

# Bhishma@ Management & Governance

Traditional Roots of Modern Ethos



Prayaga Ramakrishna

Translated from Telugu:

Prof. C. Vijayasree, Prof. G.K. Subbarayudu

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*Foreword*

Dr. G.V.G Krishnamurthy

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**PRAYAGA RAMAKRISHNA**

*Cover Design:*

**Ravikanth**

*Illustrations:*

**Chandra**

*Translated from Telugu :*

**Prof. C. Vijayasree**

**Prof. G.K. Subbarayudu**

*Foreword :*

**Dr. G.V.G. Krishnamurthy,**

Former Election Commissioner of India

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© **Prayaga Ramakrishna**

A/11, Amba Gardens,

Mehdipatnam, Hyderabad-500 028

Phone: 040-23526555 Mobile : 9849990107

e-mail : ramakrishna\_prayaga@yahoo.com

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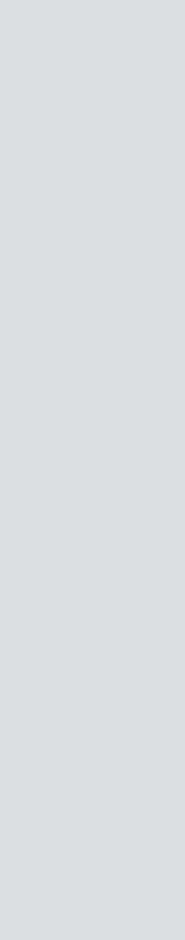
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# Introduction



**E**pic tradition in India is eternal; the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata constitute the common knowledge of men and women of most Hindu homes. Many of them may not have read the originals. These stories survive through different forms of retelling ranging from oral transmission by family elders, street performances such as *harikatha* and *burrakatha* to television serials and cinema. In temples, to date, these stories are retold by the learned in a language accessible to all. As a result, these stories become a part of every day conversation and many try to comprehend the present through frameworks available to them from the epics. These epic stories have so much neutral space in them that they can be appropriated for many ends from politics to philosophy, feminism to family-counselling, marketing to moral education.

*Bhishma @ Management & Governance* draws on the resources of the Mahabharata

stories to offer tips — practical and useful— for Corporate Governance. Bhishma, the wise old man of the Kuru clan, lies on a bed of arrows in the battlefield of Kurukshetra for fifty six days waiting for an auspicious hour to depart. Krishna, the string-puller of the entire action of the Mahabharata, knows that Bhishma's wisdom and knowledge is too valuable to be lost with him. He, therefore, advises the Pandavas to inherit that treasure trove of conduct and governance from their grandfather. It is from this episode that Prayaga Ramakrishna culls stories that have practical relevance for the management scene today. In fact these stories function as effective case studies to drive home instructions for better governance and management. In an interesting blend of lessons from epic tales with insights from Management gurus, Prayaga offers useful modules on a number of topics including Time Management, Leadership Qualities, Motivation, Mind Control and Stress Management. The method employed once again proves the efficacy of using stories for edification and instruction.

*Bhishma @ Management and Governance* originally written in Telugu won instant acclaim in press and found favour with readers across disciplines and professions. The present translation is done in order to make this interesting book on a topic of contemporary relevance available to pan-Indian readership. The original text is so rigorously organized that rendering it into English posed a few problems. However, we kept close to the original

and tried to retain its readability. Here is a book which talks about current corporate management concepts illustrating them with stories from the Mahabharata, taking the readers effortlessly from one realm to another. Prayaga Ramakrishna is not saying “we knew it all along.” The attempt is only to remind ourselves of our traditions and practices, and to recontextualize them for contemporary scenarios. In our translation, we have tried to recreate this experience for pan-Indian readers. It is for readers to judge how far we —the author and the translators— have succeeded in doing so.

