



Bhagavan Krishna as the Strategic Counselor

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ABSTRACT

The story of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata can be described as an eternal learning on how to make strategic decisions and choose right over a wrong, as well as what can be considered as an ethical ruler. The paper brings to light how its philosophical and ethical aspects can offer useful perspectives on the modern governance, management of corporations, and organizational conduct. Through discussion of dilemmas of major characters which include Arjuna, Krishna. The paper brings out the interactivity of the triadic dilemma of duty, conscience and consequence.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Mahabharata is considered to be among the most deep and vast epic in the world literature and it gives a multidimensional analysis of human nature, duty and morality. Long since it has been much more than its portrayal of inter-lynch dynasty and the disastrous war of Kurukshetra, it explores philosophically and morally the intricacies of human life, deep within. The epic explores the conflict between individual belief and social obligation, the clash between moral rectitude (dharma) and material desire (Artha), and the effects of moral renegotiation through complex plots and stories, conversations, and ethical dilemmas. Such themes render the Mahabharata a long-lasting source of understanding of the principles of decision making, justice, and leadership.

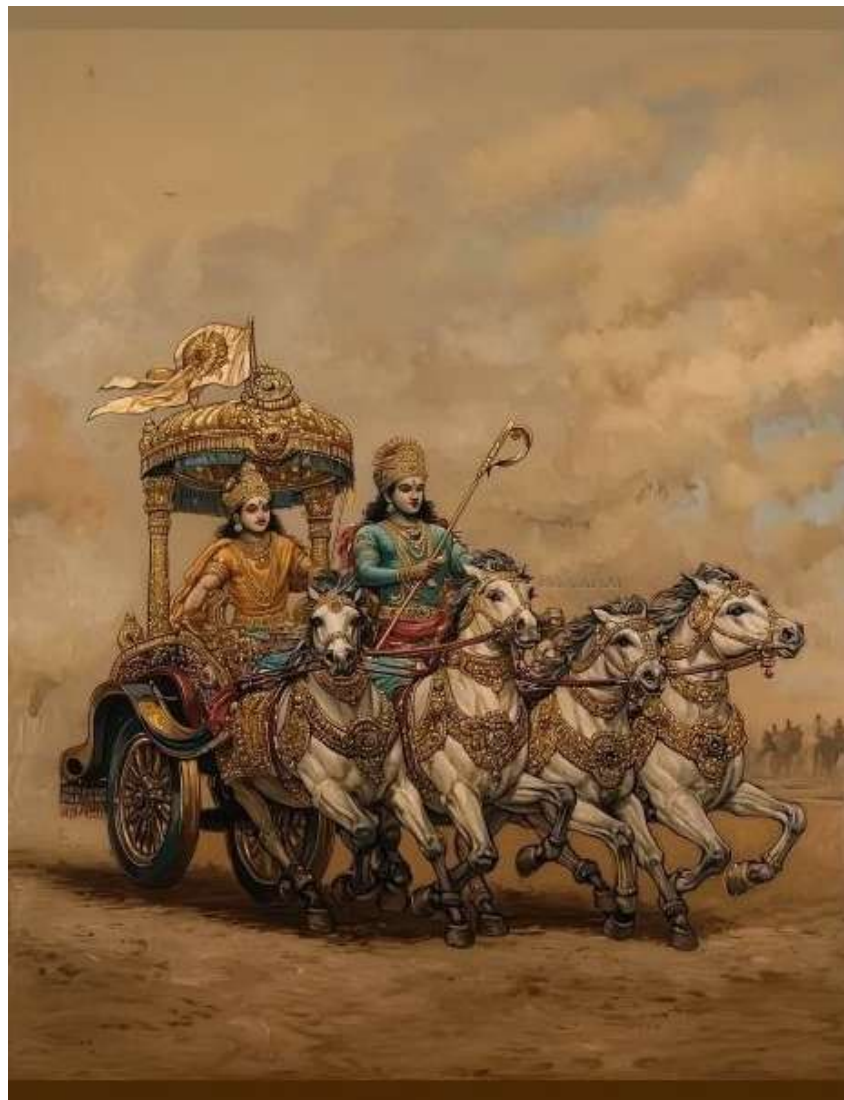


Figure 1: The Mahābhārata



The Kurukshetra story, specifically, is a microfinance of the larger moral challenges of those with a power base. It depicts leaders like Arjuna, Krishna, Bhishma and Duryodhana, all of whom face decisions that challenge their sense of duty, loyalty and conscience. The indecisiveness of Arjuna, just before the fight, is the human struggle of the emotions and duty, whereas the advice of Krishna in Bhagavad Gita turns this hesitation in the face of the battle into a philosophical question on what is the duty. With the battlefield therefore being a metaphorical area where moral philosophy meets strategic thought, there is a complex balance that has to be kept by the leaders between moral philosophy and legal reality.

