



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Management**

**A GLIMPSE INTO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LESSONS FROM MAHABHARATA**

**KEYWORD:**

Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurs, Mahabharata, Skills, Knowledge, Abilities

**Dr. D. Anbugeetha.\***

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Thiagarajar College, Madurai-09.\*Corresponding Author.

**Ms. S. Sangeetha**

Student, Department of Business Administration, Thiagarajar College, Madurai-09.

**ABSTRACT**

Entrepreneurs are those who create a new enterprise and who embrace a lot of challenges and risks for its development and operation with the view of making profit. They also drive change with innovations, where new and improved products enable new markets to be developed. In an entrepreneurial expedition one may have to face both success and setbacks. As an entrepreneur one should know how to handle both triumph and failure cheerfully and persistently. Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are vital for the growth and development of any economy. There are so many ways to learn the process of entrepreneurship and there are so many authors who have written about the skills, knowledge and abilities (SKAs) that an entrepreneur has to possess to be successful. The oldest among them is Mahabharata written by Veda Vyasa thousands of years ago. It recounts the struggle between two groups of cousins in the Kurukshetra War - the Kauravas and the Padavas and their successors. It also contains philosophical and devotional materials, such as a discussion of the four "goals of life" *purusartha*, further it gives valuable lessons to both personal as well as professional life. This article attempts to make a quick glimpse into the SKAs an entrepreneur should possess in order to achieve success and prosperity in business for a long run as conferred in the Epic Mahabharata. The article moves through the journey of entrepreneurship with legendary examples from Mahabharata.

**INTRODUCTION**

Mahabharata written by Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa thousands of years ago is a great epic and has been translated and transcreated from the original language Sanskrit in all the Indian languages and a few foreign languages as well. It consists of over 100000 poems and long prose passages consisting of about 1.8 million words in total. Mahabharata serves as the biggest source of Indian poetry, philosophy, drama, fiction, music, sculpture, paintings, folklore and other forms of creative expressions. It recounts the struggle between two groups of cousins - the Kauravas and the Pa avas and their successors. However, it is not only about the war fought between Pandavas and Kauravas, but also revolves around human emotions, relations and their complexities; contains philosophical and devotional materials, such as a discussion of the four "goals of life" *purusartha*; speaks about the importance of moral and ethical values to lead a peaceful life; gives valuable lessons to both personal as well as professional life relevant to today's life. The epic further provides valuable tips to entrepreneurs on how to manage an organization efficiently.

From managing human resources to achieving goals, an entrepreneur has to face different types of challenges in their professional life. For handling them, they need a reliable guide. Mahabharata may be considered as the most reliable guide for resolving all kinds of issues that shall arise in an organization. It is not just a story but it is an amalgamation of variety of problems with solutions pertinent even to the current era. This article attempts to make a quick glimpse into the SKAs an entrepreneur should possess in order to achieve success and prosperity in business for a long run as conferred in the epic Mahabharata. The article moves through the journey of entrepreneurship with legendary examples from Mahabharata. The authors have given a brief outline the story which will help the readers who do not know the story of Mahabharata to understand the paper better.

**The Story Line Of Mahabharata**

Santanu was the king of Kuru Kingdom, once he was on a hunting trip, he saw a beautiful girl on the bank of the river Ganga and he fell in love with her and asked her hand in marriage. The girl agreed to his proposal but with one condition that he will never question her actions, and if this

condition was broken she would abandon him. The king accepted it and lived a happy marital life with her. However, when a child was born, the queen drowned the child in the river Ganga. One by one, seven sons were born and drowned, the king remained silent because of his commitment, at last the king lost his control and stopped her when she done the same with her eighth son. After hearing Santanu's hard words, she revealed the truth that she was river Ganga and sheto abandoned him. The child was named as Devavrata who is popularly known as Bhishma, Gangaputra and Pitamaha of Kuru kingdom. The king Santanu continued his ruling, one day he saw a women who ran a ferry. Her name was Satyavathi. She was so beautiful and the king fell in love with her. Satyavathi married him with a condition that her children would rule the kingdom. The legal inherit Bhishma accepted this and promised that he would remain unmarried. The king Santanu and Satyavathi had two boys, The first one Chitrangada had no children and died in a battle and second one Vichitravirya grew up. For his marriage Bhishma abducted the princesses of Kashi, Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Amba refused to marry Vichitravirya because she was already in love with a king named Salwa, so she decided to kill herself and wants to take rebirth and become Bhishma's destruction, to fulfill this goal she was reborn as Shikhandini the daughter of Drupada. Ambika and Ambalika married Vichitravirya, but he died because of his illness, then his two wives gave birth to their inherit through Vyasa. Ambika gave birth to a boy named Dhritarashtra and Ambalika gave birth to a boy named Pandu. As Dhritarashtra was a born blind the kingdom was ruled by Pandu. He ruled the kingdom and married Kunthi and Madri because of his curse he gave up the kingdom, at that time they didn't have children. When they were in the forest Pandu requested Kunthi to use the divine mantra given by Durvasa during her teenage and they were blessed with 3 children Yudhishthira, Bheema and Arjuna later she shared the mantra with Madri, who was blessed with Nakula and Sahadeva. Meanwhile, Dhritarashtra married the princess Gandharai and had 100 sons, they were popularly known as Kauravas. After the death of Pandu and Madri, Kunti took her five sons to Hastinapur. All the 105 boys were looked after by Bhishma who was constantly trying to train them. But Kauravas were envious of their cousins Pandavas and started scheming to dethrone Yudhishthira. Their first attempt to kill the Pandavas was to aflame them inside a palace however Pandavas

