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Bhisma Parwa: Value of Loyalty and Work Ethos

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Abstract

The value of loyalty and work ethos are both found in the fragment of *Bhisma Parwa*, especially in the part when Sri Krsna is teaching the confused Arjuna. As a classical script, *Bhisma Parwa* has high value and it is contextual for this global era. This study is of library research and has been carried out qualitatively and descriptively to support that the text teaches men to value others and above all to uplift loyalty which mirrors righteousness to bring peace and happiness in life. It also teaches that any work to do should be based on dharma and the essence of working is not in achieving the goal but in widening the heart, mind, and soul in the process of it. In addition, the text also teaches that success or failure would never affect one's works as long as one unattached themselves from the results and offered them to God as well as to the benefit of human beings.

Keywords: Bhisma Parwa, The value of loyalty, Work Ethos.

Introduction

Ethics according to Hinduism teaches how men should behave and interact with their fellows, the surrounding natures, and God. As study ethics not only discusses tradition but also the true nature of mankind that can distinguish what is right and what is wrong, which is morality. The problem of right and wrong about human behaviors is seen to be important to know and all religions teach their people to do the right ones because that is the essence of the teaching of God (Wiratmadja, 1975). Men live intending to attain happiness in this material world (*jagadhita*) and the spiritual (*moksha*) one. On the way to achieve it men satisfy several needs, namely

1. The primary ones include food, house, and clothes.
2. The social-cultural ones that include education, social relation, and status
3. The spiritual one refers to the religious need.

Every step one makes has its essential individual and social values. One should satisfy the individual

needs when living as a social member where he should learn to value one another. The satisfaction one attains lies not only in what one does but also in how one does it. The foundation for ethical values is not on what is possible but on what is good and on what to do. The principles are integrated into ones' material and spiritual destinies. One has one's civilization that develops to perfection. The perfect worldly state should be based on living with ethics.

Many have a different understanding of what ethics is including the adult and learned ones (Wiratmadja, 1975). However, one should follow the right way (*dharma*) because only by so can one attain prosperity. Only by being so and close to God ones would one attain God's grace as well as overcome ones' problems and help themselves. This is found in the verse of *Rg Veda V.51.5* below:

*Svasti panthām anu cerema
Sūryā-candramasāv iva
Punar dadatāghnatā
Jānatā sam gamemahi*

Translation :

Let's take the right way, just like the sun and the moon, and associate with those that are generous, of high knowledge, and self-satisfied. (Titib, 1998).

Bhisma Parwa is literature with high moral values. The essential teaching is so systematic. The values are found within the rivalry between Pandawa and Kaurawa that symbolizes the fight between the truth against evil. The account that reveals a dilemma can take one to understand the importance of making the right decision. The ethics in the *Bhisma Parwa* include faithfulness and work ethics.

Methods

This library research is of qualitative method. It also applied interviews with the purposively chosen informants, namely some community members and leaders. The findings are described descriptively.

Results

The History of the Scripture

The scripture of *Bhisma Parwa* is one of the classical Hindu heritages that have ethics teaching. By studying it, the ideas and values within the text would survive the ages and be referred to in this life so that it is meaningful. The text has cultural and conceptual values, such as religion, ethics, and so on. Robson, as cited in Cika (2005), says that ancient scriptures can reflect the mind and aspiration of predecessors. By studying them one may approach the highly valued past life as references.

This ancient Balinese scripture of *Bhisma Parwa* was written by Ida Kamala Subramaniam and transcribed and translated by IGA Dewi Paramita, S.S. However, although it has high values, it would mean nothing when studied.

The Story of *Bhisma Parwa*

In the *Adi Parwa* I/XII, it is narrated that *Bhisma* was born and named *Dewa Brata*. He was the son of *Raja Santanu* and *Dewi Gangga* and the reincarnation of *Sang Dyoh* who had been cursed

by the Sage *Wasista* for telling her husband to steal the cow, *Lembu Nandini*, which can fulfill any wishes. The Sage *Wasista* knows that the cow was stolen by *Asta Basu* as ordered by *Sang Prabhat*. Since it was *Sang Prabhata* who gave the order, it was he who received a punishment to be born as *Dewa Brata*.

