

UNIT TWO: ANCIENT TALES

Yudhishtira's Wisdom

Source: *The Mahabharata*

The story “Yudhishtira's Wisdom” is adapted from *Mahabharata*. The story is about the importance of obedience, patience, truth, righteousness and courage in the life to achieve the goal successfully.

Long ago, five *Pandava* brothers were following a deer in the forest. It was scorching sun. The deer vanished somewhere in the dense forest. They were tired and thirsty, and were far from their hut. Due to thirst, *Yudhishtira* sent *Sahadeva* in the search of water. *Sahadeva* went to search water. After a short walk, he reached to a beautiful pond. He wanted to drink water to fulfill his thirst so he bowed the head towards the water. At the meantime, a strange sound warned him not to drink water before answering the questions. He disobeyed the sound, drank water that caused to lie unconscious at the edge of the pond. When *Sahadeva* didn't return back for long time, *Yudhishtira* sent *Nakula*. He too didn't return back. Then *Yudhishtira* sent *Arjuna* and *Bheema* respectively. They too didn't return back because the same situation occurred as it was for *Sahadeva* for all. At last, *Yudhishtira* went himself in search of brothers and water. After a short walk, he reached to the same pond where his brothers were lying unconscious at the edge of the pond. When he saw his brother's miserable condition, he started crying. He appealed the devil spirit to let him die with his brothers. He was thirsty so he tried to drink water bowing the head towards the pond. At the meantime, a strange sound warned him not to drink the water before answering the questions introducing himself as *Yaksha*. Then being patient, *Yudhishtira* requested *Yaksha* to ask the questions. Then *Yaksha* asked:

➤ *What makes the sunshine?*

Yudhishtira replied, “*The power of the god.*”

➤ *What is man's surest weapon against the danger?*

Yudhishtira replied, “*Courage.*”

➤ *What gives more to man than even the earth does?*

Yudhishtira replied, “*A mother gives birth, feeds and sustains us.*”

- *When does a man become loved by his fellows?*
Yudhishtira replied, “*When he gives up the pride.*”
- *What is that which makes a man happy when he has lost it?*
Yudhishtira replied, “*Anger.*”
- *What can a man give up and immediately become rich?*
Yudhishtira replied, “*Desire.*”

With the answers of *Yudhishtira*, *Yaksha* became well-pleased and asked *Yudhishtira* to choose one of his brothers whom he would like to revive. *Yudhishtira* claiming the truth and righteousness are a man’s only weapon and protection. So he requested *Yaksha* to revive *Nakula* because he didn’t want to end the chain of his step-mother, *Madri*, as he was alive from the side of *Kunti*. *Yaksha* became happy with the wiseness of *Yudhishtira* and revived all the brothers and told them to go to *Matsya Himal* assuring them to help in the problems.

Hence, the story is about the importance of obedience, patience, courage, truth and righteousness to lead the life towards success.

Four levels of the story Yudhishtira’s Wisdom:

1. Literal Comprehension

The story “Yudhishtira’s Wisdom” is adapted from Mahabharata. Long ago, five *Pandava* brothers were following a deer in the forest. It was scorching sun. the deer vanished somewhere in the dense forest. They were tired and thirsty, and were far from their hut. Due to the thirst, *Yudhishtira* sent *Sahadeva* in search of water. *Sahadeva* went to search water. After a short walk, he reached to a beautiful pond. He wanted to drink water to fulfill his thirst so he bowed the head towards the water. At the meantime, a strange sound warned him not to drink water before answering the questions. He disobeyed the sound, drank water that caused him to lie unconscious at the edge of the pond. When *Sahadeva* didn’t return back for a long time, *Yudhishtira* sent *Nakula*. He too didn’t return back. Then *Yudhishtira* sent *Arjuna* and *Bheema* respectively. They too didn’t return back because the same situation occurred as it was for *Sahadeva* for all. At last, *Yudhishtira* went himself in search of brothers and water. After a short walk, he reached to the same pond where his brothers were lying unconscious at the edge of the pond. When he saw his brother’s miserable condition, he started crying. He

appealed the devil spirit to let him die with his brothers. He was thirsty so he tried to drink water bowing the head towards the pond. At the mean time, a strange sound warned him not to drink the water before answering the questions introducing himself as *Yaksha*. Then being patient, *Yudhishtira* requested *Yaksha* to ask the questions. Then *Yaksha* asked:

- *What makes the sunshine?*
Yudhishtira replied, “The power of the god.”
- *What is man’s surest weapon against the danger?*
Yudhishtira replied, “Courage.”
- *What gives more to man than even the earth does?*
Yudhishtira replied, “A mother gives birth, feeds and sustains us.”
- *When does a man become loved by his fellows?*
Yudhishtira replied, “When he gives up the pride.”
- *What is that which makes a man happy when he has lost it?*
Yudhishtira replied, “Anger.”
- *What can a man give up and immediately become rich?*
Yudhishtira replied, “Desire.”

