Chapter – VI

Yudhishthira

6.1 OUTLINE

Yudhishthira, the crown prince and the rightful heir to the throne of Hastinapur is a noble man who strongly adheres to the path of ‘Dharma’ (morality of life). The eldest of the Pandavas, and a favourite among the subjects of Hastinapur, Yudhishthira retains a calm countenance in the face of every calamity. His steadfastness to a strong sense of right and wrong earned him respect from the young and the old alike. Be it Dhritharashtra, Bhishma, Drona or Vidura, they acknowledged the nobility of Yudhishthira and held him in great reverence. His own younger brothers worshipped him as their own father and devoted themselves to his service. Losing his father at an early age shifted the responsibility of the family on him and he bore it on his young shoulders with ease and authority. The trials that he faced at Hastinapur proved his mettle as a good leader. He realized very early in his life that he would have to struggle to get his rightful share of power and wealth. He had to overcome the antagonism of Dhritharashtra and Duryodhana at every stage in his life. This realization sharpened his intellect and taught him to approach any problem with utmost caution. It was an open secret that Duryodhana would go to any extent to overpower the Pandavas to retain the throne for himself. Yudhishthira also knew that Dhritharashtra would shield, protect and secretly provide all the support needed to Duryodhana in destroying the Pandavas. He was shrewd enough to know that he cannot oppose his uncle and Duryodhana before consolidating his own position. Thus he remains calm, does not react to Duryodhana’s taunts and keeps his brothers too from reacting to it. He displays extraordinary emotional intelligence skills as he keeps a tight check on his emotions.

6.2 A BRIEF CHARACTER SKETCH OF YUDHISHTHIRA

Yudhishthira, the eldest prince of the Pandavas is always projected as a person who followed the tenets of Dharma and is held in high esteem because of this. That he was a wise man who was held in great reverence is evident from two noteworthy incidents – the
‘Yaksha Prasna’ and his conversation with Nahusha, the serpent. Both these incidents bring to fore Yudhishthira’s extraordinary intellectual competency in the moralities of life and establishes him as an authority on ‘Dharma’. The ‘Yaksha Prasna’ is one of the most important sections of the Mahabharata which stands on par with the ‘Vidura Neethi’ (the discourse on ‘Dharma’ by Vidura) on aspects of morals and ethics. It is in the form of a dialogue between a Yaksha (a semi-divine being) and Yudhishthira. While in exile, the Pandavas once wander deep into the forest searching for the ‘Arani’ (sticks used by the officiating priest to start the fire of a Yagna) of a Brahmin priest. Having lost their way and parched with thirst, Yudhishthira asks Sahadeva to fetch water. Sahadeva finds a pond nearby and seeks to quench his thirst before taking water to his brothers. As he is about to drink the water, a stern voice warns him that the pond was its territory and whoever wanted to drink the water should first answer its questions lest be punished with death. Sahadeva chooses to ignore the voice, proceeds to drink the water and falls dead instantly. The same fate befalls Nakula, Bhima and Arjuna. When Yudhishthira comes in search of his brothers, he is aghast seeing his valiant brothers dead. As he demands the killer to come before him, the Yaksha appears in front of Yudhishthira and informs that the brothers invited death upon themselves choosing to ignore his warning. As the Yaksha challenges Yudhishthira to answer his questions, Yudhishthira quietly accepts. The Yaksha’s terse and puzzling questions of deep philosophical and spiritual import are handled with ease and authority by Yudhishthira. For example, the first four questions of the Yaksha are:

What is it that makes the sun rise up?
Who are his surrounding attendants?
Who makes the sun set?
In which is he firmly placed? (Iyer, 1989)

The answers are equally cryptic.

The Veda (Brahma) makes the sun rise.
The Devas are his attendants.
Dharma makes the sun set, and
He is firmly rooted in truth. (Iyer, 1989)
It can be seen that the entire conversation cannot be understood without the help of a commentator. Though the questions and answers are seemingly simple, it does not take an extraordinary mind to discover that there are layers of meaning which cannot be unraveled without the help of an expert. For example, in the first question, the ‘Sun’ stands for ‘Atman’ or the ‘Soul’ and hence Yudhishthira answers that it is the knowledge of the Vedas that helps the ‘Sun’, the ‘Soul’ to awaken from its ignorance. Further, he uses the word “Brahma” to differentiate between the pure ‘Atman’ from the ‘Self’ which is constantly confused and misled by the senses. These interpretations are only the tip of the iceberg which holds the potential for an extensive discussion on philosophy, spirituality and morality of human life. To discuss the questions and answers in detail is beyond the scope of this research as the ‘Yaksha Prasna’ similar to ‘Bhagavad Gita’ and ‘Vidura Neethi’ can form the crux of an exclusive and extensive research. It is a reservoir of knowledge on the moralities and practicalities of life. Here it serves and satisfies the limited purpose of establishing Yudhishthira as an authority on the intricacies of Dharma.

Similar to the Yaksha Prasna, the conversation between Yudhishthira and Nahusha also firmly establishes him as one who is well versed with the finer aspects of Dharma. To briefly narrate the incident, during the exile, when the Pandavas were staying at the hermitage of King Vrishaparva, Bhima goes deep into the woods smitten by the beauty of the wilderness. As he walks in the thick forest, he comes across a huge serpent of immeasurable size and strength which quickly coils around his powerful body. Bhima who was endued with the strength of ten thousand elephants could not free himself from the grip of the serpent. Meanwhile, back at the hermitage, Yudhishthira finds Bhima to be gone for a long time and comes in search of his brother. As he finds Bhima in the grip of the serpent, he demands the serpent to release his brother and promises to satisfy its hunger. The serpent identifies itself as king Nahusha who had come to this plight with sage Agastya’s curse. He also says that his freedom from the curse depended on a learned man answering all his queries on the moralities of life. The ensuing conversation between Nahusha and Yudhishthira clearly places Yudhishthira’s knowledge of Dharma on a high pedestal, as he frees Nahusha from his curse with his insightful answers.
The above incidents have been discussed with the view of establishing Yudhishtira as an authority on ‘Dharma’ as it is the central focus of Yudhishtira’s entire life. His character revolves around this aspect of strictly adhering to the tenets of Dharma even in the most trying situations. But unfortunately, this becomes his greatest weakness as well, which is discussed in the following section.