Every born child of *Dewi Gangga* was casted away to the *Gangga River*. The last one was saved by *King Santanu* and lifted to heaven by *Gangga* and named *Dewa Brata*. *Dewa Brata* was taught *Veda* by the Sage *Wasista*, trained archery by the Sage *Rama Parasu*, and was living with *King Santanu*. One day when he met *Dewi Satyawati* the daughter of *Dasa Bhala*, the king fell in love with her. However, *Dasa Bhala* asked *King Santanu* to marry her daughter, so that the son of *Dewi Satyawati* would become the king one day. *King Santanu* was sad for his son. *Dewa Brata*, the son, knows his father's misery.

Dewa Brata went to meet *Dasa Bhala* to ask about the relation between his father and *Dewi Satyawati*. In front of him, *Dewa Brata* swore to give up his throne and stay unmarried for life. Then, *Dewi Satyawati* was taken home. She was then offered to his father, *King Santanu*. *King Santanu* was surprised to see his son doing it. He then gave up his power of "staying alive" or *Swacchandamarana* to him (Gerejed, 2003). *Bhisma (Dewa Brata)* as a young one was showing his character of having a great soul of the reincarnated *Asta Basu*.

In the old tradition, a writer did not use to put his/her name on his/her work. The ancient literature of *para* was not written by a single writer. This is what today's writers can learn. Thus, there is a possibility for some literature to be written by one or more of the same writer, for example, the 15th, 16th, or 17th *para* was each written by the same writer. The first attention should be given attention, especially, to the functional particles in dialogues with their unique expressions which play important roles in the prose as they are decisive to the writers' stylistics.

Based on this, it is impossible that the writer of *Wirata Parwa* or *Bhisma Parwa* is the same person as the writer of *Adi Parwa*. There is some difference in the way quotations in Sanskrit are put there as well as the frequency of their uses (Zoetmulder, 1985).

Bhisma Parwa as part of *Mahabharata* mentions the name of Vyasa Dewa as the writer, just the same name for the writer of *Bhisma Parwa*, which was part of the material in a project of Hindu Study and Socialisation in 1985 / 1986. “*The Maha Bharata Of Krisna Dwipayana Wyasa*” translated by Nila (in Gerejed, 2003)

Based on this, *Bhisma Parwa* should be concluded as part of *Mahabharata* which was written by Vyasa Dewa, a name always mentioned in the literature, and indeed a famous one in India. The story was translated into the Old Javanese language when King Dharmawangsa was ruling in 991-1016. It was during those years the parts of *Mahabharata*, namely *Adi Parwa*, *Wirata Parwa*, *Bhisma Parwa* were all translated. Out of 18 paras that were created, now only 9 are remaining. Among them are *Adi Parwa*, *Wirata Parwa*, and *Bhisma Parwa*.

The classic literature of Kalangwan mentions that in the *Wirata Parwa* the first words (quoted below) are addressed to Krsna Dwaipayana, a name believed to refer to Vyasa, the mystical figure of *Mahabharata* creator who was asked to be a source for a blessing upon whoever narrates the *para* in other languages.

“Then, praise is to the King with his immense power creating prosperity here and there. “ May He also bless those who narrate the story in Javanese”.

Bhisma Parwa also begins with a salutation to Vyasa, and then to the king of Yawa, who was referred to as Hari, as found in the quotation below.

“He is called Hari because he is himself Visnu, who is entitled Sri, protects the world, just like a lion. He

is also the one who is called Dharma Wangsa Teguh (Zoetmulder, 1985)

The quotation above suggests that the original story of *Bhisma Parwa* was composed by Bhagawan Wyasa. The other ones, including the ones in Indonesian languages made during the ruling of King Dharmawangsa or Nanta Wikrama Tungga Wijaya, have been only the retold versions.

The translation of *Mahabharata* into Old Javanese had the goal to help the people understand the story of the literature as well as learn the values within.

The Faithfulness

The term for “faithfulness” in Hinduism is *Satya*. *Satya* is considered as the main condition for attaining happiness. *Satya* is also part of the Hindu ethics that is needed to build harmony in life. The holy Veda says that *Satya* is the principle of life. When one only follows it ones will be saved and attain prosperity. It can be gained easily as long as there is faith or *Sraddha*. With it, one can walk along the way to reach the truth (Titib, 1998). This is mentioned in the holy verse of *Yajurveda 1.5*, as quoted below.