In contemporary times, these ancient wisdoms are of astonishing business in governance, corporate governance and governmental administration. Leaders today will be confronted with numerous ethical issues when the ethical principles of the profession come into conflict with those of their personal values or the demands of the organization. Reconceptualizing the Mahabharata in terms of strategic ethics and the theory of leadership, this research will try to identify eternal values that can be employed in the current sophisticated socio-political and institutional settings. It is not only aimed at analyzing mythological events but deriving timeless templates of ethical reasoning and decision-making that can guide the present leadership and organizational behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Adhikary (2024) analyzed ethical and philosophical similarities between the modern Artificial Intelligence (AI) dilemmas and the tales in the Mahābhārata. The paper examined how the moral rationality and decision-making processes of characters used in the epic could give insights into the ethical dilemma arising due to the existence of new technologies. Adhikary pointed out that the dharma and contextual ethics of the Mahabharata provided the means of envisioning responsibility and accountability and forward-looking ethics in AI implementation, and that ancient stories could be used to shape contemporary technological regulation and philosophy.

Aithal and Ramanathan (2025) examined the ethical quandary of Arjuna presented in the first book of the Bhagavad Gita in a multi-paradigm using a combination of Dharmic ethics, consequentialist, and virtue-based viewpoints. The paper has shown that the indecisiveness of Arjuna and the advice of Krishna were a universal trend of moral decision-making in those situations of uncertainty. They claimed that this episode demonstrated the timelessness of moral clarity, duty by role, and emotion versus responsibility. The authors concluded that the knowledge would inform leaders of today, be it in an organizational, political, and social setting, especially when handling ethical dilemmas.



Jain, Verma, and Jain (2025) devoted to the teachings on leadership extracted out of the episode involving Abhimanyu in the Chakravyuha (Also called as Padmavyuha) in the Mahabharata. Their study emphasized the leadership qualities of Abhimanyu such as his courage, strategic thought processes and moral integrity as an example of the contemporary leadership problems. The paper found the character of Abhimanyu to attack insurmountable odds and stick to moral and strategic considerations to be an important example of situational leadership, risk management, and moral perseverance. The authors have stressed that the study of these kinds of narratives may contribute to better comprehension of the process of leadership development, decision-making under pressure, and how ethics and tactical competence can be applied together in modern organizations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative interpretive study of the Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita to examine ethical and strategic decision-making. It uses a comparative approach to ethics, which consists of Dharmic and Western theories to apply ancient moral wisdom to the contemporary leadership settings.

3.1 Research Design

The study paper is a qualitative and interpretive work, based on textual and philosophical interpretations of the Mahabharata, specifically the Kurukshetra story and the Bhagavad Gita. The purpose of the research is to discuss how the ethical reasoning and strategic decision-making are expressed in the actions and dilemmas of the main characters of the novel to provide some parallels with the modern leadership and organizational ethics.

3.2 Data Sources

The study will rely on primary sources like the critical edition of the Mahabharata and the commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita made by scholars like Vivekananda and Aurobindo. As secondary sources, academic books, journal articles, and research papers on ethics, leadership, and strategic behavior will be used to assist in the comparative analysis.

3.3 Analytical Framework

A comparative ethical theory, that is a synthesis of Dharmic theory and Western ethical theories, i.e. deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics, is used. Content and thematic analysis is used to analyze the decisions of the characters in order to find out the trends of reasoning, leadership and intent to



strategize. The comparison is conducted using conceptual tables to make systematic comparisons between ancient ethics and contemporary organizational settings.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The narration of Kurukshetra in the Mahabharata gives a deep theory to analyze the field of strategic decision making and ethical argumentation in conditions of moral conflict and uncertainty. Both major protagonists demonstrate a different moral and strategic disposition, which shows the sophistication of leadership and human behavior when principles, responsibilities, and feelings come into conflict. The epic provides timeless lessons about the models of ethical decision-making that are applicable in the contemporary organizational and governmental setting through its multifaceted depiction of dilemmas.