Reiterating the fact that the characters of the Mahabharat are down to earth people with a combination of positive and negative traits, it was discussed in the previous chapter how Duryodhana and Dhritharashta had inherent good qualities in them in spite of their predominant negative traits. Similarly, though Yudhishtira is always associated with an exemplary sense of ‘Dharma’, one does find in him the misgivings and uncertainties that plague an ordinary person. The following discussion of his character proves the same. His weakness for peace and non-violence, and his misgivings about his stature in Hastinapur comes to the forefront. But before one goes into the discussion, it becomes important to understand what one means by ‘Dharma’ as it is always rendered synonymous with Yudhishtira, the ‘Dharmaputra’ (son of Yama, the lord of ‘Dharma’).

‘Dharma’, if needs to be translated into English can be referred to as ‘law’ which every individual abides by, and that which empowers him with strength and courage to face any moral, ethical challenges in life. Dharma is “the sacred law, invested with divine authority, for Dharma is based on the Vedas, sacred scriptures revealed by the Divine to highly qualified sages.” (Dr. Juarez, 2014) To go into a deeper sense of the word, one needs to be aware of ‘Rita’ and ‘Satya’. ‘Satya’ means ‘truth’ and ‘Rita’ as used in the Vedas denotes the moral order of the cosmos (Iyer, 1989). To further quote the same author, ‘Rita’ is the “mental realization of truth, ‘Satya’ is the outward expression of truth” and Dharma is the observance of truth in action. Thus, a person who is oriented towards ‘Dharma’ is the observer of ‘truth’ in thought, word and deed. Further, Hinduism classifies the ‘Dharma’ of every individual according to his social status – on him being a Brahmin (one who performs Yagnas and rituals for the well-being of the society), or a Kshatriya (the warrior class), or a Vaisya (the business class) or a Sudra (one who does the menial jobs). Hinduism is based on this code of conduct and insists on the perseverance of an individual.
in following his ‘Dharma’. A person who failed to observe his Dharma in life was considered the greatest sinner. He was considered an anarchist who created chaos in the social order, as the classification of people, according to one’s duties ensured an efficient and smooth functioning of the society. Likewise, if non-observance of ‘Dharma’ is considered a sin, it also emphasizes that an individual following another person’s ‘Dharma’ is a greater sin. As Krishna says in the Gita,

*sreyansvadharma vigunah paradvartmantvanusthitat
svadharne nidhanam sreyah paradvartmo bhayavahah*

Better is one’s own Dharma, (though) imperfect, than the Dharma of another well-performed. Better is death in one’s own Dharma: the Dharma of another is fraught with fear.

(Swami Swarupananda, (1996)
(Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. IV, Sloka 34)

This “Paradvartmo Bhayavahah” – ‘following the ‘Dharma’ of another is fraught with fear’ – gains significance as one sees that Yudhishtira is constantly inclined towards peace and non-violence as behoves a Brahmana. He desists from action in spite of the need to fight Duryodhana as befits a Kshatriya. Yudhishtira’s character is defined by this supreme sense of inaction which is in part responsible for the Pandavas’ misfortunes. Thus, one understands that Yudhishtira’s strength also becomes his weakness.

Yudhishtira, at the surface level seems to be a simple, straightforward character inclined towards justice and adhering to ‘Dharma’ in every facet of life. But a closer look reveals that he was at times selfish and manipulative as any ordinary human being. He was constantly plagued by doubts and misgivings and one often finds him seeking the advice of several people before taking a decision. He was also human enough to be scared of Karna’s prowess, which could pronounce defeat to them in the eventuality of a war. He was a better listener than a man of action. In the following section one will find instances of these human weaknesses in his character.
The first instance where one gets a glimpse of Yudhishthira’s weaker side is when the Pandavas are in disguise in Ekachakrapura, after they escape an attempt on their life in the Palace of lac. They seek refuge in a Brahmin’s house that provides them with shelter and food. One day Kunti, the Pandavas’ mother finds the Brahmin and his family in extreme grief and asks them the cause of their distress. The Brahmin narrates to her the pity of the villagers of Ekachakrapura as they are tormented by a rakshasa named Bhaka. As he used to enter the village at his convenience and devour the villagers and their cattle, the villagers had come to a pact with him that each day one member from each family would bring the rakshasa food and drink. The rakshasa who agreed to it was in the habit of devouring the person who took the food for him as well. It happened to be the turn of the Brahmin’s family to send one member of them to the rakshasa the following day. Thus, they were grief stricken deciding who would be the one to go. Hearing the pitiful story, and deciding to help the Brahmin and the villagers, Kunti comes forward to send her son Bhima whose physical strength and prowess was matchless. Moreover, she realized that she was indebted to the Brahmin who had provided them with shelter when they were in dire need of it. She convinces the Brahmin to accept the help and ordains Bhima to take the Brahmin’s place in taking the food for the rakshasa. Bhima too willingly accepts and goes to meet the rakshasa. When Yudhishthira learns of this, one is surprised to find him angry and upset at his mothers’ act. He admonishes her for her rash action as she had placed Bhima in a perilous situation. As one expects him to be worried for his brother, he is more worried about losing Bhima’s support and strength in fighting the Kauravas. He bursts forth, “What rash act hast thou done, O mother! … That Bhima, relying on whose arms we sleep happily in the night and hope to recover the kingdom of which we have been deprived by the covetous son of Dhritharashtra, that hero of immeasurable energy, remembering whose prowess Duryodhana and Sakuni do not sleep a wink during the whole night and by whose prowess we were rescued from the palace of lac and various other dangers, that Bhima who caused the death of Purochana, and relying on whose might we regard ourselves as having already slain the sons of Dhritharashtra and acquired the whole earth with all her wealth, upon what
considerations, O mother, hast thou resolved upon abandoning him?" A person who was hitherto hailed as calm, unperturbed and a wise one suddenly reveals the ugly side of his fear and unease about his future. One wonders where his sense of justice and Dharma went when he questions his mother for helping a family which had given them refuge at the most needed moment.