managed to escape. Meanwhile all the five married Draupadi, the princess of Panchalam. Then Duryodhana challenged Yudhishthira in a dice game which led Pandavas to lose everything, including Draupadi. Then all the Pandavas with their wife Draupadi were exiled from the kingdom. For twelve years they have to live in the forest and in the thirteenth year they have to be in disguise. During these years Pandavas became more valiant and knowledgeable. After the thirteenth year they decided to fight which led to the war. During the war period Kauravas were only accompanied by Gandhara, Sindhu and Kambodia. But Pandavas were accompanied by Panchala, Dwarka, Magadh, Chedi, Kasi, Kekaya, Marsya, Rakshasas, Nagas and the great Krishna who also served as Arjuna's mentor and Charioteer in the war. The war lasts for 18 days. At last all the Kauravas, the great Bhishma, Guru Dronacharya and Karna, died in the war and Pandavas became victorious in the war. However, all the sons of Pandavas also died in the war. This heroic tale is not just a story; it includes ethics, law, philosophy, history, geography. It teaches many lessons which will be useful for practical life even in today's competitive world.

### Focusing On Strengths

Entrepreneurial expedition is always competitive. One should have lots of persistence to succeed in this journey. It has both ups and downs. So, one has to work on something in which he/she has a real interest or has to sharpen a skill that comes naturally to her/him which makes them feel happy while doing it. As a long processed journey, playing on strengths does not guarantee the business success but it brings self-satisfaction, makes to feel comfortable and brings better experiences which help to move to greater heights which a person desires. In Mahabharata, the Pandavas always focused on their interest and abilities. For instance, Arjuna, was never bored to aim an arrow; Bheema, was never hesitant to fight with the enemies, the real interest they had made them to enhance and update their skills. Hence, focusing on strengths will pave way to success.

### Associating With The Right Partner

In Mahabharata, after the period of exile, Pandavas did not have any commendable wealth or power. But they had the wisdom to select the right allies, when Krishna asked them to choose between him and his army, Arjuna wisely chooses Krishna as opposed to Duryodhana who opted his army. Choosing the right partner ultimately defined the fate of the Kurukshetra war. As an efficient entrepreneur one should have the wisdom to choose the right partners to his/her ideology and passion to work with. Having an atmosphere of people with right attitude around in an organization is conducive to success.

### Cultivating Core Values

As a genuine entrepreneur Krishna had three definite life goals for himself.

- Paritranaaya Sadhunam – welfare for good.
- Dharma sansthapana – establish and strengthen the good principles.
- Vinashaya dushkritam – destroy evil.

The main aim of the Kurukshetra war was the above mentioned goals which paved a way for the destruction of the old, vicious and the establishment of dharma and peace all around the world. As an Entrepreneur one should frame his/her core values which should be in accordance with ethical values.

### Team Work

Pandavas had a very structured approach within their team. They divided their team according to individual strengths and goals. Several of their associates had a grudge against the Kauravas which was rightly knitted into the overall war plan. From the chief strategist Krishna followed by the ethical

Yudhishthira, skilful Arjuna and the mighty Bheema, there was a clear flow of communication, division of roles and responsibilities. Everyone had a common goal, vision and driving force for their participation. Moreover, everyone had individual targets like Shikhandi against Bhishma, Dhristatuman against Guru Dronacharya, Arjuna against Karna, Shahadev against Sakuni, which gave an additional push to them to focus on their own duties. This was perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of their strategy. In the same way, an entrepreneur should aspire to build a focused team that is not only strong in numbers but it should also be a harmonious blend of guidance, talent, youthfulness, splendor and strength and it must be aligned with individual target which helps them to reach their common goals. An entrepreneur should have the ability to identify the talents and should place the right person at the right place. Similarly a well dedicated and placed team will pave way for success in business.

