CONCLUSION

Mahābhārata, of Ved Vyāsa, is the fountain-head from which flows the nectar of eternal values and true knowledge in a never-dying stream to slake the thirst of the humanity. The Mahābhārata can be described as a transparent and pure stream flowing from the silver-white snow. Vyāsa took a deep immersion into the perennial stream which quenched his thirst and filled his soul with indescribable solace. He visioned the light, the light of true and virgin Dharma as revealed in the Mahābhārata.

Mahābhārata extols its greatness itself in these words, "Whatever is here is also elsewhere; whatever is not here is extant nowhere." Meaning thereby that the Mahābhārata is a compendium which deals with different subjects such as Veda, Upaniṣad, Ānvīkṣikī, Daṇḍnīti, Vārta (Dhanurveda, Ayurveda, Veterinary Science, Agriculture, trade and commerce, industry, astrology, astronomy) etc.

The work consists of 18 parvas. Its story revolves round Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas and ends with the victory of Truth i.e. Pāṇḍuputraś. The style of the work is easy and flowing and undue ornamentation has been given no place in it. Discourses on the rules of good life, delineation of characters and descriptions of nature have also been included in it.
The kings have been shown full of wisdom who give discourses on Philosophy and persons, whose ancestors were learned scholars, have been depicted as great warriors. Drona and Aśvathama were Brahmins by caste but they played the role of great warriors in the Mahābhārata war. Herein lies the significance of Mahābhārata that a reversal in roles of various classes is evidently visible in it.

Different studies have been conducted by the scholars on Mahābhārata- S.C.Banerji’s Indian Society in the Mahābhārata and Smṛti Material in the Mahābhārata; Bhattacharya’s Imagery in the Mahābhārata; S.P.Dange’s Legends in the Mahābhārata; S.L. Katre’s Kṛṣṇa and the Mahābhārata’s war; R.Rai’s Mahābhārata-Kośa; R.K. Sharma’s Elements of Poetry in Mahābhārata; V.S.Sukthankar’s. The Meaning of the Mahābhārata and Critical studies in the Mahābhārata; C.V. Vaidya’s the Mahābhārata- a criticism. An analytical study of the educational doctrines of the epic is still a desideratum. Therefore, the topic entitled “The Concept and Doctrines of Education in Mahābhārata” has been chosen for the present study.

The first chapter of the thesis is introductory in nature. It deals with the date, authorship and importance etc. of Mahābhārata. It also proves that Mahābhārata is a fountain-head of knowledge. There is also detailed description of different studies on Mahābhārata. This chapter also gives clear indications that the material directly related to the education is hardly available in the
Mahābhārata, yet there are many discourses which furnish information about the duties of the first Āsrama i.e. the student life. The sources which provide information about educational material are, thus-discourses, descriptions of ideal students, hermitages and education of the princes or the Kṣatriya children.

The thrust area of second chapter of the thesis is doctrines and goals of education, concept of discipline, eligibility for education, doctrines of Brahmacharya and pursuit of highest knowledge. The doctrines of education in the Mahābhārata are the same as are propounded by the idealistic school of education. The great epic stresses to discover mind or spirit. There are lot of evidences to prove this. Another doctrine of education, as conceived by the idealists, is the knowledge of spiritual reality or Brahman which is the highest knowledge. Gautamī, Yudhiṣṭhīra and Dhṛtarāṣṭra possessed the knowledge of Brahman. The other doctrine of education, according to idealists, is the belief in the three spiritual values. These are: Truth, Goodness and Beauty. The epic named Mahābhārata abounds in such examples as prove that people believed in the above-mentioned values during the age of Mahābhārata. Truth is described in this epic as the last refuge of all. Yudhishṭhīra, a renowned character of Mahābhārata, is a living example of goodness.

Education develops one’s potentialities into a distinct individual personality. During the Mahābhārata age, such education was imparted to the individuals which contributed a lot in their physical and mental development.
and in making them complete men. Education of Vedas etc. helped in the mental development of the individuals while education regarding science of weapons contributed in their physical development. Gāndhārī, Kuntī and Vidulā gave political as well as religious education to their children which helped in the all-round development of their personality. Only those individuals who are physically fit, intellectually well-off, economically self-sufficient and morally high can contribute a lot towards the welfare of the society. During the Mahābhārata age, people of all the four castes were imparted education in their respective fields. This helped them in playing their role in the society in a better way. The moral education was given to the people which not only elevated them morally but also increased their social efficiency. Bhīṣma imparted such type of education regarding moral values like truth, forgiveness etc. to Yudhiṣṭhira. Education should be useful rather than ornamental. Vocational education makes an individual economically independent. Such type of education was also given to the people in the Mahābhārata age. People received education in Music, hair-dressing, cooking, veterinary science, astrology which used to prove helpful for them in the long run. The main aim of cultural education is to provide such knowledge to a man which may add beauty and grace to his life. In the Mahābhārata age, education regarding hospitality, different arts and moral values was given to the people which added grace to their lives. The king Yudhiṣṭhira, Śakuntalā, Sāvitrī, Sukanyā etc. had received
education regarding hospitality. The main aim of education during the Mahābhārata age was attainment of Mokṣa.