At this juncture one wonders if he is any different at all from people like Duryodhana, Dhritharashtra, Sakuni and the rest. But the slip is only momentary as he quickly gathers his wits with the wise words of Kunti. As she points out to the invincible strength of Bhima which is impossible to be defeated and also to the Dharma of protecting the weak and the needy, he calms down instantly, reposing faith in his mother’s wisdom and Bhima’s prowess. One sees in him the willingness to accept his mistake and correct himself, but there is also a nagging thought if the reconcile is too quick to be natural. Does he actually accept his mistake or does he accept his mother’s decision because he finds no other recourse. At this juncture, it might look as though one is taking too many meanings from a natural reaction of fear and shock that one’s younger brother has been sent to face a rakshas of immense power, but when this incident is juxtaposed with other similar incidents where he manipulates things to gain the utmost benefit, one does see that he had in him the intelligence to turn around things in his favour. Draupadi’s Swayamvar and her marriage to the five Pandavas is one such incident.

When Arjuna wins the hand of Draupadi in the guise of a Brahmin youth, the assembled kings deem it a great insult and challenge Drupada (Draupadi’s father) to fight them. As Arjuna stands in support of Drupada, Bhima joins Arjuna. In all this confusion, Yudhishtira, with Nakula and Sahadeva quietly leaves the place unnoticed. It is obvious that he reaches home before Arjuna and Bhima return with the bride. What follows is an excellent example of his astuteness in perceiving and analyzing the pros and cons of a particular incident and take appropriate decisions. He manipulates and orchestrates an excellent drama as Kunti unwittingly (?) asks the brothers to equally divide amongst

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36 Adi Parva, Section CLXIV, Page 334.
themselves whatever they had earned. It does not need an extraordinary mind to decipher that Yudhishthira who had left Drupada’s court much earlier had informed his mother on the outcome of the swayamvar. Moreover, Kunti cannot be so forgetful to ask her sons to share the alms as they had left for the swayamvar with her blessings. Hence it does not take much time to deduce that Yudhishthira had seen to it that Draupadi becomes the common wife of all the five. He puts his mother in front of him as he knows that his mother’s words will not be denied and also he cannot initiate such an act. He was capable of playing behind the scenes.

As one discusses the shortcomings of Yudhishthira, one should also keep in mind that these were not predominant, unitary traits in him, but a temporary lapse of any mortal being. He is quick to recover himself from his mistake and accepts the censure to mould himself into a better person. The above mentioned instances fall under this category and one cannot label him as a selfish or a manipulative person. But as mentioned earlier, there is one predominant characteristic of his which spelled trouble for himself and his associates, and that is his inability to take timely action against injustice, his weakness to desist from action even at times of crisis.

He practiced non-violence, even in extreme situations which lead the Pandavas to untold misery. For instance, consider the episode of Draupadi’s chastity being enraged by Jayadratha, Duryodhana’s sister Dussala’s husband. Mesmerized by Draupadi’s beauty, Jayadratha forces her into his chariot and carries her away. As the Pandavas come to know about this, they seek him out and rescue Draupadi. Unable to stand against the five invincible warriors, Jayadratha flees. Arjuna and Bhima set out to find him. The enraged Draupadi demands Jayadratha’s life. But Yudhishthira very calmly instructs his brothers, “O thou of mighty arms, remembering (our sister) Dussala and the celebrated Gandhari, thou shouldst not slay the king of Sindhu even though he is wicked!”

Exercising non-violence against a person who has violated his wife’s chastity beats all logic. One wonders at how could a person who is considerate towards the antagonist’s sister fails to understand

37 Vana Parva, Section CCLXX, Page 528.
the grief of his wife. Misplaced compassion has its own serious repercussions. The defeated and insulted Jayadratha seeks divine blessings to defeat the Pandavas. Lord Shiva grants him the boon that, save Arjuna, he will be able to defeat all the other four brothers in battle. At the Kurukshetra when Arjuna is elsewhere fighting the ‘Samsaptakas’, Jayadratha defeats Yudhishthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva and is instrumental in killing Arjuna’s young son Abhimanyu.

