

EXEMPLARY CHARACTERS WITH EXTREME EXTIRPATION IN 'THE MAHABHARATA'

Dr. Sri. Pa. Dhevarajan,
PG & Research Dept. of English,
Govt. Arts College, Salem-07,
Tamilnadu, India.

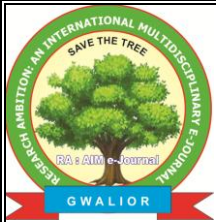
Introduction

This particular article deals with the epic characters with exceptional sentiments that laid a path to their last breath. Individually, personally they were very powerful with exceptional qualities that kept them in such supreme level of their kind but their gratitude, attitude pulled them down to the earth. In spite of knowing their uniqueness; knowingly or unknowingly; willingly or unwillingly; fortunately or unfortunately, they died pathetically for the mercy or gratitude which they possessed on their dependents. Unable to express their own feelings, they met their end pathetically. The researcher would like to list out Bishma, Karna, Gandhari, Kundhi and Amba from the great epic 'Mahabarata'.

The above mentioned characters were exceptionally talented as individuals. Somehow or other they had to derail themselves for their dependents. Because of gratitude, they totally lost either their happiness or their bright future irrecoverably. Let us have a look in detail:

Bishma

Bhisma was the son of Holy Ganges (Ganga) and King Sandhanu. Mother Ganga married King Sandhanu because of a curse of Lord Brahma, on a condition that he should neither resist her deeds nor ask questions regarding her activities. Sandhanu agreed and married her. She gave birth to a son and drowned him in the river Ganges. He did not ask any question lest she would move away from him. She drowned all her seven sons one by one after their birth. When she tried to do the same on the eighth son, Sandhanu prevented her and asked why did she drown all her seven sons in the river? Mother Ganga replied that all the eight sons were eight 'Vasus' (Celestial Bodies) and they should die within a year of their birth. This deed had happened because of the curse of Rishi Vasista. But the eighth one, Vasu Dyaus, should live for a long period for the sake of Dharma. He should fulfill certain Karmas in the land of Hasthinapur without wife and children. After saying these words to

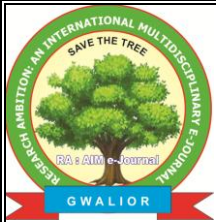


Sandhanu, Mother Ganga took the eighth son with her promising that he would be returned to the king after the completion of his education and kings' martial arts and behavioral qualities. King Sandhanu led a yogic life after the separation of his wife and son.

After a long period, when he was walking along the bank of River Ganga, to his surprise, he saw a deep hollow in the river. It was the artificial one created by a young boy with his celestial weapon. The king asked Ganga about the boy and she replied that he was non-other than his son, Devavirta, means a man of promising nature and follow severe oaths. King Sandhanu felt extremely happy and took him to Hasthinapur palace. Devavirta was unbeatable to defeat by anyone with any weapon.

One day king Sandhanu was walking along the bank of river Ganga. He felt a pleasant smell and moved towards that. There he saw a beautiful woman with pleasing feminine qualities. He came to know that she was Satyavathy, the daughter of a fishing community leader. He introduced himself and asked the leader to marry his daughter to him. The fishing leader joyfully agreed with a condition that his daughter's heir alone rule the country. King Sandhanu kept silence and moved away sadly as Devavirta was the legal heir of the nation.

Devavirta came to know the reason for the sadness of his father and approached the fishing community leader. He promised the leader that Sathyavathy's legal heir alone rule the kingdom and he would not claim any right on that; more over he promised that in order to wipe out the suspicious thought, he never marry a lady throughout his life. He also assured that he would protect Hasthinapur and its king as long as he live. Satisfied fishing leader married Sathyavathy to Sandhanu. When Devavirta promised to that leader, all the saints, sages and Deities of the upper world blessed him with flowers and named him 'Bishma' (A man who lives with terrible oaths). Melted Sandhanu gave him a boon that he would die when he wished to die. Bishma saved all the kings of Hasthinapur for three generations. In spite his wisdom and physical power; he spent his entire life as a warrior of Hastinapur till his last breath. Thus a mighty warrior and an eagle like powerful soul, spent its entire life as an ordinary warrior for the welfare of his father and for the sake of promising nature.

