ETHICAL DILEMMA OF KARNA IN “THE MAHABHARATA”: A CRITICAL STUDY OF KARNA’S CHARACTER IN THE LIGHT OF EPISODE “THE TEMPTATION OF KARNA”

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ABSTRACT
Along with Valmiki’s ‘The Ramayana’, Ved Vyasa’s ‘The Mahabharata’ is the most classic epic of all times to come. Although The Mahabharata is an Indian epic, its popularity and fame is not only confined within the geographical boundary of India but throughout the world. It is a long narrative poem consists of more than two lakhs shlokas. The story of the Mahabharata is divided into 18 large books popularly known as parvas. Each parva consists of many episodes. The story displays Lord Krishna’s (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) endeavour to establish dharma all over the world. The epic marks the dawn of a new era and the end of another one. The epic introduces heroic figures like the Pandavas on the one hand, who always stands on the side of goodness and Kauravas on the other who born to commit only evil deeds. But whenever we recollect the story of mahabhata, a character immediately comes to our mind which arouses the feeling of utmost pity and sympathy i.e. the character of maharathi Karna.

The story of Mahabharata teaches us what ethical dilemma is and most of the major figures in the epic suffered from ethical dilemmas at different point of their lives, where they had to choose between dharma and duty. The character of Karna is one among them who faced an ethical dilemma just before the outbreak of the battle of Kurukshetra. The dilemma that Karna was going through was not an easy one because that was a decision making time for him where he had to make a choice between his mother and his friend. He did not want to violate his duty to the either. But at the same time, he could not choose both of them. Hence, Karna undergoes a very traumatic situation. This paper is an attempt to explore the ethical dilemma of karna as reflected in the episode ‘The Temptation of Karna’.

KEYWORDS: Karna, Ethical dilemma, Dharma, Battle & kurukshetra

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