



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

109

From Selfless Sacrifice To Silent Witness: A Critical Look At Jatayu And Bhisma's Roles In Protecting Woman

Purva Pareshkumar Trivedi

Student

Smt. K.S.N. Kansagara Mahila Arts & Commerce College - Rajkot

Abstract

When we faced with the situations that challenges our values, how do we react? This question resonates with the stories of Bhishma and Jatayu who were faced with a similar situation, but their responses were vastly different. One has been exalted for his heroism but the other has only been recognized for his loyalty. This article is based on a comparative study between Bhishma and Jatayu. One became a shield, and their sacrifice echoed through eternity, while the other, bound by chains of obligation, became a passive witness to the unfolding tragedy. The story of Jatayu illustrates supreme sacrifice to his object of worship. Though he was older than Ravana but his promise was not inconsiderable. Therefore, we can say that 'one who fights for others knowing the consequence, his greatness is celebrated like that of Jatayu'. On the other hand, Bhishma had seen Draupadi being disrobing in the court. Could not resist and remain silent. His sinful Karma remained dormant but since he has now become a part of Adharma. Therefore, we can say that 'those who close their eyes even after seeing wrong happening with others his speed is like that of Bhishma.'



Keywords: Jatayu, Bhishma, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Women's Protection, Sacrifice, Silence, Humiliation, Dharma, Disrobing, Abduction, Helplessness, Obligation, Resistance, Limitations.

Time creates all things and time destroys them all. Time burns all creatures and time again extinguishes that fire. (Mahabharata- Adi parva)

The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata resonate with powerful narratives of heroes and villains, where women often find themselves in sensitive situations. Yet, the concept of 'protection' extended to them takes on contrasting and complex forms. This analysis delves into the stories of Jatayu, the valiant vulture king Ramayana, and Bhishma, the revered patriarch from Mahabharata, to explore the multifaceted nature of women's protection in epic tales.

Wings Of Valour

As Sita was being forcibly taken by Ravana she cried with all her might. Jatayu heard her crying. He was determined to encounter Ravana and then there was a great fight between them. Jatayu was pierced by his claws while Ravana could take up his arrows and shot at him. He sliced off the wings of Jatayu. A king of eagles fell to the earth; he could no longer fly. Counting his last breaths Jatayu said 'I knew that I could not win over Ravana, but I fought, if I did not fight future generations called me a coward.' Jatayu respected women, and sacrificed his life, then at the time of death 'he got the bed of Lord Shree Ram's lap.'

Bhishma's Piercing Penance

In the battle of Kurukshetra Bhishma Pitamah lying on the bed of arrows for six months waiting for death. Now what was the karmic reason that Bhishma Pitamah had to suffer on a bed of arrows? To the question as to why Bhishma was suffering this punishment even when he had not committed any sin during the past 72 birth lives (Great Bhishma could peep into his past lives through samadhi), Lord Krishna replied to him that, 'he committed folly in the past 73rd life birth when he inflicted injuries to insects by piercing thorns/needles into their bodies. Those thorns have now appeared as a bed of arrows for you. Your sinful Karma



remained dormant as you were a pious person throughout these lives but since you have now become a party of Adharma, of Duryodhana, the sanchit evil Karma of 73rd life has ripened now.'

Krishna further said that 'Bhishma had seen Draupadi's reputation being looted in the court. He did not do anything to stop this. Draupadi kept crying, sobbing, and screaming but Bhishma kept sitting with his head bowed and could not protect the woman. The result was that even after getting the boon of life, he got a bed of arrows.

A Fascinating Comparison Between Jatayu And Bhishma

Bhishma was a powerful warrior and patriarch if he wanted, he could have stopped the disrobing of Draupadi, yet he chooses not to physically stop her humiliation in the full court. In contrast, Jatayu was older than Ravana. Still, he chooses to try his best to protect Sita. Bhishma was powerful but he acted powerless, whereas Jatayu was powerful. 'Real power is not about physical strength but the deep desire to help.'

Even after taking a breath, Bhishma felt lifeless inside, his conscience haunted by his deed. Each day was a burden. In contrast, Jatayu died once but lived eternally true to his conscience. 'Our only constant companion is our conscience – better to be true to it.'

Feathers did not define Jatayu's nobility, nor did polished manners mask Bhishma's moral failings. Bhishma was supposed to be a highly cultured human but acted highly heartlessly in terms of values. Whereas, Jatayu was supposed to be a lowly uncultured vulture but acted highly humanely like an evolved human being. This story reminds us: 'Being human isn't about how you are born, but what you do.'

