

6. Mahabharatha Contains Many Valuable Lessons For Us

Do you know why you have been given your hands? They have not been given to you so that you may continually feed your mouth with those hands. They have been given to you so that you may perform *puja* with flowers to the Lord.

Students!

It is not easy or possible for us to understand the level at which *Paramatma* functions because we are at a human level. If we recognise that the level at which divinity operates is different from, and higher than, the ordinary human level at which we all operate, there is a possibility of raising ourselves to a level in which we can try and understand divinity.

For doing any kind of work in this world, there should be some order and discipline. Any work that you may do without discipline will not yield good results. In order to get this limitation in the worldly plane, some discipline is necessary. That which rules the world is the rule of law. What is required to control oneself and put oneself under the rule of law, is discipline. This control of oneself is like *thapas*. A life, in which there is no discipline and control, will fail and fall one day or the other. If you put yourself on the wrong side of *thapas* which is “*pata*,” it means that you are going to fall. One must recognise the truth that there should be controls on, and limits to, human nature.

The five elements that constitute the earth are also controlled by certain laws. Even the infinite ocean moves under certain laws and regulations. In the context of the whole world, man’s life is only a part. Therefore, man’s life has to be regulated. Whether it is for *prema*, for hatred, or for anger, some regulation is necessary. Such regulation has been shown to us, as an example, by Sri Krishna in his lifetime. It has become the tradition of our country to accept the stories of the *Mahabharatha* as ideal examples. Since this kind of respect and tradition has come to us from the time of the *Vedas*, our citizens are always anxious to listen to such stories and welcome an opportunity to do so. It is also very necessary for us

to accept and study the human side of such *Avatars*, and the stories about them, and implement them.

That day was the *Karthika Bahula Triodasi*. The sacred land of Kurukshetra was close to Panipat. In this sacred land of Kurukshetra, the armies of the Kauravas were lined up for battle. In the front of the army and leading it was a white-turbaned, lion-like man sitting in a white chariot drawn by white horses. This aged, lion-like man was Bhishma.

On the opposite side, the army of the Pandavas was also lined up for battle, and Bheema was leading that army. This aged Bhishma had performed three hundred *Aswamedha Yagas*. The Pandavas were filled with fear when they saw such a powerful person leading the armies. They expected some tragedy to befall them. On the one hand, the roaring battle sounds from the conches were being heard. The horses were neighing and the elephants were trumpeting loudly. The flags symbolising the chariots of each army were being flown. The weapons of each army were shining brightly.

In this situation, as if coming from nowhere, a chariot came and stood in the centre of the battle. It appeared that in that chariot there was one individual who was very despondent and discouraged. There was another person who was giving him courage and patting

him on the back. Those two were Arjuna and Krishna, the best of men and the best of gods, respectively. These two represented the deserving human of Arjuna and the supreme *Avatar* of Krishna.

We should notice here that the *Avatar* has descended from his high pedestal to the level of the best of human beings who deserved to be taught, and the *Avatar* was teaching and giving the necessary encouragement to the human being. After a few moments, Krishna descended from his chariot and began moving towards the chariot of Dharmaraja. It is not known what Krishna told Dharmaraja at that time, but it could be seen that Dharmaraja removed his armour and weapons and started walking with folded hands towards the Kauravas.

When the Kauravas saw this scene, they began to shout loudly. They thought that Dharmaraja was coming to surrender and seek peace on behalf of the Pandavas. Arjuna and Bheema, who saw this situation, were also very perturbed. The thought which Dharmaraja had and the noble feelings which made him undertake this task were not understood by Arjuna and Bheema. In the next few minutes, Krishna came and signalled to Arjuna and Bheema that they should also follow their brother.

In spite of the confusion and excitement in their own minds, Arjuna and Bheema obeyed the injunctions of the Lord and followed their brother. Dharmaraja, followed by his brothers, went along to Bhishma. When Bhishma looked at the brothers, he understood what was in their minds, and he knew the noble ideas that were passing in the mind of the eldest brother, Dharmaraja, and was praising Dharmaraja within himself.