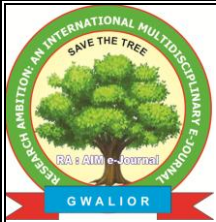


Karna

Highest by birth; cheapest in survival; strongest in gratitude and biggest in charity and generosity are the other name of Karna, son of Kundhi. In 'Mahabaratha', Lord Krishna exposed his real (magnificent) appearance only to two warriors; one was Arjuna and the other was Karna. The first one was convinced and threatened to obey His words because Arjuna put down his bow, Kandeepa, as he was not willing to fight against his Guru, Dronacharya, his cousins (Kauravas) and his respectable eldest Guru Bishma. Moreover Krishna preached entire 'Bhagavat Gita' to prepare Arjuna to fight against Kauravas. Arjuna was convinced and was counseled by Lord Krishna. On the other hand, Krishna exposed His magnificent appearance to Karna so as to yield him a peaceful death and reserved a place for him in Heaven. Krishna begged Karna's holiness and received it in the form of blood when he was struggling for death in 'Gurusetra' (Battle field where Mahabarata war took place between Pandavas and Kauravas for eighteen days). If one prays the God, he/she must go in search of God but if one is extremely good and charitable in nature, God will come in search of him/her. Karna is the latter category.

Karna was the testing mouth piece of Kundhi to test her will power and the extra ordinary boon given by a sage, Durvasa stating that she would be able to beget a child with the help of the celestial (divine) bodies. In order to test her Vedic power, she began to chant 'Mandra' (slogan) on Solar God, Surya and He blessed her with a son with Kavasa (armour) and 'Kundala' (a pair of precious ear rings) in his body. Nothing could pierce it. The child was very bright and powerful, wearing golden ornaments for protection. Kundhi was too young to bring up a baby as she was living in a palace as princess. So she covered the baby, put it in a basket and afloat it in a river. The basket was taken by Athirata, charioteer of King Dhritarashtra, King of Hasthinapur and Radha who were childless for many years. Thus a great soul began to live in an ordinary family because of a greedy mother or helpless mother.

Karna was too bright and brilliant in all the fields. Archery was his favorite instrument. He approached Guru, Dronacharya who refused to teach him the art of archery because he belonged to Shatriya (non-Brahmin) family. Then he approached Parasurama, and learned the art from him. But when he realized that Karna did not belong to a royal family; he cursed him in anger. When he called Arjuna for an archery fight, Karna was not permitted as he was not a prince. Unable to tolerate this



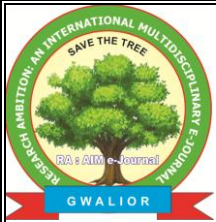
injustice, Duryodhana, the eldest of Kauravas, crowned him as a prince and became an inseparable friend of Karna. As Karna was selfless and generous in nature, he was unable to shatter 'Dhriyodana's love, though latter was full of bad temperament. When Kundhi approached Karna and revealed her reality; but he refused to do any favour for Pandavas except not killing them. Or otherwise no one could beat Karna. Lord Krishna was kind enough to save Pandavas (Dharma) and in order to protect them, He played cunning role on Karna from the beginning. He murdered Karna then and there and finally killed him in the war to save Dharma. Karna was so innocent, selfless and generous to the core and it was Kundhi who did injustice to Karna from the birth to death; because Kundhi and Lord Krishna ought to protect Dharma for the welfare of the universe. Thus Karna lost his identity and everything because of his mother, Kundhi and his foster father and mother. A wise man became vice because of this society.

Gandhari

Gandhari means so attractive, beautiful and symbol of wisdom; she was so piety and virtuous nature. As the princess of Kandhara, she was so luxurious, had abundant wealth and power. Her father, King Subala was the king of Kandhara. Guru Bishma arranged her marriage with Dhritrastra, blind king of Hasthinapura. When she came to know that she was fixed for a blind king, she herself covered her eyes so as to live as a blind lady rest of her life. Her husband insisted her to unveil her cover; she strongly refused and followed her determination. She was so fortunate to become mother of one hundred sons and a daughter, Dutchala but all her boys chose a wrong path to preserve their kingdom; they refused to give the share of Pandavas and tortured them to the core. With the help of Lord Krishna, Pandavas won the battle; yet Gandhari lost all her sons and land, and lived in a hut in a jungle with her husband and Kundhi; refused to enjoy anything as a queen. Her later life was so pathetic because she failed to control her sons and did not aware of their behavior and habits. As, both father and mother were blind; sons of Dhritrastra lost their life and destroyed their hereditary completely. Thus fortunate Gandhari became unfortunate because of her wrong decision and greedy sons.

