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RETHINKING ON MAHABHARATA: MAHABHARATA AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Mahabharata is considered as the largest epic of the world. It's said that whatever is not there in Mahabharata is not anywhere else. So, we will try to find out some intricate management messages that are relevant even today. Our main focus would be the Great War that changed the course of the Third Age of Man. The essence of Mahabharata is not in religion or war but in time. The Hindu literature classifies Mahabharata as history, not history but account of life as it was, is and always will be'. From this timeless tale one can account for everything in the world today like some of these management principles.

KEYWORDS

Mahabharata, War, History, Management principle, Literature.

1. BACKGROUND**ANDAVAS**

Exiled for 13 years, have no kingdom. Their main strength both in terms of political and financial power depends on their friends and relatives: The Pancalas, The Yadavas, The Magadhas and The Chedis.

KAURAVAS

In power for 13 years. Duryodhan has been a benevolent king. There no guarantee that the Subjects really miss the Pandavas. Not only have they the wealth and power of Hastinapur, but also that of Indraprastha, the kingdom that the Pandvas had taken such labors to build and which had surpassed the Hastina of old in all degrees. Karna had gone on a nation-wide conquering on behalf of Duryodhana. They are the national sovereigns

2. INSPIRATION**PANDAVAS**

"We fight over a Kingdom, as dogs over a piece of meat." - Yudhisthira

The Pandavas had been humiliated, their wife insulted, their kingdom taken. But...still they wanted to avoid the War. The three elder Pandavas were against the War. They even went as far as making an offer that they will stop the War in exchange of 5 villages.

KAURAVAS

"Without war, will concede not a needle prick of earth" - Duryodhana

Duryodhana was completely focused on the War. It was his moment of truth. He had usurped a kingdom, and he meant to keep it. He had resorted to any means, foul or fair to get the kingdom, which he believed to be rightfully his, and he was in no mood to give it up.

3. LOGISTICS

An akshauhini is described in the Mahabharata as a battle formation consisting of 21,870 chariots; 21,870 elephants; 65,610 cavalry and 109,350 infantry as per the Mahabharata.

The ratio is 1 chariot: 1 elephant: 3 cavalry: 5 infantry soldiers. In each of these large number groups (65,610, etc.), the digits add up to 18.

It is said that the size of Pandava's army in the Kurukshetra war was 7 akshauhinis, and those of Kauravas 11 akshauhinis.

4. COMMANDERS AND LEADERS**PANDAVAS**

1. **Overlord** - Yudhisthira
2. **Commanders-in-chief** - Dhrishtadyumna (day 1-18)
3. **Strategists** - Krishna

KAURAVAS

1. **Overlord** - Duryodhana
2. **Commanders-in-chief** - Bhishma (day 1-10) Drona (day 11-15)
Karna (day 16-17) Shalya (day 18)
Ashwatthama (night raid)
3. **Strategists** - Shakuni

5. OUTCOME OF WAR

War Lasted: 18 Days. 10 Days (Bhisma), 3 Days (Drona), 1½ Days (Karna) ½ Day (No General), 1 Day (Shalya), 1 Night (Ashwatthama)

Victory for Pandavas and allies, fall of Kauravas.

Dhritarashtra abdicated the throne of Hastinapura and Yudhisthira succeeded him.

Yuyutsu was appointed as Yudhisthira's subordinate king in Indraprastha

6. What were the strategies?

1. **PREPARATION** - "TURN YOUR WEAKNESS INTO YOUR STRENGTH"

KAURAVAS

- Karna went on a country-wide military mission, subdued the different kingdoms and acquired wealth. But it meant a loss in terms of both men and money and creation of new enemies.

PANDAVAS

Though in exile they turned their attention to improving over their weakness

- Arjuna - set out on a mission to acquire Divyastras.
- Bhima - met his brother Hanuman and got a blessing of enhanced strength.
- Yudhisthira - acquired teachings from the various wise saints, and also learnt the game of Dice from Gandharava Chitrasena, lest he was challenged to yet another dice game.

It's said that he had become undefeatable in Dice.

2. ADJUVANT- "MAKE POWERFUL ADJUVANT"

KAURAVAS

Kauravas had centralized power system. The greatest empire of the time, but not many Powerful allies, except from old relations from far off places like Gandhara (Shakuni), Sindhu (Jayadrath) and Kambodia (Camboja - Bhagadutt)

PANDAVAS

No wealth. No power of their own. But powerful allies all over India

- Panchala through Marriage with Darupadi.
- Dwarka through marriage with Arjuna and Subhadra.
- Magadh through marriage of Shadewa and Vijaya.
- Chedi through marriage of Nakula and Karenmayi.
- Kasi through marriage of Bhima and Balandhara.
- Kekaya through marriage of Yudhisthira and Devika.
- Matsya through marriage of Abhimanyu and Uttara.
- The Rakshasas through marriage of Bhima and Hidimba.
- The Nagas through marriage of Arjuna and Uloopi.

3. LEADERSHIP

"The sharing of responsibility, thus power leads to a democracy in the management and reduced reliance on one individual, thus reducing risk"

KAURAVAS

Kauravas had centralized leadership, one head of army at a time, who has supreme authority of 11 akshouhini of army. Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Shalya and Ashwatthama.

