

Abhimanyu

Introduction

One of the great heritages of India is the Mahabharat, which is a demonstrative volume on India's proud history. One learns how individual, social, economic, political, religious, moral and spiritual life should be after reading the book. Veda Vyasa, the composer of Mahabharat, spent his life for human and cultural upliftment. He was the ideal human who is full of knowledge, his heart was filled with devotion and his hands were dedicated to action.

The outlook of human life becomes positive by studying the Vedic literature written by the sage Veda Vyasa. A study of this Vedic literature builds a person's character such that the person does not slip his duties in happiness and also does not despair in grief. Dr. Winternidz says, "There is no literature like Mahabharat in the whole world. The characters of Mahabharat seem to be enjoying life in accord with the situation. The characters of Mahabharat guide us on how to live with the realities of life in happiness or sorrow."

Mahabharat is considered the fifth Veda. Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son, is one of the most amazing characters of Mahabharat. At a very young age, he was brave like his father Arjuna and an expert in use of arms. He was a follower of his mother and father in the truest sense. He was loved by both Lord Shri Krushna and father Arjuna. He was the most favorite son of Dharmaraj Yudhisthir and other Pandavs. Describing Abhimanyu's virtues, Sanjay says, "All the virtues of maternal Uncle Shri Krushna and all the best virtues of the Pandavs have jointly manifested in Abhimanyu. He is righteous as Yudhisthir, noble and active like Shri Krushna, strong like Bhishma, capable of outperforming his father Arjuna in knowledge and bravery, well mannered like uncles Sahadev and Nakul." Abhimanyu had such limitless power. He used it all for the righteous war. This is his greatness. Let us understand Abhimanyu's role by understanding how he lived rather than how long he lived.

A Protector of Culture

The Great War in the Mahabharat was a war between good and evil. The evil Kauravas desired to get rid of the Pandavas, their cousins. Pandavas had to win the war for a God centered society to be established, otherwise society would be caught in the downward spiral of anarchy and violence. That is why it was necessary for the Pandavs to win this war. On thirteenth day of this duty based war, Duryodhana and Drona planned to draw away Arjuna from the main battle field. They asked Shansaptak to challenge Arjuna to a fight in the southernmost direction. While Arjuna was busy fighting Shansaptak, Drona created a concentric circular formation to attack the main force of the Pandavas. The purpose was to defeat majorities of the Pandavas and their army. Drona knew that Shree Krushna and Arjuna were the only two who knew how to enter and exit the circular formation. With both of them tied up far away, victory for the Kauravas was assured. However, Drona and Duryodhana did not count on Abhimanyu, who knew how to penetrate the circular formation. But Abhimanyu did not know how to come back out of the circular formation. Dharmaraj Yudhisthir tried to break it by skillful arrangement of the army but was unsuccessful at breaking through the circular defense. Yudhisthir was overcome with worries. At that time, Abhimanyu went to the elder uncle and in a manner suitable to a brave warrior, said, "I know how to enter the circular defense, the only thing I don't know is how to come out of it. So what! There is no reason to worry so long as I am here." Abhimanyu's

proposal was suitable as a warrior. But Yudhisthir did not have the heart to send this sixteen year old and newlywed in to the enemy zone. In his heart, he felt proud of the valor and love for culture that Abhimanyu displayed. However, Yudhisthir was hesitant to sacrifice such a bright young man only due to duty. So he told Abhimanyu, “Go get permission of your mother Subhadra.”

Since when is valor related to age? Young Abhimanyu was right. Yet just the thought of young prince Abhimanyu will have to fight against seven mighty warriors, made Yudhishtir send him to his mother Subhadra. Even though Subhadra knew well that it was a warrior’s duty to fight, she told Abhimanyu, “Uttara is your life partner in following your marital duties. You are her everything. So consult with her about your decision before you proceed to the war.” Uttara was also a Kshatriya lady herself. Even in distress, she understood that it was more important to protect the culture than be selfish. She told Abhimanyu, “You are the son of a lion, and similarly I am the daughter of a lioness.” She told him that sinful people should be punished as necessary and always and it is the duty of every true warrior to uphold God centric culture.

What is there to be afraid of if God Himself is on your side? With a smiling face Uttara bid her husband farewell by marking his forehead with a Tilak. The war required taking on many warriors in a ‘do or die’ situation. It was doubtful if Abhimanyu will be able to win against all of the mighty warriors. Even then, the newly wedded bride Uttara kept a cheerful face and gave Abhimanyu her permission to proceed on the path of self-sacrifice. Such is the pride of a Bharatiya woman.

Mastery of War

Young Abhimanyu was able to penetrate the circular formation, but the Pandavas army that followed him was stopped by Jayadratha. The sixteen-year-old Abhimanyu, all alone and without help from anyone else, fought like a lion in the middle of the enemy armies and began to destroy the enemy warriors. All those that challenged him were forced to bite the dust. Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Karna, Shailya; all of them were defeated by him. Guru Drona himself was forced to withdraw from Abhimanyu. Shailya’s younger brother and son, both were killed. He also killed Karna’s younger brother and Duryodhana’s very favorite son Laxman. He also killed many other warriors.

When facing Drona, his father’s guru, after offering his respect Abhimanyu said, “You have supported injustice. Even if you win this war, you have already lost in the game of life.”

