

## Revisiting India's Knowledge Source of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: An Analysis of Mahabharat's Approaches

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### Abstract

*In its lakh verses, the epic Mahabharat contains all the human knowledge. Its verses reveal important knowledge about the various aspects of the social system and outline every aspect of statecraft, including the ruler's duties in both regular and emergency periods. Every type of policy has been examined in Mahabharat in terms of both internal and external politics. This paper assesses Shree Krishan's methods for resolving disputes. Saam, Daan, Bhed, and Dand are the primary diplomatic approaches Krishan used to settle conflicts. It also explains how to use these approaches to resolve a disagreement. This paper makes an effort to identify Shree Krishan's peace-making endeavours, emphasize his conflict resolution negotiating abilities, and examine his approach to holding onto power to negotiate future conflict. This paper predominantly examines how conflict resolution techniques from Mahabharat might be used in contemporary society.*

**Keywords:** Mahabharat, statecraft, diplomacy, Krishan's policy, conflict resolution.

### Introduction

The 1.8 million-word epic Mahabharat serves as a compendium of all human knowledge. The epic is a great source of information about geography, society, culture, politics, economy, and world affairs. The theory of the origin of the state, the duties of the king, good governance, the selection of ministers, the settlement of international disputes, the selection and significance of spies, and many other significant topics, as well as numerous diplomatic aspects in formulating foreign policy, are all covered in this epic. There is also a thorough description provided. *Shree Krishan* utilized a variety of diplomatic tools in the epic Mahabharat to settle the conflicts between the nations. These Lord Krishna-inspired principles are still very relevant for resolving disputes. "A nation that does not honour its past has no future"- Goethe (Jaishankar, 2020). Depending on its civilization and culture, each country displays its dignity to the outside world. The world order of today is multipolar, wherein all countries guarantee that their foreign policies are set up to best serve their respective countries' interests. In this case, national interests take precedence over the global order. Because no country is willing to compromise its national interests under any circumstance, when the national interests of two nations diverge, only a scenario of mutual

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conflict results. This is also true because the main objective of foreign policy is to advance national interests; nevertheless, in order to prevent future escalation of these conflicts, countries have employed a variety of conflict resolution techniques. These approaches might undoubtedly vary from nation to nation depending on the time and situation since each country chooses its techniques based on its perspective. In this situation, it is essential to make sure that decisions are made with the past in mind. When we examine these conflict-resolution techniques from an Indian perspective, the methods outlined in the epic Mahabharata cannot be refuted on any level.

### **Shree Krishan as a Diplomat**

*Shree Krishan* is the world's most accomplished politician, orator, and diplomat. The *Kaurav* and the *Pandav* represent the two poles in the epic Mahabharat's Game of Thrones. Pandav's mother *Kunti* is the sister of *Shree Krishan's* father Vasudev, making Krishan the Pandav's maternal brother. As a result, *Shree Krishan* is intimately linked to the Pandavas. All three phases—prior to, during, and following the battle of Kurukshetra—showcase *Shree Krishan's* aptitude for selecting choices. There is no other example in the world of the kind of decisions made by Shree Krishan in the interest of the country, to safeguard the lives of the *Praja*, to uphold religion, and to uphold justice. The *Pandavas* possessed a strong defensive capability to win the war in the pre-war period, but *Krishan's* offer of peace at that time provides a distinctive example of conflict resolution and the peace proposal of *Shree Krishan* is an appropriate example of सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः. In the same way that *Shree Krishan's* attempts to prevent war reflect his practical efforts for world welfare, so do his diplomatic efforts. The Indian vision of the well-being of the world, which is based on traditional Indian thought, is widely acknowledged as the best. He, therefore, employs *Dharmayudh's* *Sham*, *Dana*, *Bhed*, and *Dand*. Along with attempting to end the dispute, the monarch should also maintain his readiness for battle. *Rajdharm*, or constant preparation for battle, is a strategy that *Krishan's* diplomacy endorses in the Mahabharat. *Krishan's* negotiation on behalf of the *Pandavas* before the battle of Kurukshetra can be considered a diplomatic tactic.

