CHAPTER VII

Value-oriented Education in Mahābhārata

7.1. Values

The Mahābhārata, a renowned encyclopaedia of moral values, lays great emphasis on value-oriented education. A person who is a friend of all and remains engaged in their welfare in speech, mind and action is a righteous person. A man attains Brahman when he is neither afraid of anyone nor anyone is afraid of him; when he neither desires nor hates anything and does not possess the feeling of sin against anyone. If an annoyed persons performs sacrifices, gives away gifts and practises penance, then the Yama takes his fruit and his efforts become futile. The values which have been described in the great epic are as follows:

Courage

A value namely courage was prevalent during the age of Mahābhārata. There are numerous evidences to prove this. For example- when Yudhiṣṭhira was reluctant to fight with the Kauravas, Kuntī encouraged him to do so according to Rājadharma. She told him not to cast a slur on the fair name of his grand fathers and to meet an end devoid of punyas alongwith his younger brothers. At the end of the Kurukṣeta war, Yudhiṣṭhira was filled with grief on account

2. Ibid., 12/254/16, 17.
3. Ibid., 12/288/27.
4. Ibid., 5/130/32.
of the slaying of his kinsmen, sons, grandsons and friends
and was bent upon following the path of renunciation,
Draupadī exhorted him to rule over the kingdom acquired by
prowess alone.¹ When Sanjya, the son of queen Vidula, was
defeated by the king of Sindhu, she encouraged him to defeat
the enemies and not to be the enhancer of their joy² and to
blaze up even for a moment like a piece of Tinduka.³ Her
following words of exhortation have become immortal:

मुहुर्त ज्वलिते श्रेयो न च भूमायिते घिरयं ।
“Better is a momentary flaring up than go
on smoking for a long time.”

Vidula encouraged him by saying that one should always hold
one’s enemy by his thigh even when one is falling down and
one should not be aggrieved if doing so one is cut off from
one’s roots⁵ and told that only that son of Manu, who leads
an excellent life because of the strength of his arms, is
able to attain fame in this world and has access to heaven
hereafter.⁶

Endurance

A man undergoes suffering for the sake of virtue and
truth. Such tolerance of man is called endurance. It is one

¹. Mahā., 12/14/18 to 20,38.
². Ibid., 5/131/7.
³. Ibid., 5/131/13.
⁴. Ibid., 5/131/13.
⁵. Ibid., 5/131/18.
⁶. Ibid., 5/131/42.
of the forms of forgiveness and is attained through patience. The whole story of Pāṇḍavas in the Mahābhārata is a sterling example of endurance because they struggled and suffered for the sake of truth and virtue.

**Forbearance (Dama)**

All religions have greatly praised the ethical value called forbearance. It possesses an important place in the ethical code of Buddhism, Brahmanism and asceticism. The people well-conversant in the Vedas praise the value called forbearance. It is regarded as the highest duty of all the four castes especially that of the Brahmins. A person, devoid of this virtue, cannot attain success in any activity. Asceticism and all the Vedas are associated with this quality. The learned men regard forbearance as pious. A person possessing this quality becomes free from sin and fear and attains the highest goal. A person having this virtue sleeps and wakes happily and also walks cheerfully in the world. His mind also remains delightful. A self-controlled person finds his innumerable foes such as desire etc. as if there reside in a separate body. In all the modes of life, forbearance excels all other virtues.