*Agne vratapate vratam cariṣāmi
Tac-chakeyam. Tan-me rādhyathām
Idam aham anytāt satyam upaimi*

Translation :

Oh Lord, the Master of holy words. I would keep my words. May You bless me with a crown for doing this and step firmly to hold me and prevent me from falling into the lies. (Titib, 1998).

This verse suggests that to keep the faith and to do *dharma* in general we need to control our minds. Honesty can only come from the heart and in every being there is that small part of the God or *Sang Hyang Widhi* which is called *Atma* and that is the source of the holiness in human beings. There are different types of *Satya*, which is called *Panca Satya* or five faithfulness:

1. *Satya Wacana* is being faithful with words
2. *Satya Laksana* is being faithful with deeds
3. *Satya Mitra* is being faithful with friends
4. *Satya Hredaya* is being faithful to the heart
5. *Satya Semaya* is being faithful with the promises.

These five faiths are only possible when all of the deeds, words, and minds are directed towards the truth. In Hinduism, these are all summarized into the concept of *Tri Kaya Parisudha*, which teaches three holy conducts.

1. *Manaka Parisudha* refers to the holy mind. The mind determines happiness in life because it experiences any form of pleasure and pain. This is the reason why it should be directed towards positive states.
2. *Waka Parisudha* refers to speaking properly. The social relation we make relies much on the words we speak. That is why we should be careful with our words. In Indonesian people say “*multum harimaumu*” which means ‘your mouth is your tiger’. This teaches us that the good words we say will bring us happiness whereas the bad ones will cause disaster.
3. *Kalika Parisudha* is the good deeds that are derived from good thoughts.

In *Bhisma Parwa* faithfulness is represented in the deed of Arjuna :

“.....Arjuna, I see that it is time for you to do what you say. You are going to destroy the Kaurawa side that is led by Bhisma, Drona, and others. You have said that you can destroy all. Show it now. Chase away the doubt that is conquering your heart. You only think that Bhisma is your grandfather. But, see our troops who were dead. See how they were killed. Don't you pity them? They were melted just like snow being heated by the sun.”

Arjuna was touched by Krsna's words. He said: “ Take me there, Krsna. I will fight them.....(Subramaniam, 2004).

What Arjuna did is a realization of *Satya Amaya* and *Satya wacana*, which is to keep the promise. After being advised, Arjuna is ready to enter the battle. This suggests that having such loyalty and holding the truth would help one face a challenge. This is also in line with the words that Arjuna said to Krsna as below.

“.....Krsna, hold your temper. You are supposed to keep your promise. You said you would never fight. You cannot let it break with your anger. I swear I would fight the Kaurawa ass I promise it. I will face Bhisma with this emotion. I am not going to break my promise.” Listening to Arjuna, Krsna stayed calm..” (Subramaniam, 2004).

This teaches that anger and an egoistical mind can destroy faithfulness. The exchange between Arjuna and Krsna here should be seen as the mutual relation between Nara and Narayana. The same law is found too in the relation between the soul and the body. When anger controls the mind there goes the soul that whispers the truth. This emphasizes the essence that material aspects are nothing without spiritual ones. In the *Metafisika Darsana*, this is called the unity between *Purusha* and *Pradhana*, which is the source for creation.

According to Suweta (wawancara, Tanggal 25 Februari 2018) an artist of *Dharma Gita*, Bhisma is also a character in the *Bhisma Parwa* who represents faithfulness since he is the one who keeps his promise to stay unmarried in life (*nyukla Brahmacari*) for the sake of the happiness of his parents. He also vowed to dedicate his life to Astina Pura, in addition to promising not to kill Srikandhi in the battle because he was a reincarnation of Dewi Amba.

Before the *Bharatayudha*, the battle between *Pandawa* and *Kaurawa*, both sides had an agreement to stick to the conduct. This is mentioned in *Bhisma Parwa* as quoted below:

Ngkāna tikang pratiyodha n pangghoṣaṇākēn samaya Dharmayudha, tan hana wehēn paracidra. Tan swikaran

*asing mahyun mangaliha, tan mapranga
wwang sēdēng awrō, tan simbata ng
wwang mungkur alayū, tan pamanaha tan
panggēgō sañjata, tan pamātyan anggēgō
dhwaja, tan aniwaknang manulup šangka,
lāwan manabēh bheri mredangga. Mwang
malagā sahipēr wahananya, tan
pangharēpknang sor saka riya. Mangkana
sambodhanan ikang pratiodha n pangayu
kasuran mwang Dharmayuddha.*

Translation :

At that time all warriors are told about the battle conducts, such as never attack from behind, never scold the ones changing side, never attacks the drunk ones, never hit a runner, never shooting the armless one, never attacking the flag carrier, never attack the trumpet blower and other instrumental players. In the battle, a fighter should be equal in their vehicles (*Dharmayudha*) (Djapa, 2011).

