Mahabharata, the great epic of Indian mythology is composed by Vaidvyas in Sanskrit between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. It is considered as one of the most ethical and philosophical guide of spirituality. The epic has enlightened the world by providing insights in various areas. It is one of the longest poems ever composed with 18 chapters and 100,000 shlokas. Mahabharata is one of the greatest epic which personifies the essence of Indian Culture. It is a struggle between ethics and egos, which starts from conflict between wisdom and wickedness and end with peace.

Epic is the story of Pandavas (Five sons of Pandu) and Kauravas (Hundred sons of Dhritarashtra), who became opponents and fought with each other for the ownership of Hastinapura. The war continues for 18 days between Kaurava and Pandava. The Kurushetra war was won by the Pandavas. The story ends with the war, and the ownership of Hastinaputra, which was given to Yudhishtira.

Mahabharata is one of those epics in the world, which contains the solution to most of the modern day managerial problems. Management lessons drawn from Mahabharata helps managers to reflect on effective decision making based on Indian traditions. Mahabharata is full of management principles which are relevant even today (Thaker, 2013). The Mahabharata is the goldmine of management insights (Bodhananda, 2010).

Review of literature shows that Mahabharata has been explored for various management principles in the area of leadership, motivation, strategic management and commitment. So far Mahabharata have not been explored for the mentoring insight, which is considered as the most effective tool to retain talent in the organization. Therefore, researcher would try to find out some mentoring insights from Mahabharata that are relevant in today’s complex and challenging environment. Lord Krishna helped Pandva to achieve their goal. The text of Mahabharata has been analyzed, for the various instances of mentoring from the epic to understand the concept. Some of the instances of Mentoring have been summarized and analyzed for the same in below text.
First instance of mentoring in Mahabharata analyzed by the researcher is of prince Uttar. Where Arjun is the Mentor and Uttar is the Mentee. Arjun as a mentor helped Uttar to understand his abilities as a soldier at the time of crisis without taking away the dignity of the prince. Kauravas attacked Uttar’s city, there were only females and children in the city and the young Prince to defend them. Prince decided that he will fight for saving their lives. He assumed that he only needed a charioteer for his chariot for defeating the enemy. Brihanalla (Arjun), who worked in the women’s accommodations, offered to help due to the reason that he had some experience as charioteer. Uttar armed with a bow, moved towards the army. When prince saw the army, he decided to step back. In this difficult situation, Arjun helped Uttar in defeating the enemies by making him realize about his abilities. Most of the people due to the sense of inadequacy, underestimate their capabilities at the time of crisis which leads to failures. Mentor helps mentee in realizing his capabilities and helps decide the right strategy through his experience. In the above instance Arjun used his experience to overcome the crisis of Uttar. Mentor is considered as more experience person than mentee. Mentee should respect the mentor’s time, efforts and qualifications for the worthy mentorship.

The second instance, where Dryodhana as a Mentee insulted and disrespected the Mentors (Bhishma and Drona) whereas the Pandvas in spite fighting against them were always respectful towards them and so were blessed by them. So a Mentee should always be respectful towards the Mentor whatever situations may be. Mentors invest their time and effort in training and advising the Mentees, they in return expect a high degree of acceptance for their advice on part of Mentee. The above case clearly examined the importance of respect in mentoring relationship.

The third instance about the Mentoring in Mahabharata highlights the importance of right selection of Mentor, and where lack of mentoring and selecting the wrong mentor leads to failures. One of the important examples is Karna, who was originally known as Vasusena. He was one of the important characters of the epic Mahabharata. He was one of the greatest warriors. Due to lack of right direction and inferiority complex, his martial skills were not fully exploited in Mahabharata. Selecting the right mentor is very important in the corporate world as Arjun selected Drona as a mentor. It is important to sharpen the skills with the help of the mentor. It is important
to have faith on your mentor to enhance required skills for accomplishment of the goal. Arjun had faith on his mentor (Drona) training. Arjun’s loyalty towards his mentor made him a great archer of that era. Arjun capitalized on every opportunity provided by his mentor. Because of the high dedication and commitment of Arjun, Dron imparted him with Devastra and the magical arc of Brahma. On the hand Karna had to fight against misfortunes throughout his life. Karna suffered injustice in through the life due to the lack of mentoring. Karna and Arjun were equal as archers but Karna used his strength to support Duryodhan blindly, which led to the victory of Arjun.

Mentoring is considered as a tool to transfer the knowledge among employees. Trust plays an important role as a moderator in the same. In Mahabharata, there are instance, where mentee faced the same situations in which trust played an important role for worthy mentorship. Karna did not know his parentage, when he went to Parshuram for learning Martial skills, Parshuram asked him about his parentage. Despite of knowing the fact that Parshuram does not train any other community except the Brahmins, Karan became the student of Parshuram. He trained him in the art of archery and war. He gave him the knowledge of all powerful weapons like Brahmastra. When Parshuram realized that Karan is not a Brahmin, he cursed him that his knowledge would of no use when it is required most, which led to his death by Arjun. It clearly signifies the importance of trust between the Mentor and the Mentee, lack of trust in this relationship can lead to disastrous results as it happened to Karan.