With the answers of *Yudhishtira*, *Yaksha* became well-pleased and asked *Yudhishtira* to choose one of his brothers whom he would like to revive. *Yudhishtira* claiming the truth and righteousness are a man’s only weapon and protection. So he requested *Yaksha* to revive *Nakula* because he didn’t want to end the chain of his step-mother, *Madri*, as he was alive from the side of *Kunti*. *Yaksha* became happy with the wiseness of *Yudhishtira* and revived all the brothers and told them to go to *Matsya Himal* assuring them to help in the problems.

2. Interpretation

The story is about the importance of obedience, patience, truth, righteousness and courage in the life to achieve the goals successfully.

3. Critical thinking

The story is about the importance of obedience and patience. But some of the ideas in the story are not convincing. In the story, it is said that a strange sound warned five *Pandava* brothers not to drink water in the middle of the forest. Can we believe this? When answering the questions of *Yaksha*, *Yudhishtira* said due to

the power of the god, the sun shines. Does the god really exist? *Yudhishtira* said desire should be given up to be rich. Doesn't the development stop if we give up desire? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this story, I really understood the importance of patience for the successful life. The story taught me that anger and pride are the enemies of the human beings. Truth and righteousness are the fundamental components of our life. It is my perceived idea from the story.



The Brave Little Parrot

Source: Buddhist legend

The story “The brave little parrot” is adapted from *Buddhist legend*. The story is about the importance of selfless help that is even rewarded by the God. “Selfless help to be helped” is the central idea of the story.

Once long ago, Buddha was born as a little parrot. He had an interesting life in the forest. One day, due to lightening flash and thunder crash, the forest started to flame. The wild animals became terrified and started wondering here and there in search of safe place. When the parrot saw the miserable condition of the animals, he flew to the river, dipped, returned back over the fire and flapped the wings to drop the drops of water in order to put out the fire and save the life of the animals. But the drops of water vanished into the flame with a sound *hissssss*. But the parrot didn't stop his work. His eyes were red and wings were burnt due to the hot smoke. At the mean time, a group of Gods was going somewhere through the same jungle. They saw the work of the parrot and started laughing teasing the absurd work. One of the Gods, in the form of a golden eagle, came to the parrot and advised him to stop the work. But the parrot replied that he needed help but not advice which made the God feel ashamed. He became emotional and started crying. The tears from the eyes of the God started flowing like the heavy rain or the stream. That swept away the fire from the forest. Then the forest got new life, animals were saved and the bird was decorated with different colors of feathers like red, green, yellow and became a handsome bird. The animals that were saved from the fire cheered up for the selfless work of the parrot.

Hence, the story tries to give the moral lesson that everyone should be involved in the selfless help that always helps to get helped.

Four levels of the story The Brave Little Parrot:

1. Literal Comprehension

The story “The Brave Little Parrot” is adapted from Buddhist Legend. Once long ago, Buddha was born as a little parrot. He had an interesting life in the forest. One day, due to lightening flash and thunder crash, the forest started to flame. The wild animals became terrified and started wondering here and there in search of safe place. When the parrot saw the miserable condition of the animals, he flew to the river, dipped, returned back over the fire and flapped the wings to drop the

drops of water in order to put out the fire and save the life of the animals. But the drops of water vanished into the flame with a sound *hissssss*. But the parrot didn't stop his work. His eyes were red and wings were burnt due to the hot smoke. At the mean time, a group of Gods was going somewhere through the same jungle. They saw the work of the parrot and started laughing teasing the absurd work. One of the Gods, in the form of a golden eagle, came to the parrot and advised him to stop the work. But the parrot replied that he needed help but not advice which made the God feel ashamed. He became emotional and started crying. The tears from the eyes of the God started flowing like the heavy rain or the stream. That swept away the fire from the forest. Then the forest got new life, animals were saved and the bird was decorated with different colors of feathers like red, green, yellow and became a handsome bird. The animals that were saved from the fire cheered up for the selfless work of the parrot.