Observing Abhimanyu’s moral courage and outstanding bravery, Drona said, “I have never seen any other archer who can thrill the Pandav army and destroy Kaurav army like Abhimanyu. It seems like he alone can defeat all others. He is so powerful that he could completely destroy the Kaurav army.”

Like the ever pervading sunrays, no one was able to stop Abhimanyu from penetrating through each and every front of the circular array of Kaurav troops. Like a lion among a herd of elephants, Abhimanyu’s bravery tormented the Kauravs. All mighty charioteers got concerned that if Abhimanyu was not killed by hook or crook, all Kaurav armies would be completely destroyed. Drona said, “As long as Abhimanyu is in the chariot with his bow and arrows, all deities and demons combined would not be able to defeat him.”

Victim of unethical Deceptive Tactics

Duryodhana and Karna, both got impatient. Duryodhana asked his senior warriors to attack him from all directions by pelting him with shower of arrows all at once; he asked them to make sure

that Abhimanyu did not leave alive from there. Dronacharya, Karna, Krupacharya, Krutvarma, Bruhadbal (King of Kaushal), Ashwatthama and Duryodhana - seven such extremely powerful warriors attacked one young brave youth who was all alone. But he was not afraid at all. Without giving even an inch he stood there like a mountain and fought with them fearlessly. But how long can he fight with so many of them alone? The seven great warriors were bombarding him with numerous arrows; he got injured at several places. Streams of blood started gushing out from many parts of his body. The brave boy started losing some of his strength and became weak. With crimson colored body soaked in blood, Abhimanyu challenged the warriors, "Even though seven of you are fighting me along with your army and attacking me unethically, you are still afraid of my blows. Shame on you!" When he lost all his weapons he challenged them again, "You all are my elders. You are breaking the convention of war by attacking a weaponless soldier. I don't even want to see the faces of the unethical people like you. You all are an utter disgrace for a warrior. Today, you have isolated me unethically, but wait until Pandavas hear about this; they will be furious and you will not be able to escape. I will die a martyr, and will go to heaven. But the world will hate you, and call you cowards!"

Eventually, he fell to Dushashan's 'Gadaa'. Thus, Abhimanyu died for the sake of 'Dharma' and culture; he sacrificed himself. It was as if the diamond had faded. Mother Earth must be proud of the sacrifice of such a brave youth. When the content individual like Shree Krushna heard about Abhimanyu's sacrifice, even his eyes got filled with tears. His emotional anjali gives Abhimanyu's life a special fragrance. Abhimanyu became a pride for his family and an ornament for Bhartiya culture. By defending his opponents' vicious attacks with courage and by mentally defeating his opposition, Abhimanyu is guiding the youths like a lighthouse of fearlessness. There is no need to think that he was just a child. It is not appropriate to say such a thing. This is the age when Gnaneshwar Maharaj created Gnaneshwari. To date, no other literary work has been created in Marathi that is comparable to Gnaneshwari. Young Mozart, at the age of 5 excelled in music. Abhimanyu was the only one to achieve such a high status of a great warrior in such a young age. He was of the same class as Bhishma, Karna and Arjuna. At one time Draupadi threatened Pandavas, "If you are not going to fight Kauravas, I will make Abhimanyu the General and go and defeat them!" Before the war of Mahabharat, his study in Chakravyuh strategy was going on with Arjun. He had learnt how to enter the strategic formation. But he had yet to learn how to get out of the formation. He was aware of his deficiency; he also knew the outcome of his action. Even then he jumped into it. It should not be a surprise to see Shree Krushna shed tears at the sacrifice of such a youth. While describing Abhimanyu's bravery, it seems as if even Veda Vyasa is transformed into an incarnation of heroism.

Excellence in the Eyes of the Elders:

Yudhisthir's wailing after learning about Abhimanyu's death melts even the most hardened hearts. Look at the beauty of the words! Yudhisthir describes, "We pushed him into the war, the one who should be first in eating, outing, adorning or entertaining." Sanjay went even further, "The virtues developed in Shree Krushna and the virtues of the Pandavas, all of them have blossomed completely and fully in Abhimanyu."

One should look at today youth and develop these types of trait in them. In modern times, a youth possessing the virtues of brilliance, devotion and asceticism is truly a ray of hope. Today we need someone like Abhimanyu who would sacrifice himself and declare a war of (divine)

thoughts against the demonic attributes of modern life. Such a youth, instead of running blindly towards material happiness, will have full faith in Lord Krishna's words of consolation, "YogKshema Vahamyaham" meaning I make sure he is well taken care of, and he will do God's work.

We need to create these kinds of youth who understand the true meaning of life and the purpose of this creation. It is not inappropriate to believe that had Abhimanyu not volunteered to penetrate the circular array, the Indian culture, Shri Krushna's thoughts, Vedic culture and God-centered civilization might have vanished. Kaurava's defeat is a permanent consolation unto the last person. Even if the whole world, all the powers, riches and rights, jointly oppose Godly thoughts, ultimately, the truth shall prevail. And that ultimate truth is God. Today, our faith has strengthened that what we see in Mahabharat, we will also witness in life some day. The credit for that faith goes to Abhimanyu.