Kundhi

Kundhi was the daughter of Shurasena and the sister of Vasudeva, father of Lord Krishna. She was married to Pandu, king of Hasthinapur. Pandu died so earlier because of a curse of a sage.



Meanwhile Kundhi became mother of five sons known as Pandavas. Yuthistra was the eldest and he is known for his promising words till date. He guided all his younger brothers in the right path. Bhima was known for his physical strength; Arjuna was known for his archery; Nakula was known for his love on animal kingdom and he was capable of knowing the language of animals; Sahadeva was an expert in horoscope and both were experts in medicines too. She fixed Panjali @ Draupati for his five sons and they followed a disciplined family life. Even then Panjali felt happier when she was with Arjuna. Kundhi was unable to bring up Karna, her eldest son with her. This was so horrible on the part of a mother. She underwent so many hardships, trials and troubles along with her sons in the dense forest and deep valleys. Her peace of mind was shattered then and there by Kauravas. Moreover her daughter-in-law, Draupati was tortured and torn into pieces in the counsel of Kauravas. When she was tried to be undressed and naked in front of great Saints, Gurus and kings like Dronacharya, Bishma, Drudharastra and dear and near ones by Dutchatana; Kunti was helpless. She was unable to protect Panjali and finally Lord Krishna saved her chastity and honesty. When the war of Gurusetra was over, Lord Krishna asked her what kind of boon she expected from Him? She begged more and more difficulties and intolerable pains: shocked Krishna asked, "Why?". She peacefully replied, "In difficulties alone I do think of you and beg you to save me. Pains alone keep your remembrance with me. That is why I need more and more pains to think of you and want to be your humble follower". Krishna blessed her to have a peaceful rest and death. In the end of Mahabharata, she spent her life along with Gandhari and Drudharastra in dense forest and not with her sons in the palace. Thus Kunti was too sensitive to have a pleasant life even after many hardships.

Amba

Bishma was known for his vigor and valor. No one could beat Bishma on any occasion, with any weapon. When the king of Kasi, arranged 'Swayamvara' for his three daughters Amba, Ambika and Ambalika; Bishma went there and prepared to kidnap all the three brides for his brother, Vijitravirya and asked the assembled kings to fight against him. When some of them tried, he defeated all and kidnapped the brides. Amba begged him to leave her as she loved Salva, the king of Saubala. Bishma out of arrogance asked Salva to defeat him; Salva tried but in vain. Bishma brought all the three to Satyavathy and she asked her son, Vijitravirya to marry them. Amba begged Satyavathy to leave her as she was in love with Salva. Hearing the right words of Amba, Bishma sent



her to Salva: but Salva refused to marry her on the basis of 'Satriya' Dharma (Defeated warrior lost the right over that Property). Again she was brought in front of Satyavathy and she asked her son to marry Amba: but Vijitravirya strongly refused to marry her as she had loved someone else.

Unable to find out any solution, Amba approached Bishma to marry her. He strongly refused telling that he was known for his promising words. No one was ready to save Amba. She approached Guru Parasurama and explained her pathetic position. He too tried to convince Bishma but in vain: so he started to fight with Bishma. The war continued for twenty three days without any victory or defeat. So Devas (Divine powers) stopped the war declared as draw. Amba began to perform severe austerities to revenge Bishma but in vain. Finally she was convinced by Lord Siva with a boon that she would definitely kill Bishma in the next birth.

In the next birth, she was born as Shikandi, son of Drupada and brother of Draupadi. Actually he is unisex or transgender. Shikandi was irritated to the core when his sister, Draupadi was not protected by the great warriors and the eldest Guru, Bishma in Kauravas' ministry. Both Bishma and Shikandi knew very well that the latter would kill the Guru. In Gurushetra, Shikandi applied his powerful arrow on Bishma and Bishma gladly accepted the attack because he knew very well that his time had come. Moreover, he was unable to digest the atrocities of Duryodhana in the battle field. Anyhow he welcomed his death on the eighteenth day of Gurushetra war and his death was mourned by everyone on both sides. Thus the pathetic tears of a lady, Amba killed the mighty warrior, Bishma unbelievably.

Conclusion

The above said characters met their pathetic end or utmost trials and troubles because of their too much of sensations and attachment on their dependents. They chose their aim either willingly or unwillingly but they have played a vital role which is unforgettable and unshakable till the 'Epic Mahabhata' survives.

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