2. Interpretation

The story is about the importance of selfless help that is even rewarded by the God. "Selfless help to be helped" is the central idea of the story.

3. Critical Thinking

The story is about the importance of selfless help to get helped but some of the ideas in the story are not convincing. In the story, it is said that the parrot tried to put out the fire bringing the drops of water on the wings. Does a bird do so? It is also said that the tears from the God flowed like the stream and put out the fire of the forest. Isn't it fanciful idea? Does the God really exist? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading the story, what I understood is we should always try to be involved in the selfless work that brings necessary happiness and success. The story reminded me an incident of few years ago. Our village was about to be caught by the fire. It was a sunny day. We were trying to put out the fire with the bucketful water but it was almost impossible. At the mean time, the rain drizzled mixing up with the rays of the sun. Then, the fire was put out.

If Not Higher

I.L.Peretz, Poland (1852-1915)

The story “If Not Higher” is based on *Jews religion*, written by I.L.Peretz. The story is about the importance of help for the helpless people instead of wondering in search of temples for the spiritualism. “*We have to be involved in the help of helpless people instead of visiting temples for the religious gain*” is the central idea of the story.

Every Friday morning, at the time of Penitential prayer, the *Rabbi* would vanish. The followers wanted to know where their master would go. So one of the followers, *Litvak* went to the room of *Rabbi* and hid under the bed. At night *Litvak* could feel the groaning.

The following day, early in the morning, the *Rabbi* woke up and set his journey towards the forest in the peasantry dress. On the way, *Rabbi* collected the firewood and ultimately reached to a hut of an old Jewish widow. There the *Rabbi* recited the third portion of

Penitential prayers. As the *Rabbi* put the wood into the oven, he recited first portion, as he kindled the fire and the wood burnt brightly, he recited second and when the fire was set, he recited the third portion of Penitential prayer and then he shut the stove. *Litvak*, who saw all these activities of *Rabbi*, became the follower/disciple.

Hence, the story is about the importance of involving in the help of helpless people instead of wandering in search of temples for the religious pursuit.\

Four levels of the story “If Not Higher”:

1. Literal Comprehension

The story “If Not Higher” is based on *Jews religion*, written by I.L. Peretz. Every Friday morning, at the time of Penitential prayer, the *Rabbi* would vanish. The followers wanted to know where their master would go. So one of the followers, *Litvak* went to the room of *Rabbi* and hid under the bed. At night *Litvak* could feel the groaning. The following day, early in the morning, the *Rabbi* woke up and set is journey towards the forest in the peasantry dress. On the way, *Rabbi* collected the firewood and ultimately reached to a hut of an old Jewish widow.

There the *Rabbi* recited the third portion of Penitential prayers. As the *Rabbi* put the wood into the oven, he recited first portion, as he kindled the fire and the wood burnt brightly, he recited second and when the fire was set, he recited the third portion of Penitential prayer and then he shut the stove. *Litvak*, who saw all these activities of *Rabbi*, became the follower/disciple.

2. Interpretation

The story is about the importance of help for the helpless people instead of wondering in search of temples for the spiritualism. “*We have to be involved in the help of helpless people instead of visiting temples for the religious gain*” is the central idea of the story.

3. Critical Thinking

The story is about the importance of human help for the spiritualism instead of worshipping the God. But some of the ideas in the story are not convincing. In the story, it is said that *Rabbi* would be vanished somewhere at the time of Penitential prayer. Does a religious master do so? *Litvak*, the follower of *Rabbi*, went to the room and hid under the bed to know the disappearance of *Rabbi*. Can we suspect the visit of *Rabbi* to an old woman? Etc.

4. Assimilation

After reading this story, I remembered the poem “*Yatri*” by Nepalese great poet, Laxmi Prasad Devkota in which the poet mocks those people who believe on visiting the temples and worshipping there for religious pursuit being indifference on the sentiment of human beings. The story taught me the moral lesson that “*It is far better to be faithful on the human help being conscious on that the God lies within ourselves and helps the helpless people.*”