The forth instance of Mentoring noted, when Lord Krishna the divine, who is called as a Jagadguru mentored various characters, Supreme God has been called as an excellent mentor. Krishna has all the qualities of a good mentor such as knowledge, experience and an effective communicator. He practiced all mentoring techniques most effectively. Krishna is the best example of visionary mentorship. Krishna not only mentored Arjun but also other Pandavas. Krishna also helped Pandavas to make strategies to win war, the strategies to kill Bhisma ‘a ferocious and a seasoned warrior’ without Krishna’s knowledge of History and the character of Bhisma it would have not been possible for Arjun to even give him an abrasion. It was only
Chapter 4: Mentoring Insights from Mahabharata

Krishna’s strategy which could enable Pandvas to Kill Droncharya. He advised Ghatotkach to dent the Armies of Kauravas’s even while dying. His strategy prompted Karna to use his ultimate weapon on Ghatotkach thus saving Arjuna from its wrath.

The fifth instance of Mentoring in Mahabharata was, When Pandvas lost everything after the Game of Dice, and were sent for exile they were not willing to go but fight the Kauravas and get their Kingdome back then and there. But Krishna intervened and pacified the Pandvas and Draupadi. He advised them to keep their word and uphold Dharma. He asked them to go to jungle and acquire skill.

The sixth incidence of Mentoring, When Krishna suggested Arjun to elope with Subhadra (Sister of Krishna) whom Balrama wanted to marry Duryodnahana. Thus he provided an upper hand to Pandavas to forge an alliance with Yadvas. Krishna provided the way to Draupadi to acquire Akshaypatra while in forest to spare them of humiliation and hunger for the rest of their stay. In the above mentioned instance Krishna protected Draupadi in the situation of crisis. Protection of mentee is one of the functions of the mentoring. Krishna also advised Kunti to reach for Karna and reveal his true identity to him, where Karna agreed to spare the life of Pandavas other than Arjun. Karan was one of the most important warriors of the Kaurava Army. As Karan promised Kunti that he will not kill the Pandavas except Arjun. Through this advice, Krishna protected the other Pandavas while for saving Arjun he had other plans. Krishna helped Arjun not only to Kill Jayadartha but also escape the effects of Jayadartha’s father boon. Krishna again saved the life of Arjuna through adopting a right strategy in this situation. These strategies helped Arjun to kill both Jayadartha and his father together. The idea for killing Jarasangh by splitting him in two and, and about the weak thighs of Droydhana which eventually helped him to get rid of him after they furiously for long and were matching each other blow to blow. When incognito period of Pandavas was over, Krishna went to Kauravas to negotiate the agreement for the wellbeing of both the groups. He attempted till the last minute with full commitment and persuasion. When kaurava rejected any kind of agreement, Krishna looked for the other best possible alternative.
These were few of the instances of mentoring in Mahabharata, though the epic is full of Mentoring and is so vast, that a life time would not be enough for exploring it. In nutshell it can be stated that A Mentor can have a tremendous effect on your efficiency and effectiveness. A effective mentor can take you to such great heights, like Krishna did to Arjun. On the other hand if you have an inadequate mentor like Shakuni, in spite of having same set of gurus and lineage Duryodhan is deemed as bad character who did not followed Dharma, lost his family and friends in the war due to his ill intention. Even the Karna who was among the greatest of warriors of his time didn’t get his due of fame and respect. Karna who was the greatest Daanveer could not get the same respect and honor as his other brothers got, just due to the company and the mentors he had.

Mentoring is the long term process, where a mentor guides, protects and advice mentee in the situation wherever mentor is needed. This is the relationship, which is formed to achieve specific objective as happened in the Mahabharata. When Pandavas won the war of kurushetra, Krishna decided to leave the Pandavas and went back to Dwarka to fulfill his duties as King. Mentor should be equipped with knowledge and skills required to mentor the mentee. In Mahabharata when Arjun wanted to learn martial skills, his mentor was his guru Drona who was the expert in art of warfare. He equipped Arjun to be one of the greatest Archers of the world. It was Arjun’s dedication which persuaded Drona to teach him everything which he taught to his own son Aswathama.

Krishna as mentor to Arjun taught him and helped him to make political decisions and strategic alliances. The complete faith and trust Arjun had in Krishna, made him receptive towards the guidelines thus helped him to win overcome his weakness.

Krishna prompted Draupadi to reject Karna where Arjun won over opponents and married her; this made his alliance possible with one the strongest Kings and eventually added to their power. Krishna also persuaded Arjun to worship Indra and Agni who gave him the best Bow “Gandiva” and Shiva for “Pushupati”.

When in Kurukshtre, both the armies were facing each other Arjun lost his cool and decided not to fight. He didn’t want to win a war by killing his own relatives and
teachers. Then Lord Krishna “greatest of mentors” delivered the sermons which is Known as Bhagvad Gita that eventually helped Arjun to understand his true goal towards life and rise above the worldly relations and fulfil his Dharma. Therefore Bhagavad-Gita has been further explored for the same.