Yudhishthira’s inaction remains a characteristic trait in him throughout his life. He remains an indecisive person plagued by self-doubt. Lacking initiative, he does not have the confidence to go ahead with the Rajasuya Yagna. It does not suffice that his official priest Dhaumya, the divine sage Narada, apart from his illustrious brothers try to convince him, he seeks Krishna’s advice too, before hesitatingly accepting to perform the Yagna. Still, he is uncomfortable with Jarasandha’s prowess and is not sure if Bhima and Arjuna can conquer him. It is with such fits and starts that he undertakes any venture. Aware of this trait in him Kunti sends a firm message through Krishna before the Kurukshetra war. Scared that Yudhishthira might back out of the war and concede his rightful kingdom to the Kauravas, she narrates the conversation between princess Vidula and her son. Vidula’s son was of a similar disposition lacking the initiative and motivation to get back the kingdom he had lost. Vidula’s fiery words of inspiration enable him to break free from his stupor and gather the drive to defeat his enemies. The message is loud and clear that Yudhishthira too should remind himself of his foremost duties as a Kshatriya and take up arms against injustice.

Similar to Dhritharashtra, who is caught between a sense of justice and his love for Duryodhana, Yudhishthira too is constantly caught between the desire to lead a peaceful life in pursuit of spiritual knowledge, and his duty as a Kshatriya to take up arms against his enemies and protect his subjects. This often leaves him in unenviable situations where he earns the displeasure of his brothers and wife. But unlike Dhritharashtra who purposely shuts his ears to good counsel, Yudhishthira seeks guidance and advice from the sages which keep him in the right path. Moreover, he admits his mistakes and accepts criticism with a humble bearing. While in the forests Draupadi and Bhima confront him with
stinging words, blaming him for their plight, he quietly accepts the tirade admitting his mistake in going for the game of dice. He admits remorsefully, “I cannot reproach thee for thy torturing me thus by piercing me with thy arrowy words. From my folly alone hath this calamity come against you.” At the same time it is not a meek surrender as he asserts that he will stand by his word on completing the exile before taking on the Kauravas in the rightful manner. He neither looks for excuses to escape blame like Dhritharashtra nor does he justify his actions like Duryodhana. He carries a sensible head on his shoulders approaching any problem with calm and poise. Thus, it goes without saying that he becomes a perfect candidate against whom the theory of emotional intelligence can be analysed.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF YUDHISHTHIRA’S CHARACTER AGAINST THE ABILITY MODEL OF ‘EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE’

Yudhishtira’s character analysis is no different and follows the same pattern as the other two characters analyzed. His emotional perception and emotional facilitation of thought is first explored followed by a study of his emotional understanding and emotional management skills.

6.3.1 EMOTIONAL PERCEPTION AND EMOTIONAL FACILITATION OF THOUGHT

From the beginning, when Yudhishtira steps into Hastinapur with his brothers and mother Kunti, he is quick to perceive the hostile atmosphere and there in every step in his life is cautious having in mind his own vulnerable position as opposed to the power of Duryodhana. An early testimony to Yudhishtira’s emotional perceptional skills is his response to the attempt on Bhima’s life by Duryodhana. With the help of the serpent king, Bhima escapes Duryodhana’s plot to kill him with poison. When he returns to Hastinapur and narrates his misadventure, Yudhishtira is equally angry as his brothers, but exercises caution and restrains his brothers from retaliating. He advises everyone to remain silent.

38 Vana Parva, Section XXXIV, Page 75.
about this issue – “Do thou observe silence on this. Do not speak of this to anyone. From this day, protect ye all one another with care” – as they were at the mercy of Duryodhana, in his palace.

The next instance is when the Pandavas plan a trip to Varanavata on Dhritharashtra’s behest. Duryodhana had planned to burn alive the Pandavas in the palace of lac specially built for them. Vidura, sensing the evil designs of Duryodhana and Dhritharashtra drops hints to Yudhishtira who is quick to perceive Vidura’s code language. With the help of Vidura he conceives a counter plan and thereby himself sets the palace on fire making everybody believe that the Pandavas with their mother Kunti had perished in the fire. While Bhima rages that they should not have accepted to come to Varanavata once they are aware of the plot, Yudhishtira calmly reasons out to him the pros and cons of their vulnerable position. He quietly ascertains that, “If, however, from fear of being burnt, we fly from here, Duryodhana, ambitious of sovereignty will certainly compass our death by means of spies. While we have no rank and power, Duryodhana hath both; while we have no friends and allies, Duryodhana hath both; while we are without wealth, Duryodhana hath at his command, his full treasury.” He also expresses his concern whether the elders of Dhritharashtra’s court – Bhishma or Drona – would openly condemn the powerful Kauravas and support the dependant Pandavas. Thus, he rightly decides to bide the time, consolidate his position before retaliating.

It can be said with conviction that his emotional perceptual skills are extraordinary as he judges people accurately and knows how to get things done in his favour. Two such remarkable incidents are the promise he extracts from Shalya and the information on Bhishma’s and Drona’s defeat from them. When Duryodhana’s character was analysed, it was seen how cunningly he pulled Shalya (Nakula and Sahadeva’s maternal uncle) to support him in the war. Yudhishtira goes a step ahead as he approaches Shalya at a time when he is guilty of extending his support to Duryodhana. Taking full advantage of this

39 Adi Parva, Section CXXIX, Page 270.

40 Adi Parva, Section CXLVIII, Page 310.
guilt in Shalya, he makes Shalya promise that at a crucial juncture when Shalya would be
the charioteer for Karna, he would demoralize Karna by insulting him and praising Arjuna.
He requests Shalya, “There is no doubt that thou wilt act as the charioteer of Karna. Thou
must damp the spirits of Karna then by recounting the praises of Arjuna.”\textsuperscript{41} This incident
gains significance when one comprehends the master craftsman in Yudhishtira. He is
shrewd enough to know that at the crucial battle between Arjuna and Karna, Shalya would
be chosen as the charioteer as his skills equal none but Lord Krishna. Next he knows how
important it was for Karna to prove himself better than Arjuna. Karna was a person who
was plagued by the insecurity of not knowing his biological parents. His entire life was a
torment as he unsuccessfully fights for recognition equivalent to Arjuna. Not only is he
denied this recognition but also jeered and insulted as a person of doubtful precedents in
spite of his extraordinary military skills. Yudhishtira chooses to strike at Karna’s
vulnerable spot to demoralize him and thus ensure victory for the Pandavas. If perceiving
the emotions of others and utilizing the knowledge to the best advantage of oneself is
emotional intelligence, then one may say with certainty that Yudhishtira is one who fits
the bill perfectly.