2. Ibid., 12/213/2.
3. Ibid., 12/213/3.
5. Ibid., 12/213/5.
people of ancient times believed that the fruit of forbearance is greater than that obtained by the practice of religion. A self-controlled person is never vindictive, is always well-behaved and remains unaffected by praise and censure. Such an intelligent man who possesses good character and good conduct attains heaven after death. A self-controlled man neither frightens nor himself is afraid of all the creatures and deserves respect from all. A self-controlled man does not rejoice even at the attainment of large acquisitions and feel sorrow when overtaken by misfortunes. Such a man is said to be a twice-born man, as the following verse describes:

न हृदयाऽं महत्त्वं व्यापने व न शोपति ।
सै व परिमित्तुः त दानों तद्विशं उपयोगे ॥ ४

Forgiveness

A man who endures both the agreeable and disagreeable; forgiveness and unforgiveness is considered to be an esteemed and good man and a true man attains the virtue of forgiveness. A man who does not become wrathful with anyone is better than the one who performs sacrifice every month for hundred years. A person who possesses this virtue

2. Ibid., 12/213/12.
3. Ibid., 12/213/14.
4. Ibid., 12/213/15.
5. Ibid., 12/156/14.
6. Ibid., 1/74/6.

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is honoured in this as well as the next world and attains Brahman.\textsuperscript{1} It is sometimes considered that a man who is possessed with this quality is incapable but the same is not true. Forgiveness is the best form of peace.\textsuperscript{2} A mighty man endowed with this virtue acquires a place superior to Heaven.\textsuperscript{3} A king who knows the best use of forgiveness, Lakṣmī remains always at the beck and call of such a king.\textsuperscript{4}

**Friendliness**

Man should always be grateful. Everything may be obtained from a friend. Truth and prowess originate from a friend. The wise man should worship his friend to the best of his power:

\texttt{हृत्येन तदा भाव्यं भिन्नकामेन शान्ति।
मिन्नत्पुष्टेऽत्य भिन्नत्पुष्टेऽयम्।
तत्त्वं सत्त्वसैयरं पुरूषोत्तमं विद्याय।}\textsuperscript{5}

No man should injure a friend. He who injures a friend sinks into dreadful hell for a long time.\textsuperscript{6} The wise man should shun a sinful, ungrateful, shameless and wretched person.\textsuperscript{7} Expiation has been prescribed for one who slays a Brahmin, for one who drinks, for a thief and for one who has not

\begin{itemize}
  \item[1.] Mahā., 1/38/9,10.
  \item[2.] Ibid., 5/33/47,48.
  \item[3.] Ibid., 5/33/53.
  \item[4.] Ibid., 5/33/86.
  \item[5.] Ibid., 12/167/21.
  \item[6.] Ibid., 12/167/20.
  \item[7.] Ibid., 12/167/22.
\end{itemize}

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fulfilled a vow but there is no expiation for an ungrateful person. Even the cannibals and the worms those feed on carrion do not eat those persons who injure a friend and who are cruel, ungrateful and mean.

Goodness

That virtue as a result of which one performs good acts with care to all creatures is called goodness. It has no particular shape and is attained by casting off all attachments. Yudhiṣṭhira, a renowned character of Mahābhārata, is a living example of goodness.

Modesty

A modest man does the welfare of others, does not indulge in self-praise and is cool-headed. Modesty is the consequence of virtuous conduct.

Non-violence

Different religions may disagree in the concept of God, Soul and universe and they may descend to bitterness in actual practice but there is uniformity in their views as regards the basic code of morality. The value of non-violence has been highly praised in the Mahābhārata. It has been regarded as the highest duty, highest austerity, highest truth and also the root of religion. This virtue is the

2. Ibid., 12/166/29.
4. Ibid., 12/156/15.
5. Ibid., 13/116/25.

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highest sacrifice, the highest strength, the best friend and the eternal bliss.¹ The killing of animals even for sacrifice has been criticized in the epic. Bhīṣma narrates a story to Yudhiṣṭhira in which violence is considered as an evil. It tells that once a bull was killed in the sacrificial pāṇḍal and the cows bellowed with fear. Hearing this, the king Viṣaknu told the people that only the atheists regard it appropriate to kill the animals for a sacrifice.² The pious Brahmins are of the view that Viṣṇu is present in all the sacrifices and therefore, Lord Viṣṇu should be worshipped with milk and flowers. When a man offers anything to the gods with pure mind, it is accepted by them—