### Commitment

In Kaurava's side, except Duryodhana nobody wants the war as the main warriors like Bhishma and Dronacharya. Karna had personal bias. For Bhishma, Pandavas were his loyal grandsons. For Dronacharya, they were his obedient students and for Karna, Pandavas were his brothers and he also promised Kunti that he will not kill anyone except Arjuna. In Pandava's side, it was opposite. Everyone was committed and wholeheartedly willing to achieve their common goal. Especially Ghadothkatch by his life sacrifice destroyed almost half of Kaurava's soldiers. Thus, it can be seen that everyone had a sincere commitment towards their responsibilities. Pandavas never stopped fighting for what legally belonged to them. Thus Mahabharata set up an example for the new age entrepreneurs that, the situation may be very difficult, but keep your spirits high and be committed to your goal. Job once taken has to be finished without getting distracted. An entrepreneur has to be committed to achieve the success he expects for himself.

### Half Knowledge Is Dangerous

Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna and Subhadra was a valiant warrior, who is known for his persistence, intrepidity, devotion and sacrifice. Though he appears in the Mahabharata for a short period, he is the most popular son of Pandavas and remains an inspiration always. Abhimanyu had mastered the art of archery, when Kauravas challenged Pandavas in a war formation called Chakravyuh, as a sixteen year old boy he entered into it bravely though he didn't know how to destroy the formation and fought with 7 Maharathas like Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Ashwathama, Karna, etc. They circled and attacked Abhimanyu. Karna broke Abhimanyu's bow and also broke the chariot which Abhimanyu used to shield himself. Finally unguarded, unarmed, tired Abhimanyu was killed by the Kauravas. The death of Abhimanyu teaches us an important lesson that "Half knowledge is dangerous". As an entrepreneur one should have complete knowledge about his/her projects, which is the base for the success of the business.

### Lifelong Learning

Both Pandavas and Kauravas learned from the same guru Dronacharya. Pandavas being passionate learners continuously upgraded their skills throughout their life. When Pandavas were in exile, all invested their whole time for acquiring new skills which helped them to win the war. Arjuna grasped whatever came his way, be it the military science from Dronacharya, strategy making from Bhishma, superior weapon arts from Lord Shiva (Pasupatastra), Lord Vishnu (Vaishnavastra) and Indra. Bheema an individual who possessed 10000 elephant's strength also enhanced his strength by getting blessed by Vayu Putra Hanuman. Unlike usual learning in school or college, entrepreneurship teaches real life lessons. In a single day an entrepreneur could

brainstorm the latest technological developments with his programmers, marketing plan with marketing heads, and the importance of HR team while recruiting and training the right personnel for the right job. While playing all these different roles an entrepreneur has to consistently upgrade his/her skills. For entrepreneurs, everyday becomes a new learning platform and he must be able to constantly keep abreast of the latest developments to sustain in the market. He has to be open to acquiring new skills, as that's what would keep the business going. Entrepreneurs should have an aptitude for lifelong learning because entrepreneurship is a journey in which sometime one wins and sometimes one learns.

#### **Right Manager**

In Mahabharata, Krishna as the best manager, imparted valuable lessons to all. He guides Arjuna to perform the duty of a warrior and fight the righteous war to establish the rule of good. His discourses to Arjuna at the beginning of the battle take the form of narrative framework Bhagavad-Gita. Lord Krishna was a master strategist and tactful communicator. He used tactical skills to win the war for Pandavas. An entrepreneur should have the ability to listen, and to communicate. In Mahabharata, Krishna though he is the supreme power, played the role of a charioteer as a perfect charioteer. Through this action he shows that one should be responsible in the role he plays. Moreover, entrepreneurs should know how to get works done by others. He should express diligence, enthusiasm and should cultivate the joy of working in a group. Not only preaching but being an inspiration helps an entrepreneur to develop his organizational position.

#### **Think Before You Act**

Kunti is one of the influencing characters in Mahabharata, she was a great advisor to all her sons. Her presence of mind and intelligence was their ray of light in regaining their honor. But at her young age she summoned Sun God to test the boon she had received and gave birth to Karna. Due to social stigmas she was so afraid and let the child in the river Ganges. She did it without analyzing the serious consequences. Karna was smart, handsome and talented but he faces lots of troubles and shame being a charioteer's son. Kunti at the end displayed the courage to walk away from glory by accepting Karna as her son before the world. Alike, the actions taken without analyzing the consequences will have huge impact, in business. So an entrepreneur must analyze oneself to foresee the consequences of his actions.