4.1. Arjuna's Moral Dilemma: The Ethics of Duty and Emotion

The *Bhagavad Gītā* opens with the paralysis of Arjuna, which was a scene of moral and emotional crisis. He is standing on the battleground of Kurukshetra and is unable to handle the thought of slaughtering his own blood, his elders, and even his teachers. His self-dilemma is the common war of the heart that is emotional empathy and professional responsibility. The reluctance of Arjuna is not just a lack of courage, but rather a profound moral issue of what dharma is, what is the correct course of action when everything seems to be tainted ethically?



Figure 2: Arjuna's Moral Dilemma



Krishna’s intervention transforms this emotional paralysis into moral clarity. Krishna prompting Arjuna to carry out his svadharma (his duty as a warrior) presents the doctrine of nishkama karma, or nishkama (action) without any attachment to the fruits of an action. What this principle does is to redefine the sense of duty as a moral predestination that has no connection to emotional involvement or anticipated consequences. It echoes deontological morals in Western tradition, in which moral value is based on will and obligation rather than on outcome.

In contemporary settings, this ethical change can be compared to the reasoning of professionals who are supposed to act under emotional and moral ambiguity- e.g. judges, soldiers or doctors. The episode highlights that ethical leadership does not require lack of emotion but its transcendence based on the ability to exercise principled action.

Table : Comparison of Ethical Frameworks in the Kuruksetra Context

Ethical Framework	Key Principle	Epic Illustration	Modern Parallel
Dharmic Ethics	Contextual righteousness; action based on duty and role	Arjuna performing his <i>svadharma</i> as a warrior	Role-based ethics in organizations where responsibilities define moral boundaries
Deontological Ethics	Duty-oriented morality; intention matters more than outcome	Krishna advising Arjuna to act without desire for reward	Kantian duty-based ethics emphasizing moral obligation
Consequentialism (Utilitarianism)	Focus on the outcome and collective good	Krishna’s pragmatic war strategies to ensure <i>dharma-yuddha</i> victory	Strategic ethics and cost-benefit models in governance and management
Virtue Ethics	Character and moral excellence guide ethical behavior	Yudhishtira’s unwavering commitment to truth despite adversity	Moral integrity and virtue-based leadership models

This comparative table shows how the Mahabharata unites various ethical principles. With dharmic ethics unlike the rigorous Western frameworks, morality is tailored to the realities of the context,



focusing on balance and not absolutes. The advice Krishna gives Arjuna is a good example of duty, consequence and virtue integration which provides a complete model of decision-making that can be applied in other complex socio-political and organizational settings.

4.2. Krishna as the Strategic Counselor: Pragmatism and Ethical Flexibility

Krishna is the type of a philosopher-strategist, who has successfully combined morality with practicality. His leadership style is not an authoritarian, idealistic, morally purposeful, and adaptive one. The Kurukshetra story hinges on Krishna as a guide to both morals and strategy as he shows that a strategy devoid of morals results in chaos and morals devoid of strategy results in impotence.

His guidance to Arjuna—“Focus on action, not results”— possesses a kind of strategic removal, rationalized emotional restraint, which is very critical when the leader is required to act in high stakes situations. Nevertheless, Krishna also supports obsolete approaches (e.g., telling Arjuna to attack Karna when he is weak) when the moral duty (dharma) requires make-or-buy decisions that are likely to be uncomfortable. Such an interaction between idealism and pragmatism characterises the style of leadership Krishna had as transformational and situational.

5. CONCLUSION

The Mahabharata episode of the Kurukshetra is a classic commentary on the human need to balance morality with war strategy; it is immensely instructive to today dilemma-ridden leaders in positions of authority. The epic uncovers that there is a moral and a practical side to every choice that individuals make as the dilemmas faced by Arjuna, Krishna strategic advice, the loyalty of Bhishma and the ambition of Duryodhana draw a parallel between choices made by individuals and their moral and practical impacts. It highlights that the leadership based on dharma or righteous duty and conscious awareness of the ethical aspects is the key to the short- and long-term success as well as peace and acceptance.

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