*Shree Krishan's* diplomacy is distinctive in that it disregards the tactics of war because its goals outweigh its means. All of the strategies employed by *Krishan* during the conflict are legitimately practical and capable of directing the nations even today. The strategies of *Shree Krishan's* warfare are not set in stone; they are constantly adjusted to the circumstances. There is a long tradition of not fighting wars according to the rules; this is also evident in the Mahabharat. Each warrior expects others to follow the rules even when he does not (Jaishankar, 2020). *Shree Krishan's* plan was kept flexible since no ideology should stand in the way of the interests of the country. *Krishan* uses motivation as well to complete his tasks. He inspired *Arjun* about his responsibilities when he wasn't ready to fight his relatives. Even today, the utilisation of this motivational component on the battlefield is quite effective. Indian history has never embraced imperialism, and even the Mahabharat rejects the "winner takes all" mentality (Jaishankar, 2020).

### **Continual National Power Expansion**

When we carefully examine the Mahabharat, we see that there are several instances of conflict resolution that we can comprehend by looking at the stories it tells. When the *Pandavas* were sentenced to twelve years of exile and one year of ignorance, we got to see a very real version of this. Here, the dispute between the two newcomers has escalated to the point where the *Pandavas* and *Duryodhan* are battling for their shared interests. However, *Yudhishtir's* diplomacy is also in favor of the possibility of a future peaceful resolution to this conflict. This does not imply that one should only wait for a peace treaty to be signed.

From this vantage point, the Mahabharat instructs the king on the appropriate course of action to take.

श्रुता मे राधमाश्रुर्वर्णानां च वर्वनश्चया।  
आयत्तां च तदात्वे च यः पश्यवत स पश्यवत ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 36, Shlok2)

In this verse, Yudhishtir tells *Bheem* that he is aware of various rules governing the obligations of rulers and that a responsible leader should consider both the present and the future of his nation.

सुमखिते सुवर्वक्रान्ते सुकृ ते सुवर्वचारस्ते।  
वसध्यन्त्यर्ता महाबाहो दैर्वा चात्र प्रदविर्म् ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 36, Shlok 7)

सर्वे वदव्यास्त्र वर्वधदांसः सर्वे धमा परायर्ः ।  
अजेयाश्चेवत मे बुखधदरवप देवैः सर्वासर्वैः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 36, Shlok 17)

In this stanza, *Yudhishtir* advises *Bheem* not to make hasty decisions and to consider all choices before making any further decisions. He told to him that several of the rivals' warriors possessed *Divyastra* (a formidable weapon), and that even *Indra* (the great power of the time) could not vanquish them in battle. He explained that they need to gather more power in order to adequately tackle the situation in the future. The *Pandavas* made a very wise decision in this crucial combat circumstance to steadily build their might while waiting for the perfect moment. In order to ensure that future conflicts can be resolved peacefully as well as through battle, you should always be prepared to act in the interests of your country.

प्रीता च तेहां दास्यावम यदस्त्रमवनर्वाररतम् ।  
त्वां वह शक्तो मदीयां तदस्त्र धारवयतुं िर्ता ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 39, Shlok 71)

*Arjun*, who is constantly gaining strength, first acquires the *Pasuptashtra* through worship of *Bhagwan Shiv*, शक्रस्य हस्ताद्र दवयतां र्वा मस्तां च दुः सहम्। (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 44, Shlok 4) and then he receives the *Vajra* from the heavenly realm. In both circumstances, a steady increase in defence weaponry will be advantageous. The enemy country must first understand the strength of *Vijigishu* before any attempt at a peace deal can be successful and the country's interests can be successfully safeguarded even in the event of war.

### Proposal for Peace

"How can anyone hurt the one who has a sword in the form of peace in his hands," writes Mahatma *Vidur* in *Vidur Niti*. Since the creation of the modern international order, several examples of conflict settlement have existed. In this essay, we're talking about *Shree Krishan's* pre-war diplomatic efforts. Here first of all we will discuss some diplomatic tactics of peace proposal which was used by *Shree Krishan*.

शमां र्वे याचमानस्त्वां नाधमं तत्र लप्स्यसे।  
कुरुन् वर्वगहावयष्यखन्त धृतराष्ट्रं च पावर्वाः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 72, Shlok 34)

तखमिँल्लोकपररक्ते वक कायामर्ववशष्यते।

हतो दुर्योधने राजन् यदन्यत् क्त्रयतावमवतः॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 72,

Shlok 35)

In these shlokas, *Shree Krishan* said to *Yudhishtir* that this peace proposal would be right in both Situations. If this proposal is successful, there will be no war and secondly, if they reject my proposal for peace, then your side will not feel guilty. When the plan is rejected, each king will withdraw from *Dhritarashtra* and *Duryodhan*. All of our goals will then have been achieved, leaving us with nothing else to accomplish. *Shree Krishan* travels to the *Kaurav's Sabha* (Assembly) after these discussions. Thus, *Shri Krishna's* most significant task is to advocate for a peace treaty on behalf of the *Pandavas* in the *Kaurav's Sabha* (Hastinapur). Even though the entire continent had been split into two poles and war was all but certain, *Shree Krishan's* diplomacy continued to work toward a peaceful resolution to the dispute since, according to Indian tradition, the king's primary responsibility was to safeguard the lives of the *Praja*.

