and strength but is ineffectual in bringing positive change in herself or her kith and kin. Her freedom is restricted partly wilfully and partly by circumstances and situations. She is asked to appear only on certain occasions mostly when all else has failed. She exhibits integrity of character but her coherence and consistency levels are low (she does not 'bless' Duryodhana citing dharma, yet she uses her penance to fortify and strengthen his body before the
war). Gāndhārī's self-concept thus seems to dip toward the low end.

Looking at her self-complexity processes – Gāndhārī does not exhibit much variability in traits. Her ascetic merit and strong value base are her skill repertoire and she does not attempt to extend beyond. On the other hand, she chooses to 'blind' herself restricting any kind of expansion or growth. Her clarity in her value-system is very high yet she is unable to use this clarity to control her responses or actions. Her self-complexity is lower than that of the other characters.

Self-enhancement - Gāndhārī confines herself to the inner apartments of the palace. Although she acquires great ascetic merit through her meditation, she gives way to her negative emotions, especially those of frustration and anger, and fails to use the psychological strength for positive purposes. It is only toward the very end of her life that she 'opens' her eyes, removing the blindfold and makes a feeble move to reach out to a deeper sense of being.

Gāndhārī is low in positivity. The consequences of her action have not only not aided her but brought her to a state where she herself needs support and help. This dependency only reduces one's span of recourse to alternatives. She is confined in more than one sense to very limited space. Her synergy is dissipated and she chooses to tune out rather than be attuned to herself. The purpose and meaning of her life seems to be lost in the labyrinth of the palace in which she confines herself. Although it may seem as if Gāndhārī is exercising her choice, her actions are negative. Contrasting with a more contemporary character of Helen Keller who was congenitally blind but engaged in positive actions taking cues from her situations - Gāndhārī in comparison knew the right action and spoke out but was ineffectual in converting the crisis into an opportunity.

Draupadī has a well-integrated self-concept. She is coherent and responds to situations consistently. Her grief arises due to an attack on herself and her self-respect. Draupadī's skill base is varied. She is well-read and well-versed in diverse arts. She utilizes her strengths even while in grief, donning the role of a sairandhrī (a hairdresser) for the Virāṭa queen and engaging her with. Through dialogue she sharpens her knowledge and expands her skill base. Her complexity is high.

She moves with a single purpose of keeping her husbands focused on the goal of regaining their kingdom and at the same time follows her duties with humility.
Enhancement of her self is evident in the forest sojourn through her dialogues with Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā. Draupadī's focus prompts her to adjust herself to even difficult situations (in the forest, the exile, through the war). She oscillates on the trust dimension but tries to engage meaningfully with herself and others.

These characters by their different means of coping with grief, illustrate the processes of self-concept, complexity and enhancement and how these are tied in with well-being.

4.4.3 Summary

Grief can move a person in any direction. We have seen in Gāndhārī and Duryodhana, grief is associated with negative self-affirmations, leading to destruction. In the other characters, Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, and Draupadī, their mechanisms to cope show creative and sustainable ways of living. Using the self and well-being parameters tentative conclusions have been drawn for each character relating to the meanings they experience in their life situations. The experiential narratives of the characters emphasize the process of 'becoming' and finding meaning and purpose in the journey of transcending the limited boundaries of existence.

4.5 A perspective on self and well-being

The self processes, characters, and parameters for well-being along with the varied responses of characters in their primary life incidents have been presented in a tabular form, in Table 7, to create a picture of the analysis and interpretations made.

In the Rogerian framework, pain and suffering arise when persons do not move toward actualizing their potentials. Being trapped in one's own negative attitudes diminishes the person. "Individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviour; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided" (Rogers, 1980, p. 115-117). In the Mahābhārata, self-protection, and freedom from violence and hatred are emphasized and violence is not merely against another but violence against oneself too (Badrinath, 2007a).

