Twitter Thread by Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute



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14 Reasons for Sadness According to Mahabharata

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A Long Thread

After the Kuru war, in the moment of a victory that has come at a great cost, Yudhishthira goes to meet Bhishma, who is in his dying breaths.

Yudhisthira's inquisitive dialogue with Bhishma, which takes place here, spans Shanti and Anushasana parvans of the Mahabharata.

In this dialogue, Yudhishthira asks Bhishma, "Why does one feel sorrow? why does one feel pain?"

Bhishma's answer is comprehensive, it nearly spans 18 shlokas. The reasons he enlists are both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature.

Reason 1 –

Despite of worldly comforts, when one is in a foreign land, away from home and away from the loved ones, one feels a gnawing loneliness. That makes them long and yearn.

(In Welsh language, there is a beautiful word that captures this longing for home – hiraeth)

Reason 2 –

May be because of personal flaws, but when a person is deserted by their friends and loved ones, then the home itself feels like a foreign land, and that thus makes the person sad.

Reason 3 –

Sometimes even when a person has been noble and kind, and if their friends treat them badly, then that does lead to

anguish.

Reason 4 –

Rich and influential people, who might not be as good a human being as you are, if they treat you with disrespect and apathy, sometimes that leads to pain.

Reason 5 –

Oft despite being a learned, honourable, and capable person, one does not receive the justified rewards. Yet when the undeserving ones do, this leads to resentment.

(In human resource management, there is expectancy theory of motivation, which is similar in nature)

Reason 6 –

When one does not have proper means of livelihood (lack of a unique skill), it makes one anxious.

And yet if the person is too proud to ask for a helping hand out of false sense of self-respect, it leads to suffering.

Reason 7 –

When your generosity and goodness of heart is perceived to be your weakness by those who benefit from the very qualities, when they take it for granted, and in turn reduce you in your own eyes, it causes deep anguish.

Reason 8 –

When a learned and deserving person is belittled and insulted by those who lack knowledge and kindness, it could cut deep and cause them pain

Reason 9 –

When an enemy behaves like a friend, earns trust, and then eventually betrays; this manipulation and betrayal leads to resentment and anguish.

Reason 10 –

A person understands the material world well, has a knack of explaining complex phenomena well, and yet if the person is ignored and belittled by the learned and the respected, it leads to pain.

Reason 11 –

Devoid of money and devoid of intelligence, when one still aspires for higher things and fails due to own shortcomings, it leads to sorrow and suffering.

Reason 12 –

Familial troubles such as the lack of harmonious relations with the family, disapproval of your decisions by your own family, betrayals and malice by sons and sons-in-laws can lead to deep pain.

Reason 13 –

If the money a person has set aside for retirement is stolen, and they have to depend on unworthy people of subsistence, it makes the person anxious, afraid and awkward.

Reason 14 –

A person dear to you has been distant and angry due to their own doing/misunderstanding, and you are unable to pacify them and make amends, it leads to suffering.

The description of this passage of the interaction between Yudhisthira and Bhishma is taken from the lecture by Dr. Pradeep Apte, which is a part of the course on “18 Parvans of Mahabharata”.

In the lecture, Dr. Apte points out a poignant juxtaposition.

In this conversation, the one who asks the question, Yudhishthira, has suffered immense anguish through ignominy to the victory. The one who answers is Bhishma, who has lived a life full of difficult choices, and who even in his last moments experiences a prolonged agony.

Maybe it is this complexity of these characters and their gravitas, which enables exploration of such diverse and expansive topics in such a timeless manner.

The course “18 Parvans of Mahabharata” covers these topics and more. The third batch of the course commences on 7th October. The details are in the thread embedded below.

https://t.co/RQ2Nhq2fGN

> ** The 3rd batch of "18 Parvans of Mahabharata - Introduction to the Incredible Epic" begins on 07 Oct. 2021. **https://t.co/J8SbQvBdAq
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> — Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (@BhandarkarI) September 20, 2021