सेयमापन्महाघोरा कुरुष्वेर्व समुखिता।

उपेक्ष्यमां कौरव्य पूर्व्वी ण्घातवयष्यवतः॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 94,

Shlok 11)

शक्या चेयां शमवयतुं त्वां चेवदच्छवस भारत।

न दुष्करो हत्र शमो मतो मे भरतर्ाभ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 94,

Shlok 12)

A key moment has arrived on *Kuruvansh*, and if it is ignored, it would destroy the entire world. If you wish to prevent this disaster, then this peace proposal is the answer, says *Shree Krishan* as he enters the *Kaurav's Sabha* with a peaceful proposal. After this *Krishan* also introduces the other side to the deadly repercussions of war because *Shree Krishan* is well aware that the level at which a peace treaty can be reached is at which the terrible repercussions of war are. The outcome of the conflict would have an equal impact on both sides, making this aspect the true rationale for the treaty. Because it is the foundational requirement for the exercise of human rights, life protection is vital at all levels. If this scenario played out today, it would be known that such peaceful endeavours are the only means by which human civilization and the existence of nations may be preserved in this nuclear age. *Shree Krishan's* peaceful approach demonstrates how a specific country should view its role in the context of the global order and serves as a means of conflict settlement. These Mahabharat instances can be a surefire method of resolving disputes. *Shree Krishan* informed the *Kaurav's* about the might of the opposing side when they were not prepared to sign a treaty, which had a psychological impact on them. These verses are related to it.

इंद्र सांवनवहतां तात समग्रां पावर्ाव बलम्।

अयां भीष्मस्त्रा द्रोः कर्ाश्वायां तर्ा कृः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 124, Shlok 48)

भूरश्रवः सौमदविरश्चिमा जयद्रः ।

अशक्तताः सर्वा एवैते प्रवतयोद्रधुं धनांजयम्॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 124, Shlok 49)

मद्र खददतीयां पुं ऽ पार्ता कः प्रसन्नः  
यधु दे प्रतीपमायान्तमवत सांतात् फलं ददः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 124,  
Shlok

56)

We can see *Shree Krishan's* diplomacy here; He wants to create a treaty between the two rivals by any means necessary. In order to achieve the purpose, he tells the Kaurav Sabha that there are numerous warriors in your ranks, such as *Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripacharya, Somdatta, Bhurishrava, Aswathama, and Jayadratha*. But even they cannot face Arjuna on their own. And also informs them about *Arjun's* ally's power (*Shree Krishan*). And even Indra would not want to fight with whose charioteer I am, implying that the *Kaurav* side will be doomed. *Shree Krishan's* peaceful approach demonstrates how a specific country should view its role in the context of the global order and serves as a means of conflict settlement. These Mahabharat instances can be a sure-fire method of resolving disputes.

### **Mahabharat on Bargaining Power**

In international politics, the *Vijigishu* monarch can also pursue this course of action when he wishes to end a dispute, but first, he must be aware of the true strength of the adversary country. To do this, kings may employ spies. A government should endeavour to sour relations with those friendly states if it knows that the competitor nation is not prepared to cease the conflict because it has their support. A nation should use all available *Sama, Daan, Bheda, and Danda* methods in this attempt. As a result, the enemy nation's power will be diminished, and it may agree to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. When we examine all the incidents of the Mahabharata from an analytical point of view, we can see that in this entire episode, there are only two main allies – the first ally is of Shri Krishna-Arjuna and the second ally is of *Danveer Karan-Duryodhan*. Such efforts can be an important step in the situation of conflict resolution, and such a grand example is shown in the diplomacy of *Shree Krishan*.