The information on Bhishma’s and Drona’s Achilles heel is yet another testimony to his
emotional intelligence. As the Kuruksheta war is about to begin with, both the armies
assembled against each other, Yudhishtira drops his weapons and armour and walks alone
towards the Kaurava army. As people are stunned and puzzled over his action and are
waiting with bated breath to know his intention, he walks up to Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and
Shalya seeking their blessings. This is a masterstroke as he knows that the elders’ support
for Duryodhana was not a whole hearted one. He knew that they were bound by their
loyalty to the throne and hence their support to Duryodhana. He also knew that they were
aware of Pandavas’ stake in the kingdom and wanted the Pandavas to inherit their rightful
share, yet were unable to either convince Duryodhana or help the Pandavas. As they are
captured between their loyalty to the throne and love for the Pandavas, Yudhishtira, by

\textsuperscript{41} Udyoga Parva, Section XVIII, Page 31.
seeking their permission and blessings to face them in the battle, tilts the cart in his favour. Obviously appeased and gratified with the respect shown by Yudhishtira, they openly declare that, “If, O lord of the earth, thou hadst not, in this battle come to me thus, I would have, O great king, cursed thee, O Bharata, for bringing about thy defeat. I am gratified (with thee), O son. Do battle and obtain victory, O son of Pandu …”42 Further, each of them grants him a boon of his desire. Yudhishtira cleverly asks Bhishma and Drona the means of defeating them, reminds Shalya of his promise to demoralize Karna and gets the blessings of Kripa to emerge victorious. One cannot but wonder at the audacity of Yudhishtira in getting information from the horse’s mouth itself. The place and time he chooses to seek the blessings is also crucial. He places the elders in a spot where they can neither deny him nor ignore him. The entire act is so dramatic and Yudhishtira benefits the most from it. He not only assesses people accurately, but is also adept at getting what he wants from them.

Even as he perceives others’ emotions and thought processes, he is not ignorant of his own emotions. He openly declares his fear for Karna at several junctures. Right from the day Karna steps into the arena, challenging Arjuna to fight with him, Yudhishtira identifies a formidable foe in him. Karna’s military skills terrified Yudhishtira as he “… was impressed with the belief that there was no warrior on earth like unto Karna.”43 This knowledge drives him to be cautious against war, and also finding means of strengthening themselves in the eventuality of war. This is the foremost reason why he sends Arjuna in search of divine weapons. While in exile, when Bhima and Draupadi are impatient and confront Yudhishtira in seeking out vengeance, he quietly tells them that the thirteen year period should not be considered a curse but utilized to strengthen themselves for the great war. He expresses his concern and fear over the great warriors in Duryodhana’s side – Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Duryodhana himself and Karna. His fear for Karna seems greater as he exclaims, “O Vrikodara, I cannot sleep thinking of the lightness of hand of that Suta’s

42 Bhishma Parva, section XLIII, Page 100.

43 Adi Parva, Section CXXXIX, Page 290.
son, who, I regard, is the foremost of all wielders of the bow." But this fear propels him into positive actions as he summons Arjuna and commands him to acquire divine weapons from Indra, the lord of celestials. He instructs Arjuna, “… O bull of Bharata race, devote thyself to fierce asceticism. … O Dhananjaya, all celestial weapons are with Indra. The celestials, from the fear of Vritra, imparted at the time all their might to Sakra. Gathered together in one place, thou wilt obtain all weapons. Go thou unto Sakra, he will give thee all his weapons.” Thus, one sees that Yudhishthira was aware of his emotions and this knowledge motivated him to constructive decisions. This is in direct contrast to Duryodhana who proceeded to justify his emotions and act accordingly, and Dhritharashtra who either tried to conceal his emotions or lay the blame on others for his actions. It also reveals the fact that Yudhishthira was not controlled by his emotions; rather he was the one in the driver’s seat.

One more instance that stands proof of Yudhishthira’s emotional perception is the episode of Draupadi’s marriage to all the five Pandavas. Though at the surface level, it might seem manipulative, when the larger picture emerges – that of Pandavas’ unity, one does find it easy to acknowledge Yudhishthira’s political shrewdness. Of course the argument arises whether it is appreciable to ignore the interests of Draupadi while ensuring better prospects for the Pandavas. But one has also to keep in mind the precarious situation of the Pandavas whose life was in constant threat from the Kauravas. At any cost, they had to gather support and power to shield themselves from Duryodhana, and Drupada would be a powerful ally. Further, they had to remain united to take on the forces of the Kauravas. Yudhishthira had to ensure that there wouldn’t be any dissention among the Pandavas regarding Draupadi – as he sees the eagerness in all their eyes when looking at Draupadi. “As the ravishing beauty of Panchali who had been modeled by the Creator himself, was superior to that all other women on earth, …”, the Pandavas looked at Draupadi, and “… the God of Desire

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44 Vana Parva, Section XXXVI, Page 79.