**C.Vijayasree**

**G.K. Subbarayudu**

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# 1

## The King's Way

*The king should not rely on anyone too much. He shouldn't even doubt everyone. Not to trust anyone is equivalent to death. Trusting too much is untimely death.*



When there are people, there will be rulers. You may call this ruler a king, queen, minister or CEO; that's up to you. The nomenclature may change, but certain norms that a ruler should observe remain the same. This much every one should know, must know. Those in power must be moral; must never transgress ethical norms; must keep trying incessantly for the realization of their goals. God helps those who strive. A ruler who has a good character and upholds peace shall prosper. The king, minister, state, fort, treasury, friends and army—these seven are called *prakritis* or organs. It's important to safeguard these. That can be done only when truth and righteous behaviour are ensured. Principles of governance are of primary importance. These must be observed with alertness. Of all fortresses the human fortress is the most formidable. The human fortress refers to people of four castes. A king should treat them all as equals. He must be considerate to all. At the same time, he should not be too complacent.



If a ruler or master is too soft, his subjects take him for a ride like elephants do the mahouts sometimes. If the king is cruel, every one will curse him. Therefore, like the spring sun, a king should show tenderness as well as toughness. Of all the norms of kingly conduct, this is an important one. Before delivering a punitive sentence, the king should enquire after the facts carefully. He should not cause pain to his subjects by his willful behaviour. Just as an expectant mother eats food that is necessary for the child, a king should give priority to the welfare of his people, not to himself. People do not respect a king who is engrossed in fun and frolic and indulges in frivolous talk with his servants.

So a king should never lose his restraint. He should not entertain vain and arrogant persons. A king attains a higher spiritual state by providing good governance to his people. He should carefully balance the five aspects of kingly conduct: *sandhi* (peace), *vigraham* (enmity), *asanam* (waiting for the right occasion to attack the enemy), *yanam* (invading the enemy), *dwaitibhavam* (remaining indifferent) and *samasrayam* (seeking the help of the capable). He should acquire resources in the right way; should not trust tale-tellers. He must be vigilant to observe fraudulent people. In fact, he should not rely on anyone too much. At the same time he shouldn't doubt everyone. Not to trust anyone is equivalent to death. Trusting too much is untimely death. Wisdom lies in discretion.


A king should observe everyone with vigilance. One who does good is a friend. Under his auspices, all work yields good results. A king, however, should not be laid-back leaving the

entire responsibility to his friends. A king should carefully choose a friend who follows the path of righteousness without yielding to flattery, or fear of insults. Such a friend deserves to be given a lift. When a king musters strong support, his enemies fear him. Otherwise they belittle him; talk to him disrespectfully and even deceive him. So if a king wants to make his own position secure, he should muster a large group of supporters. Every king needs someone who can earn him money in a righteous manner. Such a person is generally vulnerable and it is the king's responsibility to provide protection to him. Bhishma narrated a story to illustrate this point.

*Once upon a time there was a king called Kshemadarsi who ruled the kingdom of Kosala. One day while the king was presiding over his court, Sage Kalavrikshiya arrived and the king received him with due respect. The sage was seated on the lotus throne; the king washed the sage's feet in a gold plate and offered him clothes. The sage, contented with the hospitality, called the king to come closer to him and showed him a cage that he had brought with him. Looking at that cage the king and his courtiers were surprised. Instead of a parrot, there was an ugly black crow in that cage. The sage, however, displayed the crow fondly to every one and said admiringly: "This is no ordinary crow. It knows the past, present and future." Then the sage turned to the king and said, "You are showing a lackadaisical attitude in matters related to money-making. This crow will enlighten you about the dangers of such an attitude. It will also catch all those who are plotting against you and hand them over to you." The sage then gave the cage to the king and went away.*

*The next day when the sage returned to the royal palace, he found the king sitting there with a gloomy face. On seeing the sage the king said*

sadly, “Swami! Last night someone killed the crow you had given.” “Mabaraja! That means your officers were afraid that the crow might expose their misdeeds. Otherwise there is no need for any one to kill the crow. Your father and I were good friends. After your father’s death, I did not feel like staying in this kingdom any longer, and so went to the forest to do penance. Out of my paternal love for you, I came here to inquire after your welfare. I toured your kingdom. Although you are virtuous, you and your people are in danger on account of your vicious officers. I used the crow as a pretext to tell you all this. Now that the crow is killed, obviously there is someone who is out to harm you. If you observe vigilantly, you might find out more things. Create differences among your officers and win each one over to your side. Then you can easily find out who the culprit is,” advised Kalavrikshya. Kshemadarsi followed his advice and subsequently appointed the sage as his Minister.



**End of Preview.**

**Rest of the book can be read @**  
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