The eligibility for education has strictly been laid down in the Mahābhārata. As pure gold is tested by heating, cutting and nabbing, similarly the students should be examined on the basis of their birth and accomplishments. During the first stage of human life, the student had to reside in the preceptor’s house for the acquisition of knowledge. The life of the Āśramas was very hard and the student had to lead disciplined life. The student could not dare even to think of breaking the discipline of the Āśramas. The example of obedient and disciplined students in the Mahābhārata are Āruni, Upamanyu, Veda and Uttanka etc. The students of the Mahābhārata time were bound to follow the doctrines of Brahmacharya. A disciple should perform all such acts as are ordered by the guru and stand by him. The Brahmachārin should always practise those observances which have been laid down in the Śāstras for him. The realization of the highest knowledge i.e. the knowledge of Brahman requires dedication of whole life and not only a part of it. Gautamī, a character of Mahābhārata, possessed the knowledge of the Brahman. When her only son died as a result of snake-bite, she could deliver a scholarly lecture on the state after death due to this very knowledge.

The third chapter of the thesis throws ample light on seats of learning/different institutions which existed during the Mahābhārata age where pupils from far and wide gathered for acquiring knowledge. The prominent among these were : (i)
Asramas and (ii) Centres of education in cities. The Asramas of the sages played a major role in imparting education during those days. The Asramas of Agastya, Jamadagni, Kanwa, and Vasishtha were famous seats of learning. Apart from the Asramas of the sages, the description of some centres of education in the cities is also found in the epic where education regarding weapons was imparted. Some of these centres were those of Kripa and Drona in Hastinapura. Various types of education such as home, Asrama, self and education regarding Brahman were prevalent in the Mahabharata age. Women, particularly, mothers played a pivotal role in imparting education at home. Many sterling examples of such women as Gandhari, Kunti and Vidulka are found in the Mahabharata who were capable of imparting political as well as religious education to their offsprings. The words of mother Gaudharsi deserve special mention in this context who declared prophetically, "Victory always accompanies Dharma." Education regarding Vedas, different Sastras, archery etc. was given in different seats of learning. When the preceptors denied education to some extraordinary students, they acquired it at their own level without seeking the help of the guru. A glaring example of one such student-Ekalavya-is found in the Mahabharata who made a clay statue of Drona (who didn't accept him as his disciple) and considering it to be his real preceptor attained special skill in archery. Markandeya imparted education regarding Brahman to Yudhishtira and Sanatsujata to Dhrtarashtra. A detailed description of the practices/procedures followed in the
Asramas also finds a special mention in the speeches of Veda Vyāsa, Bhīṣma etc. Different methods of instructions were prevalent during the Mahābhārata age. These were: Thought, Teaching, Austerities, Boon, Question, Discussion and education through show of skills. The status of the teacher was considered very high in the Mahābhārata age. Reputed teachers were appointed as gurus by the State. For example—Bhīṣma appointed Drona as the guru of his grandsons including the Pāṇḍyas. Sometimes the teacher used to demand such things as Daksīṇa which were not easy to be given but even then the students offered those without any hesitation. For example—Drona desired that Ekalvya should give the thumb of his right hand as Daksīṇa and Ekalavya did so cheerfully.

Vocational education finds a special mention in the fourth chapter of this very thesis. Different careers or occupations were prescribed for the members of the four castes during the age of Mahābhārata for which they were expected to prepare themselves during the period of their education. The kind and methods of education prescribed for the members of the four castes helped them in acquiring proficiency in their respective fields. All education thus becomes in a sense vocational or practical. Self-control was the duty of the Brahmin. Study of the Vedas and teaching were his other duties. By practising these two, all his acts were done. He should also perform sacrifices. Serving the guests and keeping up of the three sacrificial fires—were the duties of the house-holder Brahmin. The duty of the Kṣatriya was to give and not to beg. He should protect his subjects,
remain busy in the destruction of robbers and display his prowess in the battle-field. The stress in the education of Kṣatriya was given on military training. The entire military science called Dhanurveda was studied in isolation and by practice. Arjuna went out and practised even at night, consequently he became expert in different military arts. The education of the Vaiśya and Śūdrā was such as could prepare them for performing their duties well. The main duty of the Vaiśya was to rear up the cattle. His duties included trade, agriculture etc. The duty of the Śūdrā was to serve the three twice-born classes. Dhanurveda (Military Science) acquired an important place in the education of the Mahābhārata age. There is a mention in the epic that Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kripa, Karna and Aśvathama were well-conversant with Dhanurveda. Droṇa was a prominent teacher of archery. Some persons acquired much proficiency in the science of archery during this age and bowmen like Arjuna changed the course of Kurukṣetra war. There are descriptions of several instances in the Mahābhārata age when the skill in archery was displayed and this display was in no way less surprising than that of the weapons of the modern age. Ekalavya struck seven arrows in the mouth of the barking dog and the Pāṇḍavas praised him for this act. Ayurvedic education (Medical Science) finds a prominent place in the great epic Mahābhārata. Great physicians were paid due respect and essential medical facilities were provided to maintain a high standard of the health of the people during the Mahābhārata age. Science of Sanjīvanī was used for giving life to the
dead. Sukra revived Kacha and Kacha revived his guru Sukrāchārya by taking the help of the same. Sage Kashyap, Sukra, Kacha etc. were described as physicians. The chariot-drivers acted as physicians who were imparted training to provide the first-aid to heal the wounds of chariot-soldiers. Besides it, the progress of Veterinary Science is also visible in the Mahābhārata. Bāhuka, who was the Āsvādhyakṣa of king Rūtuparna of Ayodhya, was skilled in giving training to the horses as well as for their medical treatment. People also acquired industrial proficiency and were acquainted with music, dancing, singing, architecture, art of cooking, hair-dressing, astrology, astronomy etc.