त्वमेव कर्ता जानावस वेदवदान् सनातनान्।

त्वमेव धर्मा शास्त्रेषु सुक्ष्मेण पररवनवितः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000) Chapter 140,

Shlok 7)

सोडवस कर्ता तर्ता जातः पाण्डोः पुत्रोडवस धर्मात् ।

वनग्रहाद् धर्माशास्त्रार्थमेव राजा भवर्ष्यवसः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 140,

Shlok 9)

राजानो राजपुत्राश्च पाण्डवार्थे समागताः ।

पादौ तव ग्रहीष्यन्त सर्वे चान्धकर्वृणयः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 140,

Shlok 13)

Shree Krishan attempts to sever *Duryodhan* and *Karan's* alliance when his peaceful approach is rejected by the *Kaurav Sabha*. He meets *Karan* and shares with him the details of his birth and his relationship with *Kunti*. He is also the senior *Pandav*. He told the *Karan* that you are an expert on the difficult subject of theology and you also have a deep understanding of the *Sanatan Parampara*. The *Pandav* and all the kings who have come to support the *Pandav's* will also come under your protection and as a result of that, you will be crowned king of *Hastinapur*. युवधखठिरं च भीमां च यमौ चैर्वाजुनादते । अजुनेन समा युधदमवप यौवधविरे बले ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 140, Shlok 21) Despite rejecting his offer at the moment, *Karan* makes a pledge to *Mata Kunti* that he will only attack *Arjun* and not the other *Pandav's* after

learning this truth. Here, we see how *Shree Krishan* can use his negotiating skills to settle the dispute and how he protects some of the *Pandav's* interests by making the appropriate choice at the appropriate time. Because it becomes imperative in international relations that national interests be maintained as much as feasible through decision-making if the issue cannot be totally resolved.

### Handling the Sturdy Actors

In this interdependent era, all states establish their interactions with one another based on their national interests, and all nations ensure that national interests are met while also maintaining world peace. This necessitates that countries have positive connections with one another. Because we live in a multipolar world, each country has its own perspective on connecting the world, and we cannot disregard multiculturalism (Jaishankar, *The India Way Strategies For An Uncertain World*, 2020). Everyone knows that India's famous epic Mahabharat contains a wealth of wisdom in every element of world affairs.

यदा तु हीनां नृपवत्तर्वाधादात्मानमात्मना  
अमातैः सह सम्मियुक्त्यात् सांवध बलीयसा। (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 69, Shlok 14)

According to Mahabharat, when establishing connections with a powerful nation, the king should do a thorough appraisal of his position. If the monarch's side is relatively weak, he should negotiate a treaty with the powerful king after consulting his ministers. When negotiating a treaty with a great nation, the king must adhere to certain policies.

अज्ञायमाने हीनत्वे सांवधुक्त्यात् परेर्वै।  
वलप्सुर्वा कंवचदेवर्त्ते त्वरमार्गे वर्वचिर्ः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 69, Shlok 15)

कृत्वा बलवता सं मात्मानां यो न रिक्त।  
अतथ्यवमर्व तद्र भुक्तां तस्य नार्त्ताय कल्पत। (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 139, Shlok 109)

In the present verse, *Bhishm* states that if the *Vijigishu Raja* wishes to create a treaty with another monarch, he must guarantee that the treaty is finished before the state's weakness is known, or else the objective of the pact will be defeated. The head of state should never believe that his country is fully protected after signing a pact with a major country. Even after that, the king must assure his safety. If the monarch does not take care of his security, his treaty can be as deadly as food that is not entirely digested.

Indian foreign policy repeated such blunders even in the 1960s, when it did not take care of its security after a treaty and had to pay a high price for the war; this is the type of policy that our past forbade. In 1954, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, signed the Panchsheel Agreement (A Peace Treaty) with China. Both countries signed the Panchsheel Agreement, which states that they shall coexist peacefully in the region while respecting each other's internal and exterior sovereignty. Following this agreement, Indian Prime Minister Nehru issued the slogan "*Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*," but India's great mistake was that the Prime Minister of India trusted the deal without thinking for India's security, and India paid the price in the form of the 1962 war.

The Mahabharat's treaty diplomacy states that even if a treaty is not possible in international affairs, one should not be afraid to challenge the powerful king for the sake of national interest. The nation has the same tasks as an individual warrior in order to attain its interests and goals. We may learn from Arjuna's decision to choose responsibility for the national benefit, regardless of the repercussions. (Jaishankar, 2020)

### Managing the Frail Rivals

In international affairs, the Mahabharat represents both powerful and weak governments' foreign policies. The Mahabharat makes it clear that the king should never disregard a weaker kingdom.