Sacrifice should be performed with the earnestly earned offerings. The holy scriptures consider salutations, herbs, recitation of the Vedic mantras as oblations. If one worships gods with these, the gods are delighted.⁴ Absolute Ahimṣa is not feasible because one cannot escape killing many germs

¹. Mahā, 17/3/17/3.
². Ibid., 12/257/4.
³. Ibid., 12/257/10, 11.
⁴. Ibid., 12/255/3.
which exist in the water, fruits and on the earth.¹

**Obedience**

Obedience is a virtue par excellence which is eternal. Children as well as disciples of the Mahābhārata age possessed this virtue and they never dared to disobey the commands of their parents and preceptors. The rules regarding Brahmacharya bear testimony to the fact how much obedient the students were. According to Vyāsa, while dwelling in the preceptor's house the students should go to bed after the teacher has gone to his and rise before the teacher has risen. He should perform all such acts as ordered by the guru and stand by him.² Āyuda-Dhoumya ordered his disciple Āruni to stop a breach in the water-course in his field. Āruni did so.³ Dhoumya ordered his pupil Upamanyu to look after his kine. The preceptor told him not to feed on alms, drink the milk and taste the froth. Upamanyu remained hungry and completed the task.⁴ Dhoumya ordered his pupil Veda to serve his teacher. Veda suffered much woe and did the assigned work successfully.⁵ Veda ordered his disciple Uttanka that he should do whatever was required to be done in his house in his absence. Uttanka obeyed the instructions of

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2. Ibid., 12/23/18, 19. For detail see 2.5 of this thesis.
3. Ibid., 1/3/19 to 31.
4. Ibid., 1/5/32 to 78.
5. Ibid., 1/3/79 to 82.
his preceptor without doing anything improper. His preceptress told him to go to the king Pauṣya and bring the ear-rings of the queen. After facing many hardships, Uttanka brought the ear-rings and presented them to his preceptress.¹ Drona ordered the Pāṇḍavas to seize the kingdom named Chatravatī from the king Drupada. The Pāṇḍavas defeated the king Drupada in battle and handed over the kingdom to Drona.² Drona ordered Ekalavya to give the thumb of his right hand as dakṣiṇā and Ekalavya did so cheerfully.³

Reverence

The most important Dharma is to worship parents and the preceptor. One should obey their orders unhesitatingly whether these are consistent or inconsistent with righteousness. One should not do such acts as are forbidden by them. Parents and preceptors have been called the three worlds, three stages of life and three Vedas. There is no one who deserves as much reverence as mother. The preceptor should be given greater importance as compared to the father or the mother. Parents are the creators of the body but the life which one obtains from the teacher is heavenly. They should never be slain even on committing the greatest offence. This virtue has been attached great importance in the Mahābhārata. According to Vyāsa, the student should go to bed after the preceptor has gone to his and rise before the

1. Mahā., 1/5/36 to 163.
2. Ibid., 1/154/19 to 22.
3. Ibid., 1/123/33 to 37.
preceptor has risen. He should never drink water before his teacher has drunk water and never sit down before his teacher has sat down. According to Sanatsujāta, the student should regard the preceptor as father and mother because the preceptor frees a man from untruth by giving discourses on the Supreme Soul. He should never hurt the teacher remembering the good done to him.

A man who fights after paying due respect to the elders emerges victorious in the war. For example—Before fighting in the Kurukṣetra war, Yudhiṣṭhira went to Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kripa and Śalya and asked them to grant permission to fight.