They went close to Bhishma, touched his feet, addressed him as grandfather, and said, “Ever since we lost our father, you have looked after us and brought us up; but today, unfortunately, we have to fight with you. Please give us permission for this battle.” Bhishma’s heart was very much moved when he saw that even under those terrifying battle conditions, Dharmaraja was willing to do his duty by *dharma* and came all the way to seek his permission.

Bhishma embraced Dharmaraja and said, “Even in the battlefield, you are observing *dharma* and this gives me great pleasure. You will be victorious in this battle because you are acting according to *Dharma*. *Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*. Those who protect *dharma* will in turn be protected by *dharma*. You are protecting *dharma* and so *dharma* will protect you and victory will be yours.”

Immediately after that, Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva also sought the blessings of Bhishma. They approached Dronacharya and touched his feet and said, “You are the guru and we are the students. Unfortunately, today such bad times have come that disciples have to fight with the teacher. In such a situation we are begging you to bless us.” Dronacharya recognised the right conduct in this, and he also embraced them and blessed them towards victory. Such regulatory conduct was shown by Krishna; and this example makes us wonder if we, as human beings, are observing any rules and code of conduct.

Why should the all-powerful and all-knowing Krishna undergo all these troubles and tribulations? Did he do all this for himself with a selfish motive? All this was done for someone else and in the interest of promotion of peace. He underwent all these troubles and tribulations in order to help and support those who sought his grace and support. As a result of the love which God has for his devotees, God has been going through several kinds of troubles for their sake. Moreover, while he taught the *Gita* to Arjuna, there were several occasions when Arjuna had doubts; and there were situations when Arjuna became despondent. Krishna was undertaking this *yoga* in order to enable Arjuna, the human, to overcome the obstacles that were

coming in his way, and to take courage and move forward.

We generally think that the *Gita* consists of certain teachings which will help us and teach us renunciation and take us along the spiritual path. This is not the correct aspect. We should recognise that the *Gita* gives us teachings which will help us to run our daily lives and meet the situations which we come across.

Krishna established the truth that our spiritual life and our daily worldly life are not two distinct compartments. He demonstrated that our daily life is something intimately connected with spiritual life. He showed the need for harmony and connection between man's thoughts, words, and deeds. He proclaimed that in order that man may have good thoughts, his mind is very important. In order that he may communicate these thoughts to the world, his word is very important. In order to put this into action, his deeds are equally important.

Many people argue and say that God could do anything, and they say that God should have avoided the war by his own *Sankalpa* (Will). Here, we must notice that Krishna was not willing to use his divine strength for the benefit of mankind directly. He was living as human beings do, and he wanted to use the

normal human methods by which to control various actions. There are thousands of people in the world who are willing to demonstrate these spiritual aspects in a manner which is quite easy to understand. There are great people who will help you to follow the essence of the *Vedas* in an easy manner. Were there not kings who acquired wealth and ruled over kingdoms? Where have all those kings and kingdoms gone now? What is it that they have taught to the world? Today also, we have a large number of people who preach and say that there are short cuts to teach the essence of the *Vedas*, but there are very few people who put them into practice in their lives.

All these individuals and the lessons that they teach are merely like guideposts. The best that a guidepost can do is to tell you that if you travel in that way, you will reach such and such a destination; and if you travel along another path, you will reach another destination; but the actual ups and downs along a particular path will be understood only by the people who undertake the journey. The guidepost cannot tell you anything about the ups and downs. One can speak about a crore of things, but one cannot put even one of them into practice by merely speaking. You should put into practice what you say and set an example. You should be prepared fully to put into practice what you say and hear.

The situation in the country is not something which you do not know. Today, hatred, injustice, and fear have filled all aspects of our lives, and the young students are the only people who can remove those evils. You have the capacity to do this. You should make an attempt to understand the sacred ideals that are contained in our sacred texts. The spirit of sacrifice which pervaded the lives of the citizens of this country at all times is contained in the blood flowing in you. In such a sacred country, the Pandavas have led lives in a manner which are ideal examples. They were persons who were the leaders in all aspects—the political, ethical, moral, and all other aspects.