This suggests that one should keep faithful not only to one's brothers and friends but also to one's foes. It also teaches that faithfulness is a symbol of self-discipline and positivity towards the agreement that has been made in life. A promise is a trust to us made by others for all. Thus, when one fulfills one promise one will live peacefully, happily, and can reach the highest truth, as it is written in *Yajur Veda XIX.30*, as quoted below.

Śraddhayā satyam āpyate

Translation :

By valuing trust, one can reach the highest truth, namely God Himself. (Titib, 1998).

Bhisma Parwa is a story with deep values of faithfulness, especially *Satya Semaya* and *Satya Wacana*. They teach how to value each other. How bad we are and how much we hate something, we should keep our faith (*Satya*), because it reflects the truth as an aspect of ethics to be implemented to gain peace and happiness.

Ethics of Working

People still work hours despite the development of technology. At the traditional markets, supermarkets, shopping centers, offices, military quarters, working people can be easily seen. In other working places, namely hotels, hospitals, people may work days and nights. After work, at home, the activities are continued, such as reading magazines or newspapers, listening to the radio, watching television, talking, etc. To sum up, in life men do not stop working (Gorda, 2004).

All works are controlled by ethics. Ethics holds the spirit to do jobs optimally and better. It also perfects them when they are based on the faiths in the values (*dharma*) and avoids those that are not (*dharma*).

The teaching of karma in *Bhisma Parwa* can be found in almost every part of the story. This is so because every dialog between the characters mirrors the concept of karma. Below is an example of a dialog taken from the story, namely between Krsna and Arjuna that reflects the point:

“.....Even when you cannot understand it I am going to push you to the war because you are a warrior. You must fight. Fighting the war for protecting the truth equals the highest conduct that a warrior can do. This is now happening to you. The gate of heaven is opening for you. If you avoid it, which is the fight for uprighting the truth, you are resuming the evil. You are irresponsible for your duty and it is a sin” (Subramaniam, 2004).

The lines above basically teach that all works should be done based on *dharma*. It is *dharma* that can take the works or karma to perfection. Never be irresponsible with your duty for it can be a sin in life. Realizing it is part of men's destination as the fully minded creature. God lets men go on the journey of life to reach perfection. When the job is based on *dharma* the key of life is in hand. *Dharma* provides positive energy to the job and makes it ethical. It directs properly all attitudes and deeds and becomes the condition for achieving success in

life. Without it, all that is done turn to be egotistical and selfish.

When doing the duty one should not attach oneself to the system nor to the process where one can feel the burden and then get stressed for the situation. Depression in workplaces is common because of the heavy tasks and the low payment. This also tempts one to walk away from the job. *Bhisma Parwa* provides the answer about the ethics (*karma*) in doing duties in life as found in the dialog between Krsna and Arjuna below.

“.....You must do the job. Your right is your job. Yet, the result of it is not yours. Never even to think about it. When you do your duty never think much about what will it give you. You should not do anything either because none of them can help you. You have no right to do anything. Do not attach yourself to anything. Just do your duty unconditionally. No success nor failure should bother you. When your mind is unattached then it is the same as doing yoga.” (Subramaniam, 2004).

This quotation above about Krsna’s words to Arjuna suggests that work or karma should be valued more than material. Only by so, one can be free from attachment. Do your duty with all of your heart. Do it as an offer to God so that everything will be light and fruitful and receive good *Pahala*. Working innovatively and ceaselessly is a must to reach success. In Hindu working is a sacrifice or *yagnya* offered to God. It is a *yagnya* if it is done wholeheartedly no matter how small or large it is. The quotation below suggests it.

“Do your duty as a sacrifice. Free yourself from attachment. Do it as if you do it all for the sake of others. This is the secret. You should do it so that others and not you, can get benefit from it. Offer the result to me. Fight. Keep your heart. Free yourself from any wish or want. Avoid selfishness. When doing your duty, sin or gain is not going to be attached to you. Only

then you are liberated.”.
(Subramaniam, 2004).