Righteousness

Sanatana Dharma is beneficial for all and indicates universal friendship. There is a firm conviction in Indian religion that dharma is essential to emerge victorious. When Duryodhana went to his mother Gāndhārī and asked her to give him a boon to be victorious in the war, Gāndhārī replied prophetically, “where Dharma is there is victory.” Draupadī explained the theory of Karma to Yudhiṣṭhira. She also

2. Ibid., 12/234/21.
3. Ibid., 5/44/7.
4. Ibid., 6/41/32, 47, 64, 73.
5. Ibid., 12/254/5.
6. Ibid., 11/14/8, 9.
7. Ibid., 3/35/3 to 58.
explained to Satyabhāmā the duties of a chaste lady towards her husband.¹ Yudhiṣṭhira asked Pāṇḍavas to get ready for war on seeing evil omens.² Yudhiṣṭhira described ill omens after the king Jayadratha took away Draupadī forcibly.³ The sage Mārkandeya explained to Yudhiṣṭhira the theory of Karma,⁴ the virtue of a chaste lady,⁵ the virtue of Brahmins,⁶ the description of Soul⁷ and attainment of mokṣa.⁸ Sūta described the evil omens which occurred before the taking away of Ambrosia by Garuḍa.⁹ Vaiśampāyana explained good omens which occurred at the birth of Arjuna.¹⁰ Bhīma told Yudhiṣṭhira the definition of religion.¹¹

Truth

Good people always respect Truth. Truth is eternal duty. All the men should respectfully bow to Truth. Truth is the last refuge of all.¹² Truth is duty, penance and Yoga.

². Ibid., 3/153/3 to 7.
³. Ibid., 3/253/3, 4, 7, 8.
⁴. Ibid., 3/181/9 to 33.
⁵. Ibid., 3/197/1 to 43.
⁶. Ibid., 3/197/38.
⁷. Ibid., 3/200/23, 24, 26, 31, 33 to 38.
⁸. Ibid., 3/200/49, 50, 52.
⁹. Ibid., 1/26/28 to 32.
¹⁰. Ibid., 1/114/38, 39.
¹². Ibid., 13/156/4.
Truth is eternal Brahman. Truth\(^1\) has been described a great sacrifice. All things are dependent upon Truth.\(^2\)

There are different forms of Truth. These are: Truth, impartiality, self-control, forgiveness, modesty, renunciation, meditation, goodness, endurance and non-violence. Truth is immutable, unchangeable and eternal. It is attained through practices which do not oppose any of the other virtues and by Yoga.\(^3\) No duty is higher than Truth and no sin is more dreadful than untruth. Truth is the root of righteousness and, therefore, Truth should not be destroyed.\(^4\)

A man obtains the fruit of gifts, sacrifices along with presents, vows, Agnihotras, the Vedas and everything which leads to righteousness by following the path of Truth.\(^5\) If a thousand Horse-sacrifices and Truth are weighed against each other in the balance the latter proves to be heavier than the former.\(^6\)

Truth is the creator of all creatures and sustains the whole universe. It enables man to attain Heaven.\(^7\)

Untruth is another form of Darkness which leads a man downwards. Those who are overpowered by tamoguna, are

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1. Mahā., 12/156/5.
2. Ibid., 12/156/5.
3. Ibid., 12/156/24.
4. Ibid., 12/156/25.
5. Ibid., 12/156/26.
6. Ibid., 12/183/1.
unworthy of visualizing light which is shrouded by darkness.\(^1\)

It has been said that Heaven is Light and Hell is Darkness. The living beings of this world can attain both Heaven and Hell through truth and untruth respectively.\(^2\) In this world too, Truth as well as Untruth give birth to contrary action and contrary indications like Righteousness and Unrighteousness, Light and Darkness, Pleasure and Pain-

\[\text{तः त्वेव विधा वृत्तिपिक्ष सत्यातुता मेवेत्।}
\text{धर्मायतर्व प्रवक्षण तमो दुःख दुःख लय।।}^3\]

Amongst these, Truth is Righteousness. Righteousness is light and Light is Happiness. Similarly Untruth is Unrighteousness; Unrighteousness is Darkness and Darkness is Sorrow or Misery.\(^4\)

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2. Ibid., 12/183/3.
3. Ibid., 12/183/4.
4. Ibid., 12/183/5.