PANDAVAS

Distributed leadership, seven commanders for the seven divisions

Like as per a successful company's organizational structure had a Director, CEO, advisor and individual manager for individual department.

- Virat (King of Matsya)
- Drupad (King of Pancala)
- Sahadeva (King of Magadha)
- Dhrishtaketu (King of Chedi)
- Satyaki (Only warrior from Dwarka)
- Shikhandi (Prince of Pancala)
- Commander in Chief - **Dhrishtadyumna**
- Supreme Commander - **Arjuna**
- Arjuna's charioteer and counselor - **Krishna**

4. TEAM STRENGTH

"Teamwork succeeds where individual fails, but the team formed must have the same vision, goal and passion"

KAURAVAS

No team spirit. They all fought their individual wars.

Bhishma: For his Vow to protect the throne Hastinapur.

Drona and Kripa: They owed allegiance to the throne.

Shalya: Simply cheated by Duryodhana to be there, Was originally a Pandava ally.

Karna: To prove his mantle against Arjuna, Friendship for Duryodhana

PANDAVAS

One team, one goal. As men, they all had huge respect for Krishna and Yudhisthira. While as warriors they were in complete awe of Bhima and Arjuna. Most of them were close relatives – cousins, brother-in-laws, and father-in-laws. More than that they all were part of the decision making process. It was their "common" war.

5. CHARACTER MOTIVES

"The Right team is made by selecting the Right Individuals. Get the right man for the right job"

KAURAVAS

Except for Duryodhana nobody wanted the War. All the 4 main generals had strong ties with the Pandavas.

- Bhishma (grandchildren) – Won't kill the panadavas. Will kill a thousand soldiers each day.
- Drona (students) – Won't kill the Pandavas. Will capture them only.
- Shalya (Nakula-Shadeva's maternal uncle) – Loved the Pandavas and covertly helped them by humiliating Karna
- Karna: Promised not to kill any of the other Pandavas save Arjuna.

PANDAVAS

Common goal, but the individuals had their individual targets there, own agenda which just became one with the teams' agenda.

- Dhratsadyumna : Drona
- Shikhandi : Bhishma
- Satayaki – Bhurisravas
- Arjuna – Karna
- Bhima – Duryodhana and his brothers
- Sahadeva – Shakuni and his sons
- Nakula –Karna's sons

6. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

KAURAVAS

Patriarchal structure.

Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Dhrtarashtra, Vidur, Shakuni, Duryodhana, Karna, Duhsasana. No women in the decision making process. Gandhari retreated to the Inner Chambers. Nobody listened to her.

PANDAVAS

Matriarchal Structure.

Kunti was the authority supreme for the Pandavas.

"Whatever my mother says is Dharma to me": Yudhisthira.

Draupadi was a companion in whatever the Pandavas did. She had a big role in the entire decision making. Without her the Pandavas would have most probably reclined to the forests. Even the younger Pandavas : Ghatotkach, Abhimanyu and Iravan were brought up by their mothers. So the female influence was huge.

7. LORD KRISHNA: THE BEST MANAGER

A discussion of any aspect of Mahabharata is incomplete without the mention of Lord Krishna. His divinity scintillates throughout the tale and Panadavas would have had a hard time winning but for him. For a moment let us set aside his divinity and views him in the scope of a manager.

7. CONCLUSION

- Turn your weaknesses into strengths.
- Turn enemies into allies.
- Share your responsibilities.
- Teamwork scores over Individual Effort.
- Right team right set of Individuals. The right man for the right job.
- Commitment scores over Competence.
- Team interests over individual interests.
- Know your enemy/challenges. Exploit its weaknesses. Take calculated risks.
- The Right Managers: To inspire, invigorate, counsel in crisis.
- Know ground realities. Accept different ideologies. Cooperate.
- Empower Women. The gender balance is required for stability and administration.

8. SOME MORE IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING FACTS

1. **Don't sign a blind contract** (Bhishma did, and had to suffer for the rest of his life)
2. **Don't be disrespectful** (Draupadi was, towards Duryodhana, got repaid worse, much worse) (Shakuni was, towards Dhritarashtra, his sister went blind, he spent the rest of his life planning revenge)
3. **Your right, power and role is just to put your best efforts, expectations of results are futile.** (The famous **Karmanyevadhikaraste...**)
4. **Don't worry about your weaknesses, they are helping you in disguise** (Arjun's impotency)
5. **Don't risk what you can't afford to lose** (Yudhishtira did, won years of problems for his family)
6. **He who is reverent for you, may be a villain for others.** (Dronacharya for Arjun v/s Dronacharya for Karna and to some extent, Eklavya)
7. **Don't play around if playing around means getting pregnant.** (Kunti did, ended up with Karna)
8. **Even if you are super smart, it's no good if you have to listen to idiots.** (Vidura, second smartest fellow in Mahabharat was rendered frustrated by Dhritarashtra, Pandavas because they had to listen to Yudhishtira)
9. **Don't be angry.** Keep patience and wait for the right time
10. **Half knowledge can always be a dangerous thing** - Abhimanyu

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