#### **Adaptability**

In spite of living a life of royalty, Pandavas spent most of their life in the forest, they did not hesitate to give up all their wealth and comforts. Especially during the period of disguise, they faced extreme challenges by donning different roles like working for a king, a cook, a transgender music teacher, and Draupadi as a beautician to a queen, they held themselves together through long periods of strife by adapting to every situation they encountered. Similarly, as an entrepreneur one should not act just like a boss, they should adapt to different roles like a sales person, counsellor, manager, etc. The entrepreneur must be able to always deliver positive words to his team irrespective of the challenges waiting to bog him down on any given day. It could be anything from a stab in the back from a promising partner, or a huge loss in the business, or facing legal complications for a mistake that the entrepreneur is not directly responsible for. Adaptability is the savior! Just fit in and blend in with the 'present' like an amoeba and he or she will be able to survive.

#### **Making Powerful Allies**

Kauravas were the greatest empire of that time, but they did not have many powerful allies except a few like Ghandhara (Shakuni), Sindhu (Jayadrath) and Kambodia (Camboja –

Bhagadutt). On the otherside, Pandavas the team of five brothers had neither wealth nor power at that time. However, they had powerful allies all over India. Panchala through the marriage with Draupadi; Dwarka through the marriage of Arjuna with Subhadra; Magadh through the marriage of Shadewa with Vijaya; Chedi through the marriage of Nakula with Karenmayi, Kasi through the marriage of Bheema with Balandhara, Kekaya through the marriage of Yudhisthira with Devika, Matsya through the marriage of Abhimanyu with Uttara, Rakshasas through the marriage of Bheema with Hidimbi, Nagas through the marriage of Arjuna with Uloopi. Thus beyond team they were close relatives like cousins, brother-in-laws, and father-in-laws. It was their common war. For Entrepreneurs, having right set of friends and loyalists in the corporate world is the key to make a long lasting impression and to earn fair reputation from the competitors and allies. If the entrepreneur is alone and has no allies, he has to learn to protect himself. Else, like Abhimanyu, he may be a casualty of collective conspiracy. No matter how talented he is, the results will be disastrous. Simply having the clout is not enough to trail the corporate route. One should have the right set of skills, tools and attitude to win the combat of wits. Articulation, right words and proper action are all part of the corporate life that will earn respect and further the career towards new heights. The words to be kept in mind are "Don't just make customers and vendors, make alliance and relation."

#### **Women Empowerment**

In Mahabharata, Pandavas gave due respect to women. Women played a predominant role in decision making process. Kunti, Draupadi, Subhadra are few powerful female characters in Mahabharata. For Yudhisthira "whatever his mother said, it is dharma to him" whereas Draupadi the better half of Pandavas also played a vital role in every decision made by Pandavas. On the other side, Kauravas followed the patriarchal structure. Gandhari was the only woman who took part in the war camp. Though she was the Rajamatha (royal mother) of the Kuru kingdom, her suggestions and advice were not heard by any one of her sons. As an entrepreneur, an individual should not have gender bias. The best suggestion given by any of the subordinates should be taken into account irrespective of the gender as the oldest and eminent epic revealed that gender equality also paves a way for success.

#### **Keeping Up Words And Promises**

Karna was known for keeping his words no matter what the situation or condition is, he never backed from his words. He promised Duroyadhana that he will always be there for him at his toughest situations and Karna did it. He faced a pitiful situation where, he was shot dead by his own brother. He also promised Kunti that he will not kill any of the Pandavas except Arjuna and he followed it. Thus Karna acts as an exemplary example in keeping up words and promises. As an entrepreneur one should learn to stay clear in their words and promises to their clients, customers, partners, distributors, etc. If you are bound to promises, you may have lots of opportunities. If an entrepreneur cease from holding on to his promises, he will be tagged as an erratic corporate professional who has no ethics.

#### **Excellence In Governance**

Pandavas received the Kandavaprasatha through partition. A good number of people from Hastinapur followed Pandavas even though the partition part was a barren land because they had trust in Pandavas. Draupadi was always friendly to them. As per their hope Kandavaprasatha became Indraprastha and the kingdom prospered. Its fame spread and migration took place. Like Pandavas, entrepreneur should have the ability to practice excellence in governance. They should possess the quality to make all their employees participatory, consensus, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient and follow the rule of the organization with pleasure.



## CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurs are those who create a new enterprise and who embrace a lot of challenges and risks for its development and operation with the view of making profit. Entrepreneurship is a mind-set or an attitude towards how to handle different situations tactfully as well as strategically in order to change the situation that will be favorable. Entrepreneurship can also be viewed as recognizing change, pursuing opportunity, taking risk and responsibility, innovating, making better use of available resources, maintaining versatile relationship with partners, employees, clients, distributors, customers, etc. and creating new valuable products for the customers, keeping words and promises and doing it all over again and again. This article has made a quick glimpse into the skills, knowledge and abilities an entrepreneur should possess in order to achieve success and prosperity in business for a long run as conferred in the Epic Mahabharata.

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