45 Vana Parva, Section XXXVII, Page 91.
invaded their hearts and continued to crush all their senses.”

Thus, Yudhishthira instantly declares, “The auspicious Draupadi will be the common wife of us all.” Not only did Yudhishthira predict dissention among the brothers on Draupadi’s pretext, he also realized the complications that would arise if Draupadi wedded Arjuna alone. What if Drupada extended his support to Arjuna alone? What would be the position of the other brothers in that case? As Yudhishthira did not want even a remote chance of Arjuna deserting the brothers, he takes a firm step in eliminating the problem even before it arises. Thus Yudhishthira’s decision to make Draupadi the common wife of all the five brothers can be seen as an excellent example of his emotional perceptional skills.

Moving on to the next level, if emotional facilitation of thought can be understood as emotions helping in prioritizing thinking (Mandler, 1975) or allowing people to be better decision makers (Lyubomirsky et. al., 2005), then Yudhishthira can be classified as one who was adept in this skill as well. In all the above discussed instances, one sees not only his skills of emotional perception, but also his talent in emotional facilitation of thought. It can be seen that he puts his knowledge of his own and others’ emotions to the best use and in a positive way as well. He thinks positively to find a favourable course of action that would benefit him the best. When the question arises that he did not take Draupadi’s consent in marrying the five brothers, it should be remembered that neither did Draupadi declare her unwillingness. It cannot be argued that she was afraid or intimidated nor was she a timid person. Someone who could reject Karna in the open court by insulting him openly is not a mark of diffidence. Thus, it can be said confidently that Yudhishthira was very good at perceiving his own and others’ emotions, think constructively thus enabling himself and others towards situations that are favourable to him.

One more incident can be discussed before deciding Yudhishthira’s skill at using his emotional knowledge to think in a constructive manner. The game of dice which becomes the culminating factor in pushing the Kauravas and the Pandavas into the Kurukshetra war,

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46 Adi Parva, Section CLXLIII, Page 381.

47 Adi Parva, Section CLXLIII, Page 381.
also stands testimony to Yudhishthira’s astuteness even in the most trying situations. He looks for factors that would favour him even in hopeless situations like the aftermath of the game of dice. He had pathetically lost to Duryodhana shamelessly staking his brothers, himself and Draupadi. The court is aghast at Yudhishthira’s action of staking and losing his wife which was unheard of. The Kauravas never to miss a chance to take full advantage of this situation to deride, insult and put down the Pandavas. Duryodhana summons one of his attendants to drag Draupadi to the court as she is now the slave of the Kauravas. It is at such a volatile situation with the Pandavas hanging their heads down in shame, the Kauravas gleefully awaiting to drag and insult Draupadi in full view of the court that Yudhishthira quietly sends a messenger to Draupadi. Knowing fully well the intentions of Duryodhana, he “… sent a messenger unto Draupadi, directing that although she was attired in one piece of cloth with her navel itself exposed, in consequence of her season being come, she should come before her father-in-law weeping bitterly.”

Yudhishthira’s intentions are quite clear. As the court is divided in their opinion whether Draupadi was actually won or not, Yudhishthira wants to orchestrate a drama that would divert people’s attention from his own shameful act to condemning the Kauravas. He knew that the Kauravas would exceed their limits in attempting to insult the Pandavas and at that juncture if Draupadi would come to the court in her pitiable state, there was no doubt that the court would turn its ire on the Kauravas and pity the predicament of the Pandavas. That is exactly what happens as the Kauravas attempt to disrobe Draupadi and the court aghast with the appalling behaviour of Duryodhana and his aides, and condemns them severely. It seals Duryodhana’s image as a tyrant and the Pandavas emerge as virtuous and honorable. In a flash Yudhishthira’s dishonorable act of staking his wife is pushed to the background and Duryodhana’s tyranny alone stands imprinted in everyone’s mind. One cannot help being awestruck with Yudhishthira’s shrewdness in turning the table on the opponents moving on from a hopeless situation to an advantageous position. It does not need an extraordinary mind to attribute this quality of his to his skill in assessing and understanding the emotions.

48 Sabha Parva, Section LXVI, Page 127.
in himself and others. In turn, this awareness leads him to think better and thus steers even the most difficult situations to advantageous ones.

The act of turning the public’s opinion in his favour can also be seen as his skill in emotional understanding, the third level in the ladder of emotional intelligence skills. Yudhishthira understood that the people of Hastinapur would never sanction a public insult of their beloved princess Draupadi and precisely calculates that their sense of disappointment in Yudhishthira would turn to wrath against Duryodhana. The next section discusses in detail his talent in emotional understanding and emotional management skills.

6.3.2 EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

Emotional understanding is nothing but understanding how different emotions combine, progress and move from one to another (Brackett and Salovey, 2006). There might not be incidents that explicitly show this ability of Yudhishtira in comprehending the transit of one emotion into another, but in such incidents as Draupadi’s wedding and Shalya’s promise one sees this ability hidden and implicit. In sanctioning Draupadi’s marriage to the Pandavas he understood that the adoration the brothers had for Draupadi had the potential to change into hatred and jealousy for each other, in Shalya’s case he knew that the deep sense of remorse and guilt would propel Shalya into sanctioning favours that would not have been possible in normal circumstances. In asking Draupadi to come to Dhritharashtra’s court clothed in a single garment lamenting and wailing, is his knowledge that the sense of shock and displeasure of the people in gambling away his wife would give way to pity and sympathy. Not only does he accurately understand the transition of these emotions, but he also realizes their potential and utilises it to the maximum.