On one occasion when Dharmaraja, Arjuna, Bheema, and others were in some other place in the battlefield, Abhimanyu was lured into the *padmavyuha* (Labyrinth of the lotus shape). His mother cautioned him by saying that the situation at this time was very precarious. The times were not very good for them: his wife was in the family way, his uncle Krishna was not present. He was only being lured into the battle, and he should think twice before going into the battle. When the mother was thus entreating him not to go into the battle, Abhimanyu, because of his brave family traditions and because of the sacrificing spirit in his blood, was begging his mother to let him go. He told his mother,

“Instead of telling me to be a lion and jump into the battlefield, you are trying to prevent me from going there.”

The mother, herself, was a great heroine, and she realised the greatness in Abhimanyu’s heroism. She thought that if she let him go forward, it was bad; and if she stopped him, it was also bad. She was unable to decide between the two evils. This was the situation in which she found herself. In this unfortunate situation, you can imagine what the people of today would have done. They would have cursed God and cried out, “Oh, cruel God, why did you put my son in such a situation!” But this heroic mother was blessing her son by saying that he should go and secure victory on the battlefield. The kind of blessing which she gave her son was an unparalleled one. We should ask ourselves if any mother would give a blessing like that these days.

Every part of the *Mahabharatha* is such that it has an ideal lesson for us. The ideals demonstrated by the Pandavas and taught by Krishna are very essential for the people of our country even today. As I explained yesterday, when Krishna went to negotiate peace and was asked by Duryodhana to accept his hospitality, he said that as he had come on a mission; he had no right to accept the hospitality till the mission was completed.

Until the peace negotiations were completed, he did not want to accept the hospitality offered by Duryodhana; and he went and stayed in Vidura's house. Because such rules of conduct were being observed in those days in the matter of political negotiations, they were always of a very high order. Today, if ambassadors come from other countries, they are driven to the Raj Bhavan straight from the airport; and even before the negotiations begin, a dinner is arranged and other types of hospitality is given to the visitor. In the conditions that are existing today, if we accept and put into practice the ideals that were demonstrated in the *Mahabharatha*, our country will certainly prosper. We are thinking and taking the view that the *Mahabharatha* simply consists of people who were warmongers. This is not correct.

The *Mahabharatha* is an ideal text for people who are peace lovers. The *leelas* and the stories that we learn from the *Bhagavatha* are not as important as the lessons and morals that we learn from the *Mahabharatha*. So long as we are human beings, and have to live as human beings, we cannot understand and follow the actions of divinity. We have to accept and follow the actions done by God as a human being. When the chariot was kept between the two armies, Arjuna begged of the Lord, in many ways, for enlightenment. He accepted that all that was said by

Krishna was truth and was backed by what had been said in the *Sastras*. Because Arjuna was an ordinary human being, he could not understand Krishna's divinity; and he prayed that he be given the strength to understand the potency of what was told to him. He requested that the great divine vision of Krishna be shown to him. He also requested that the weaknesses that were in his mind and body be removed. He requested that mercy may be shown to an ordinary human being like him and that he might be elevated. In all humility and in a devoted way, he was begging Krishna.

Arjuna's anxiety and sincerity were noticed by Krishna; and convinced of his devotion, he told Arjuna that his divine form could not be perceived by the ordinary eyes; and he touched his forehead and said that the eye of Wisdom, which he could give, would enable him to perceive the Lord. By this touch of Krishna, the Wisdom eye had entered Arjuna. This gift had come only through grace and did not come by right. Thus, Krishna had given this gift to Arjuna as a Grace.

Through this eye of Wisdom, Arjuna realised that the entire creation was contained in the divine vision. He realised that all living beings—human as well as

animal and insect—were part of this vision. He realised that Krishna was responsible for all creation. He perceived that Krishna was present in every minute particle. Arjuna closed his eyes and the divine vision was there in all directions. He then addressed Krishna and said that he did not have the strength to bear that divine vision any longer and said that he had seen his greatness and his divine strength.