What is said above should sharpen our understanding that doing our job should not be attached to the self or with egoism instead should be done to make others happy. A steady heart is needed to keep the job. You can imagine when one day one is honest and studious to do the job only to turn into an unstable state the other day. It is only going to break the job because the professionalism begins to fade before it is gone totally. God does not like a lazy workers. This is said in the mantram quoted below from *Atharvaveda XX.18.3*:

*Ichchanti devāh sunvantam
Na svapnāya sprhayanti
Yanti pramādam atandrāh.*

Translation :

Gods like those who work hard. They dislike those who are lazy and just want to be easy. Only those who are diligent to work will gain great happiness (Titib, 1998).

God loves those hard workers and will grant them success and happiness in their lives and heaven. When one works hard, the benefit is for many people, families, societies, countries, and even mankind. On the contrary, God never tolerates the lazy ones who like avoiding jobs. This is because such laziness only brings foolishness and poverty not only to the lazy ones but also to society. They become a burden to the family, society, and the whole world. Therefore, raise and do your duty as a human being (Gorda, 2004).

Being free from the attachment is not easy because it means one has to conquer one’s mind from which all desires come. This is said by Krsna to Arjuna in a dialog as quoted below.

“I am going to tell you more about yoga. Whatever one does one should free himself from expecting the result? Only then one can be happy. Then, one will keep

on working and be unattached to the result. The knowledge about God has destroyed all into ashes and men are free from attachment. One does it all without any sense of selfishness. There one can be united with Me. When you offer your work to Me, you have disciplined your mind and can have peace. However, others are attached to their works and become selfish. They are bound to this world. A true yogi or Sannyasin does his duty but seeks nothing from it. Pulling yourself from worldly attachment equals selflessness. You need to be away from any wants. Only by doing your duties, you can be unattached to yourself. This is the only way in yoga when there is calm in mind". (Subramaniam, 2004).

The lines above teach that worldly business shakes the heart and takes one away from peace and happiness. The attachment comes from the connection between physics and mental that is rooted in the senses. When there is attachment there will be always desires and it is dangerous. What you seek is the one that you are going to leave because nothing is eternal in this world. Therefore we should control our senses so that we are not conquered by the world.

This is in line with the following verse in *Bhagawad Gita V.12* as quoted below :

*Yuktah karmaphalam tyaktva
Santim apnoti saishchikim
Ayuktah kemakarena
Phale sakto nibhadyate*

Translation :

A server can gain peace by being unattached to the result of the work and unite the soul to God leave the desires towards the outcome that can chain him. (Maswinara, 1997).

Eternal peace is a perfect condition that may be reached gradually, namely from the pure heart,

knowledge, free from desires, selfishness, balanced soul in doing *bhakti*. Success in freeing the self from *karma* will happen only we work with hearts and unattached ourselves from the result.

According to Djapa (interview on 20 February 2018), men work not only with the body but also with the mind and intelligence. When intelligence and reason are directed towards God, then senses will serve God too. This is the key and secret of *Bhagawad Gita*: focus on God with all of your heart. Think about God all the time. Be My server. Bow to Me. Pray to Me. By doing these you are going to reach Me. This is mentioned in *Bhagawad Gita IX, 34*. This material world has three Gunas, namely righteousness (*sattwam*), desire (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*). Above them, there is time and karma. Karma is shaped on these natural characteristics under the control of time.

This is the concept of ethics in working or *Karma* as found in *Bhisma Parwa* regarded as the mother of "*Bhagavadgita*". It all starts with the confusion of Arjuna who finds it hard to choose between karma and dharma. The key is to the wise in choosing. All doubt is wise in choosing. All works should be based on *dharmā*. Realizing the essence of work that is not in the result but in being unattached in the process and result of working. Success and failure should not affect ones' works when there is no attachment but offering all to God and the creation. There is nothing in vain we all will gain the result (*Pahala*).

Conclusions

Faithfulness (*Satya*) means keeping the promise (*Satya Amaya*) and words (*Satya wacana*). It reflects the values of truth as an aspect of ethics to be practiced daily. Whereas, ethos (*karma*) means understanding that the essence of working is not on the outcome but on the realization of freeing the soul from the attachment. Successor failure will not bother when one offers all to God and mankind. The truth is there is nothing pointless about one 'deed (*karma*) because everything will have its consequences (*Pahala*).

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