It is obvious that Yudhishtira was extraordinarily adept at managing his emotions. The instances of his encounter with the Yaksha and Nahusha are good examples as both are incidents where his brothers’ lives were at stake. When the Yaksha challenges him, all his four brothers were lying dead; yet, Yudhishthira confronts the intriguing questions with poise and confidence. He doesn’t falter anywhere and it is as though the fate of his brothers had no effect on him. Furthermore, he remains unperturbed by the fact that his own life was
in peril if he gives a wrong answer to the Yaksha’s questions. Even at such an unstable and
uncertain situation he is able to remain calm. Equally precarious was the incident with
Nahusha. Bhima’s life was at stake and even one wrong answer would end his life. Yet one
sees Yudhishthira calmly answering Nahusha’s questions. What’s more, he even clarifies
his own doubts on certain challenging concepts of Dharma and the conversation ensues
with such ease and comfort as though it was a light hearted chat at a coffee table. Though
these two incidents firmly establish Yudhishthira’s control over his emotions, one more
eample would help understand his emotional management skills in a better light.

After successfully completing the twelve year period of exile in the forests, the Pandavas
choose King Virata’s palace as the ideal place to spend the thirteenth year incognito.
Yudhishthira dons the role of Kanka, one who keeps company with the king and playing
the game of dice to entertain him, Draupadi takes on the role of a maidservant to the queen.
Bhima takes to the kitchen. The queen’s brother Kichaka was a powerful person and it was
he who was ruling the kingdom. King Virata was entirely under his mercy. It so happens
that Kichaka falls for Draupadi’s beauty and commands her sister to send her maid to his
chambers. Poor Draupadi is forced to meet Kichaka in his apartments where he tries to
enrage her modesty. Draupadi resists his advances and runs into the open court where
Yudhishthira was playing dice with the king. “And while she was running with all her
speed, Kichaka (who followed her) seizing her by the hair, and bringing her down on the
ground, kicked her in the very presence of the king.”\(^{49}\) Bhima is infuriated by this act of
Kichaka and is ready to crush him to death, when Yudhishthira sensing his brother’s wrath
signals him to remain calm, and diverts him, “Lookest thou, O cook, for trees for fuel. If
thou art in need of faggots, then go out and fell trees.”\(^{50}\) One cannot help but wonder at
Yudhishthira’s ability in keeping his emotions in a tight check even as his wife is openly
abused and insulted. The foremost thought in his mind was to protect themselves from
being discovered by the Kauravas and banned for another thirteen years of exile. He

\(^{49}\) Virata Parva, Section XVI, Page 28.

\(^{50}\) Virata Parva, Section XVI, Page 28.
advices Draupadi to retire to the inner apartments meant for the ladies saying that this was not the right time to retaliate. It is with cold resolve that he says, “The wives of heroes bear affliction for the sake of their husbands, and undergoing toil in ministering unto their lords, they at last attain to region where their husbands may go. Thy Gandharva husbands, effulgent as the sun, do not, I imagine, consider this as an occasion for manifesting their wrath, inasmuch as they do not rush to thy aid. O Sairindhri, thou art ignorant of the timeliness of things, and it is for this that thou weepest as an actress, besides interrupting the play of dice in Matsya’s court. Retire, O Sairindhri; the Gandharvas will do what is agreeable to thee.”

One even wonders if he is capable of any feeling. At a time when his wife was abused and insulted in full view of the court he remains unperturbed. He does not want Bhima to retaliate as it would lead to their identities being revealed. Thus he exercises restraint and hints to help at a later stage when the time is conducive. But the entire episode brings to the fore Yudhishtira’s extraordinary skills in managing his emotions. In fact, in the entire epic, Yudhishtira probably loses his control only on the following three occasions.

- when he confronts Kunti in sending Bhima to face the rakshas Bhaka.
- when he accuses Arjuna of not killing Karna and
- when he learns of the secret of Karna’s birth.

In these three episodes, the second one where he blames Arjuna for not defeating and killing Karna gains significance as it indirectly throws light on his emotional management skills.

The emotional outburst and the stinging accusation he places against Arjuna, stands evidence to the extent of his fear for Karna. Facing a humiliating defeat at the hands of Karna, Yudhishtira retires to the camp. Meanwhile, at the battlefield Arjuna is worried about not seeing Yudhishtira and decides to go in search of him. As Arjuna finds Yudhishtira at the camp and is relieved to find him safe, Yudhishtira smarting under

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51 Virata Parva, Section XVI, Page 29.
Karna’s taunts and the embarrassing defeat concludes that Arjuna was coming to him with the news of Karna’s defeat. The glint in his eye is unmistakable as he embraces Arjuna and exclaims, “I see that without being wounded yourselves, you two, – his foes, – have slain the mighty car-warrior Karna.”52 It is an emotional outburst as he repeatedly asks Arjuna to confirm that Karna had actually been defeated and to describe the manner in which Karna was slain. ‘Have you really slain him’ is the refrain which reveals the extent of his fear and hatred towards Karna. No wonder he explodes when Arjuna explains that he had not killed Karna, but had come to check on Yudhishthira’s safety. Carried away by anger, disappointment and grief, he proceeds to insult Arjuna as none could have. Losing his senses, he challenges Arjuna to give away his Gandiva (the celestial bow) to a more deserving person. Gandiva was not just a bow, but Arjuna’s pride, his identity. It was a part of him and one cannot imagine Arjuna without the Gandiva. The fact that he had vowed to kill anyone insulting the Gandiva shows the extent of his respect and attachment to the divine bow. If Yudhishthira could say something as stinging as handing over the bow to another person, one can understand the extent of his emotions or rather his loss of control over his emotions. What follows is an ugly episode of brothers drawing their swords against each other which fortunately ends with a return of goodwill and affection with the timely intervention of Krishna. Nevertheless, the strong display of emotions betrays the depth of Yudhishthira’s feelings against Karna. But, as mentioned earlier, this episode in a roundabout way reveals Yudhishthira’s emotional management skills. It is not until this episode does anyone actually understand the intensity of his fear and loathing for Karna, which in turn throws light on how well he had hitherto managed to keep his emotions in check.