Bhishma was strong, but when Draupadi cried for protection from Bhishma because she knew that, if someone could protect her, it was only him; yet he stayed quiet. He could've stopped her pain, but his silence spoke louder than words. On the other hand, Sita never begged Jatayu, the brave vulture, to protect her. She just wanted him to tell Ram. Jatayu knew he wasn't the strongest, but he fought anyway. His actions spoke louder than any plea. 'The language of the heart is more powerful than the language of the words.'



Bhishma got caught up in his kingly duties, forgetting what was truly right in his heart. He was all tangled up and confused. Meanwhile, Jatayu knew exactly what he had to do, no doubts, no confusion. He followed his heart and fought for what was right. When things get tough, remember to listen to your heart, not confusing rules. Do what feels right, what shines clear as day. That's what makes real heroes, the ones who follow their heart's truth.

Bhishma was an elderly relative of Draupadi but stood cold and distant during her time of need. He was like a stranger, watching her pain unfold. In contrast, Jatayu was not at all related to Sita; he was a stranger to her but rose to her defence without hesitation. He fought like a true protector and acted more than a dearest relative.

Life sometimes puts us in situations where we need to make crucial decisions in a few moments. What we decide very much depends on the kind of inner integrity we cultivate by the associations we keep. Bhishma, surrounded by power and ambition, may have lost sight of what truly mattered. His choices didn't reflect the good he knew. In contrast, Jatayu, inspired by kindness and loyalty, chooses to fight even when the odds are stacked against him. He lived by the values he admired in others.

When faced with Bhishma's silence, Krishna, the wise one, turned away, showing his disapproval. In contrast, Rama, filled with respect for Jatayu's brave sacrifice, held him close in his final moments, offering an honour even his father, Dashrath didn't receive.

This recount is not to criticize Bhishma's character in Mahabharata as such. We admire Bhishma's overall goodness, his great personality, and his heroic actions but this one inaction is what piqued our curiosity and deserves closer examination.

Women Empowerment

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः॥



is a famous shloka taken from Manusmruthi which means where women are honoured, there the gods reside and delight and where they are not honoured, all actions are fruitless.

During ancient times, Indian women had a very respected place in society. This can be easily understood from Bhishma's advice from his deathbed to the Pandavas and Duryodhana. Bhishma said that a woman is like a gentle breeze. A home where a woman is disrespected can never be happy or flourished. A home where there is no respect for women, bad luck strikes them often and family members suffer a bad fate. In contrast, a home where a woman is respected flourishes with health, love, wealth, and happiness as lady luck shines bright on such families. He also said that the homes where women are not treated as equal, can't be prosperous. Where a woman is treated like an equal, her needs treated like your own such a family will have the blessings of Goddess Laxmi too. Where the flames of defiance or women's rightful place ignite, even the heavens shimmer with the reflection of their courage but where their spirits are subdued, even the most ardent prayers drift unheard into the silence. This interpretation focuses on the activism of women, framing their fight for respect as a catalyst for societal transformation and divine acknowledgement.

Conclusion

According to my point of view, if you have devotion to the lord, you will be the real successor of your life. It is better to lose and win than to win and lose. As per the 14th verse of chapter 14 of Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta,

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् |

तदोत्तमविदां लोकानमलान्प्रतिपद्यते ||

On second thought we can say that, 'one must always oppose the wrong. Truth is troubled, but not defeated.' Sometimes we do what we think is right but it is too late when we realize our mistakes so, please think twice before making any decision.



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

Let's explore the depths of the Ramayana and Mahabharata! These ancient stories aren't just about piety, but about living good lives based on strong morals and dharma. By rereading and discussing them, we can learn valuable lessons that enrich our lives and guide us to become tomorrow's leaders, rooted in our rich culture and traditions.

By analysing characters like Jatayu and Bhishma through shared discussions and retellings of the epics, we can encourage diverse perspectives and interpretations. This diverse engagement with the stories enhances our understanding of dharma and morality, enriching our lives and moulding us into responsible individuals.



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

References

1. Jatayu and Mahabharata - Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham
2. The BHISM way or JATAYU way. (linkedin.com)
3. Kathir Velu's answer to Was there any previous birth relation because of which Bhishma of Mahabharata has to be laid on the bed of arrows for many days? - Quora
4. What is the difference between the Jatayu of Ramayana and the Bhishma Pitamah of Mahabharata? - Sanatan facts - Quora