न जातु बलवान् भूत्वा दुबाले वर्वश्चसेत् कावचत्।  
भारूणसदृशा होते वनपतखन्त प्रमाधत्॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 93, Shlok 37)

In Shanti Parva, *Bhishm* teaches *Yudhishtir* about foreign strategy, stating that no matter how powerful the king is, the weak opponent should not be overlooked. This is because when King *Vijigishu* is unconscious, these weak nations attack like eagles, and the king has no time to recuperate.

न च शत्रुर्वज्ञेयो दुबालोऽवप बलीयसा।  
अल्पोऽवप वह दहत्विर्वर्मल्पां वहनखस्त च॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 58, Shlok 17)

एकागडेनावप सम्भतः शत्रु दुमन्तः ।  
सर्वा तापयते देशमवप राज्ञः सखि नः ॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 58, Shlok 18)

The significance of a weak enemy should never be underestimated because even a small amount of fire burns and even a small amount of poison kills. If even one side of a weak adversary's army is strong, that opponent can destroy the entire kingdom of *Vijigishu*. In this way, *Vijigishu* should retain the weak states connected with him through the treaty, demonstrating the importance of the pact. The Mahabharat describes three different sorts of treaties:

सांवधश्च वत्रवर्धवभख्यो हीनो मध्यस्त्रोमिः ।  
भयसत्कारवर्धिख्यां कात्स्न्येन पररर्वर्तातम्॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000 Chapter 59, Shlok 37)

The king should maintain the less powerful state with himself by using any of these three treaties: *Uttam* (Vitt Sandhi), *Madhyam* (Sathkar Sandhi), and *Adham* (Bhay Sandhi). In today's world, countries maintain emerging nations near them through financial treaties. For example, India sends economic aid to its bordering countries such as Nepal and Bhutan to keep them connected with India. Prime Minister Modi's vaccine diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Indian Budget of 2023-24, which provides grants to Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Afghanistan, are examples of the same. Respect is the most important factor in human nature, and India builds excellent ties with many countries by using *Madhyam Sandhi* (Sathkar Sandhi). To call SAARC countries in 2014 and BIMSTEC countries in 2019, Prime Minister Modi's inauguration ceremony was a significant political event to improve the relationship with SAARC as well as BIMSTEC countries. The ruler should never be neutral in dealing with weak states.

वर्नरुक्ताः राजानः केभयात् समुपावश्रताः ।

मध्यस्थदोर्ः केचैर्ः वमवत वनत्ः वर्वचन्तयेत्॥ (Vedvyas, Mahabharat, 2000)

Chapter 93, Shlok 36)

Even the weak nations that have taken sanctuary in the king pay close attention to the basis for this king's subservience to me - love and dread. If a weak nation seeks the protection of a king for self-defense, the king must defend him with all his power. The India-Pakistan war in 1971 for the safety of Bangladesh is an appropriate example of this. As a result, we may conclude that Mahabharat is a rich source of wisdom for every element of world events, and its diplomacy is far more realistic than that of any other source. In any tough situation for a country, Mahabharat provides an acceptable answer; treaties and agreements are the only methods to resolve a problem peacefully.

### Conclusion

Mahabharat provides us with many tips related to international relations. The present paper focuses on the issues related to the alliances. Treaties are one of the most important tools for protecting national interests. Mahabharat explains the strategies pertaining to entering into treaties with underdeveloped and developed nations. Though it discusses the strategies to win a war but still it emphasizes on handling the issues through the discussions and avoiding the war at all costs. In the *Kaurav Sabha*, Krishan was even ready to accept only five villages just to avoid the war, which shows that the ultimate goal is to secure the lives of people by avoiding the war. Apart from it Krishan's commitment towards avoiding the war is exemplary. Though he knows that his side is powerful but still he leaves no stone unturned to establish the peace treaty. Mahabharat shows the way to modern-day diplomats and showcases the importance of a competent diplomat and diplomacy. When Krishan came that war was inevitable, he attempted to reduce the power of the enemy by attempting to convince the *Karan* to cross the line. As well as managing the stronger country through the use of treaties and agreements and involving the weaker country for future interests by the use of *Uttam (Satkar)*, *Madhyam (Vitt Sandhi)* and *Adham (Bhay Sandhi)* treaties. From the perspective of conflict resolution, the Mahabharat period diplomacy inspires that if a country's goal is justified and also in the interest of the nation in this situation, the end is more important than the means, and to achieve that goal, a country can use any diplomatic medium like as *Saam*, *Daan*, *Bheda* and *Dand*, etc. Mahabharat wisdom related to conflict resolution and protecting the national interests is relevant even in contemporary times.

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