6.4 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

From the above analysis, it becomes evident that Yudhishthira’s skill of emotional perception was excellent which in turn sharpened his thought process. His emotional understanding was on par with the rest of his skills which eventually helped him in

52 Karna Parva, Section LXV, Page 170.
effective management of emotions. The questions that were raised at the beginning of the research strived to find out whether emotional intelligence helped in managing stress, and fostering good relationships with fellow humans, whether a role model could be identified for the common man and whether there was a chance of emotional intelligence being used negatively. With Yudhishtira’s character analysis, it becomes evident that emotional intelligence skills enable a person to manage stress and maintain a cordial relationship with everyone around. His skills help him have a sensible, cool head on his shoulders at even the most anxious moments-

E.g. the Yaksha Prasna and the conversation with Nahusha.

One does not find him overtly stressed or anxious at any point of time. The relationship he enjoys with even those on the side of Kauravas is commendable. His emotional intelligence also helps him in effective problem solving as one sees the various instances where Yudhishtira puts his emotional intelligence skills to find a beneficial solution to the most difficult problems. For the question whether emotional intelligence can be used negatively, one does not find any instances with Yudhishtira as he uses his skills in a positive and constructive manner. So, can Yudhishtira be identified as a role model for an emotionally intelligent person? The following section analyses and answers this question.

When the sorceress in Divakaruni’s ‘The Palace of Illusions’ (2008) teaches Draupadi to “close off from the sorrow of others” so that she might survive, one wonders what a weird lesson to be taught a princess. But as one reads Yudhishtira’s life, one finds that this is exactly what Yudhishtira does on many occasions. It came easy to shut himself from the sufferings of the others so that he can survive and succeed. He deliberately closed himself from any feeling towards the plight of Draupadi in several occasions and the misery of his brothers whenever the need arose. As it is but a thin line that divides emotional intelligence and insensitivity towards people, it is uncomfortable to note that Yudhishtira crosses the line on quite a few occasions. When he cautions his brothers not to react to Duryodhana’s taunts it is emotional management, but one feels that it crosses the line towards insensitivity when he advises his brothers to let Jayadratha go unpunished. When he coldly ignores
Draupadi and stops Bhima too from helping her when she is physically abused by Kichaka, one cannot help condemning him strongly for his selfishness. He strictly follows the rules of Dharma, but many a times at the cost of others’ misery. He accepts the challenge for a game of dice against the advice of his brothers and Vidura. He waxes eloquent on the duty of a king to accept such an invitation. He also points out to his vow that he will not refuse anything to anyone lest it will lead to discontent paving way to a terrible war. He is adamant that it was his duty to stand by his word. Here too he reveals himself as a selfish person who was more worried about his word of honour than the ground realities as it was an open secret that none can defeat Sakuni in a game of dice. While he focuses only on his duty and his responsibility as a King, he conveniently chooses to ignore his duty as a brother or a husband. Moreover, what right has he got to jeopardize the interests of his subjects as he willingly and knowingly walks into the trap laid by Duryodhana. Having lost his kingdom not once, but twice, he proposes patience to his wife and brothers and makes them wait for thirteen long years before avenging their insults. Even then, if not for Duryodhana’s adamancy, he would have settled for just five villages or even five houses. In all these instances Yudhishtira emerges as a person adamantly goes ahead with his decisions brushing aside others’ opinions and feelings. For someone who constantly sought the advice of others in deciding even the most mundane things, it sounds an aberrant that he ignores others’ wishes in crucial decisions.

Furthermore, for a person who advocated peace and harmony he does not show any remorse or grief in fighting his kith and kin once the war was on. He does not falter like Arjuna on seeing his own flesh and blood, his grandsire and guru standing against him. In fact, he approaches them with a cold resolve and extracts information on their downfall even from them. There is no second thought in him as he sends Abhimanyu, Arjuna’s young son to break the Chakravyuha. It was his lie that Drona’s son Aswatthama was dead that brings about the gory death of Drona. Yet there is no pain or remorse in him. It is with a clinical precision that he executes what was supposed to be his duty. At the Swargarohana Parva when the Pandavas along with Draupadi leave this mortal world to the heavens treading the mountainous terrains of the Himalayas, one is appalled as he moves along.
without even a turn as his beloved wife and brothers fall to death one by one. Not for a moment does he stop or wait to alleviate their pain, but walks forward ignoring their cries for help. He reasons out that it is their own actions that pushed them to their fate, but one expects him to at least stop for a moment to soothe their pain instead of walking on without any emotion.

Thus, it can be seen that though Yudhishtira had all the skills of an emotionally intelligent person, many a time he displayed insensitivity towards others’ feelings and that strongly disqualifies him as a suitable candidate for a role model. Emotional management is the skill to connect or disconnect to a particular emotion at any given time. Yudhishtira is able to disconnect from his emotions, but is unable to emote at the right time for the right need.

To sum up, it can be said that Yudhishtira had all the skills of an emotionally intelligent person as proposed by Mayer and Salovey, but he also reveals that an emotionally intelligent person can be insensitive if he does not balance between awareness and management of emotions. Yudhishtira’s awareness of emotions in himself and others and his management of his emotions have only led him to decisions which had not considered the sensitivities of others. In his eagerness not to antagonize Duryodhana and to avoid war, he crushes his and his brothers’ good fortunes.