The self is implicitly tied with the other. This is to say that we are connected to
each other and an integral part of the whole. Thus, the actions of oneself and others affect each other. The Mahābhārata states that *sukha* and *duḥkha* (pleasure and pain) are *svakṛta* (used in the sense of one's own deeds) and *parakṛta* (the deeds performed by others but which affect us in some way). Happiness and sorrow of the other are inextricably bound to one's own sorrow and happiness. Stolorow (2011) affirms this intrinsic bonding of one's being with one's sorrows and happiness. He terms trauma as an “ontological unconsciousness” which he describes as a loss of the sense of being, an emotional distancing of one from oneself.

Moldoveanu & Nohria (2002) argue that the self is essential to master its anxiety. They claim that the self is an instrument by which the ‘I’ seeks to master anxiety, agitation, fear and others with a potential to enervate rather than energize. The self can be considered to be in tune with the universal and the macrocosm. Any component of this system, if out of harmony with the self, results in impeding the journey toward achieving wholeness.

While Western psychotherapeutic procedures are geared toward the adaptive and adjusting capacities of the individual with her environment, Indian thought is oriented toward the merging of the personal discrepancies and separations, a cogent avenue toward congruence; a turning inward to transcend the outward environment. Through a control over our inner forces, we strive to achieve the potent harmony that will lead us nearer to the goal of uniting with the supreme macrocosmic universal force.

The knowledge one acquires while resolving personal crises and sorrows is an experience that increments the self. The expansion of the self provides the inner space which is vital for growth; a movement from the periphery to the core, from the circumference to the centre. This knowledge and coherence carries forth toward enlightenment and enhancement and a flourishing of the self and consequently well-being. Through their individual processes of grief, the characters submit to varied levels of engagement, positivity, optimism, and purpose and meaning. Personal grief and loss may give way to moments of potential spiritual transformation.
Table 7: Self and Well-being Processes for the Mahābhārata characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process → Character ↓</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
<td>Self-Complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yudhiṣṭhira</strong></td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Expanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arjuna</strong></td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Expanded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duryodhana</strong></td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Low variability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gāndhārī</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Draupadī</strong></td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Expanded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our narratives are written and read and assimilated into one's identity and self-understanding. As we pass through various temporal pockets, newer dimensions come to fore, and create opportunities for further reflections. Past experiences can be re-described and narrated, when heretofore unrealized connections are suddenly seen between characters, actors, agents of action, situations, circumstances, motives, objects of desire, goals and others such that greater understanding of the self is established. This understanding increments our awareness, leading to enhancement and well-being.
CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Concluding a process-based study is a difficult task and sort of contradicts the nature of the phenomenological approaches adopted in the research. To conclude something that is dynamic, evolving and growing is intimidating. However, the thesis has to be contained within the limits of the study undertaken and the research objectives that have been specified. The aim of the present study has been to examine the interrelations between self and well-being, utilizing the Rogerian framework mainly to accrue a theoretical base to Indian Psychology through the Mahābhārata, and to understand the implications of such understandings in the practice of counselling. To gain an understanding of these processes, the 'data' considered and analyzed were: a target set of characters, from the Mahābhārata, and their primary life incidents in the experiences of desire, conflict, and grief. The self is analyzed and understood in terms of self-processes, i.e. self-concept, self-complexity, and self-enhancement.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to understand the self from an experiential and psychophysical framework. The Indian idea of self is considered as encompassing bio-psycho-social and spiritual aspects, and as a lived experience and a transcendental goal. It is the self as a process that I seek to emphasize upon rather than a self as a fixed entity, a holistic process rather than of bounded notions. We possess a living self with which we interact with the world and acquire experiences. The interactive process constantly presents us with opportunities to transform as a result of the interactions. Where transformation takes place, fluidity and pliancy ensues and creates well-being. The Mahābhārata characters seek their well-being amidst complex interpersonal relations and often the well-being represented by them signifies the importance of self-enhancement, transformation and acceptance. In our

14 'Data' in this thesis refer to the material of the Mahābhārata characters and their primary experiential narratives.