In the Mahābhārata times, women were not deprived of the opportunity of getting education—this is the subject matter of the fifth chapter of this thesis. Vidulā, Kuntī, Gandhārī, Draupadī etc., it appears, have received political as well as religious education which in turn they imparted to their children. Women were also well-versed in the art of music, dancing and singing etc. They were also given cultural education regarding hospitality etc. Sukanyā, Sāvitrī and Śakuntalā had received such education. Sulabhā and daughter of Śāndilya remained celibate ascetics throughout their life. Mothers like Vidulā and Kuntī played a pivotal role in educating their children and shaping their personalities.

Literacy doctrines are discussed in the sixth chapter of this thesis. The entire Mahābhārata is in itself a proof that the concept of literacy was prevalent among the people of higher castes. The seats of learning during the
Mahābhārata laid stress on imparting two types of education i.e. religious and education related to warfare. During the Mahābhārata time, education was not a fundamental right. Therefore, there was no agency which could force the concept of literacy among the people. There was ultimate relationship between the teacher and the taught but there were a few teachers and less number of students. Although the concept of education was moulding the pupils' personality but the education was not a fashion in that society. Kṣatriyas were not sending their female children to Āsramas but managing education for them at their houses to enable female children to manage their houses. For example- Uttarā, the daughter of king Vīraṭa, was given education in singing at home by Brihannāla. Draupadī delivered a lecture to Satyabhāmā on the duties and responsibilities of a wife. The tradition of education of Veda was followed during the Mahābhārata age. Even the son of Kṣatriya could pursue religious education. The theory of Karma, the virtue of a chaste woman were explained to Yudhiṣṭhira by Mārkanḍeya. The society being highly advanced, people were well-acquainted with the rules, codes and conventions of the society. Vaiśāyas and Śūdras had to follow the codes of Vedas. Therefore, they were busy in providing service to higher castes. It was hard nut to crack to move from place to place when there was no facility of transportation, but under such tiring circumstances scholars like Dhoumya travelled a long distance and stayed with Pāṇḍavas providing them religious education by way of describing Tīrthas and Āsramas. Even the disciples used to
provide preliminary education while moving from place to place. As such they were considered mobile schools. Life-long and continuing education was prevalent in the society during the time of Mahābhārata. The people used to continue their education even after completing their education in the āsramas and returning to their homes during the Mahābhārata time. This helped the pupils in keeping their learning intact throughout life, therefore, they didn’t relapse back into illiteracy. The students were aware to a certain extent of the need to develop their personalities and live their life as fully as they could. Kuntī, Vidulā etc. imparted such education to their sons as helped in the all-round development of their personality. The students of Mahābhārata time left an indelible imprint on the sand of time.

The emphasis in the seventh chapter is given on value-oriented education. Courage, endurance, forbearance, forgiveness, friendliness, goodness, modesty, non-violence, obedience, reverence, righteousness and truth have been described in this chapter. A man undergoes suffering for the sake of virtue and truth. Such tolerance of man is called endurance. It is described as one of the forms of forgiveness which is attained through patience. The whole story of Pāṇḍavas in the Mahābhārata is a sterling example of endurance because they struggled and suffered for the sake of truth and virtue. According to Mahābhārata a person who possesses the virtue of forgiveness is honoured in this as well as in the next world and attains Brahman. Obedience is a virtue par excellence which is eternal. The rules regarding
Brahmacharya bear testimony to the fact how much obedient the students were. Truth is eternal duty, the root of righteousness and sustains the whole universe. Yudhisthira, in the great epic, has been portrayed as the follower of truth.