Arjuna prostrated before Krishna and was overwhelmed and began singing in ecstasy and said, “How can I know you Krishna? You are smaller than the smallest thing in this world, and you are greater than the greatest thing in this world. You are the very basis of the eighty-four lakhs of kinds of *jivas* in this world. You are infinitely great, and you cannot be compared even with the greatest thing in this world, and you are the source of everything that can be seen. I now surrender to you and will do whatever you ask me to do without any question.”

An *Avatar* is capable of all things at all times, yet the *Avatar* will not undertake to demonstrate his powers at all times. An *Avatar* will undertake to demonstrate such powers when exceptional circumstances demand it, and will shed the grace on a deserving person only. Although such *Avatars* were present in our country for

thousands of years, and although our people were exposed to such *Avatars*, they have not fully understood all the aspects of such an *Avatar*.

We should examine the reason why the formless Lord takes the form of a human being and comes into the midst of humans. This formless being comes in the form of a human being so that he may mix with the human beings and set up examples and ideals for human beings and convey to them all aspects which they should learn. Many people ask very innocently and ignorantly why an *Avatar*, who possesses all powers, should subject himself to all troubles; and why should it tolerate hunger and suffering all around. An *Avatar* who has all the powers should be able to remove all such suffering in one moment. If there is any meaning in such a question, why should an *Avatar* come in human form at all? The *Avatar* can remain as a formless divinity and do all these things from that position itself. In time, and under certain conditions and environment, whatever has to be done must be done and such acts, at a human level, have to be performed.

Certain things are essential for remedial action and without doing those things, to expect an *Avatar* to simply remove all suffering is a very foolish thing. First of all, you should make an attempt to make good

use of the mental and physical strengths that have been given to you. When you are so lazy as not to use the mental and physical strengths that have been given to you, what are you going to do with divine strengths? Suppose that you have been given food and drink by the divine grace and strength of the Lord. Because God has given you enough food on your plate, for you to think that God has also to help you in transferring this food to your stomach is a very lazy idea. For taking the food to your stomach, God has given you hands, a palate, and a mouth. You should make good use of them. If you are not able to use the organs that have been given to you, and if you are not able to use the mind and mental strength that have been given to you, it is better to die than to live in that condition. That we may learn to make good use of our mental and physical strengths and other organs, God comes in human form to demonstrate how these may be used.

The essential quality of an *Avatar* is to teach you how to make good and proper use of your thought, word, and deed. Depending on the conditions in the country and the environment in the country, the *Avatar* comes to teach you and show you the right use of all your organs. In Bharath, a country which is like heaven on earth, so that you may be able to make good use of the facilities and faculties that have been given to you,

I am hoping that the sacred texts of the *Bhagavatha* and *Mahabharatha* will provide good examples.

Divya Atma Swarupas, Boys and Girls,

To some extent you should make an attempt to master your sensory organs and not become a slave to them. I am hoping that by mastering your sensory organs, you will become ideal citizens and representatives of our ancient culture. The ideals that have been demonstrated to us in the *Mahabharatha*, and the close relationships between the Pandavas and Krishna that have become evident from this sacred text, and the lessons from such a relationship must be understood by us and put into practice in our daily lives. The *Mahabharatha* is not an ordinary text. In fact, it has come to be known as the fifth *Veda*.

Every individual character in the *Mahabharatha* has some powers which are attributed to God. They are not people who are born like other ordinary people. As they are not just ordinary people, every act that they perform is an exemplary act. They are individuals with superhuman powers, and so whatever they had done should be taken as an ideal act. That text has, in the context, been compared with the *Vedas*. As days go on, you will hear more stories from the *Mahabharatha*, and you will learn how Krishna had set aside his divinity,

and as a human being, taught how human beings should behave and conduct themselves. I am hoping and blessing you that you will take these lessons and put them into practice and develop yourselves into useful and worthy citizens of our country.