"As butler is superior to curds, as the Brahmana ranks high among all human beings, (as) the ocean excels all reservoirs of water and (as) the cow is superb among four-footed animals, like all these Mahabharata is par excellence (among all narratives)."

CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION
1.1 The Mahābhārata - a glimpse

Mahābhārata - of the great scholar and saint Ved Vyāsa is the fountain-head from which flowed the nectar of eternal values and true knowledge in a never-dying stream to slake the thirst of the humanity. 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 Dhārana as revealed in the Mahābhārata.

The Mahābhārata extols its greatness itself in these words, "Whatever is here is also elsewhere; whatever is not here is extant nowhere" (यद्द इधारस्ति तद्द अन्यत्र यन्महारस्ति न तद्द कवचित्). Meaning thereby that the Mahābhārata is a compendium which deals with different subjects such as Economics, Politics, History, Philosophy, Theology, Mythology, Religion, Morals and Ethics etc. It also possesses something significant to say regarding the supernatural and the occult, conscientious objection and pacifism, women's lib, sexual frankness and cataclysmic warfare.

The significance of the great epic can be adjudged from the words of Monier Williams, ".... the Mahābhārata reflects the multilateral character of Hinduism; its monotheism and polytheism, its spiritualism and materialism, its strictness and laxity, its priest craft and anti-

priestcraft, its hierarchical intolerance and rationalistic philosophy, combined. Not that there was any intentional variety in the original design of the work, but that almost every shade of opinion found expression in a compilation formed by gradual accretion through a long period. In unison with its more secular, popular, and human character, the Mahābhārata, has, as a rule, less of mere mythical allegory, and more of historical probability in its narratives.... ¹

The epic was called 'Jaya' in the beginning.² After the inclusion of some verses it was named 'Bhārata' and ultimately it became 'Mahābhārata' due to some more additions. According to Monier Williams, "The title of the poem is Mahābhāratam, a compound word in the neuter gender, the first number of which, mahā (for mahat) means 'great', and the second, bhārata, 'relating to Bharata'..... It is curious that in the Sangraha-parva, or introductory summary (1.264), the word Mahābhārata is said to be derived from its large size and great weight, because the poem is described as outweighing all the four Vedas and mystical writings together."³ In the words of M. Winternitz, Mahābhārata means "the great narrative of the battle of the Bharatas."⁴

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2. Mahā., 1/1/1; 1/56/19.
3. Williams, Monier, Indian Wisdom, p.371 (Foot Note 1).
The Mahābhārata, is considered as the fifth Veda due to moral teachings and high religious ideals described in it. These have not only been given as teachings but are reflected in the lives and actions of the characters.

The epic Mahābhārata is called itihāsa, purāṇa and ākhyāna. M. Winternitz emphasises the importance of the epic as a work of poetic art and a manual of morality, “Therefore, the Indians themselves regard the Mahābhārata, though always as an epic, as a work of poetic art (Kāvya), but also at the same time as a manual (Śāstra) of morality, law and philosophy, supported by the oldest tradition (smṛti)…”2

In other words, it is rightly considered an encyclopedia or a store-house of knowledge.

*Date*

The clouds of smoke of controversies have shrouded the date, authorship etc. of this priceless jewel, named ‘Mahābhārata’. How many years have elapsed, since the Mahābhārata was composed? That is a baffling question on which divergent views have been recorded. Many orientalists (Western and Indian) have already attempted to find out the exact date of the Mahābhārata but no two of them agree.

*Western Scholars*

According to B.P. Roy, "It was Christian Lessen who for the first time tried to fix the date of the Mahābhārata

1. Mahā., 1/57/74.

in his book entitled "The Indian Antiquities" (1837), and on the basis of many evidences, he fixed the upper limit of the date about the 5th century B.C.  

Holtzman (Mahābhārata Andcentel, 1892) has' advanced peculiar views regarding its date and thinks that it is the book representing the conflict between Śaivism and Vaishnavism and the gradual absorption of Buddhist elements in it. He regards the present form of the epic not older than the 12th century A.D. 

Buhler (Genesis De Mahābhārata, 1899) has shown that the epic existed in the 5th century A.D. but he thinks that in all probability this date may be pushed back by 4th or 5th centuries B.C. 

E.W.Hopkins observes, "Bhārata (Kuru) lays, perhaps combined into one, but with no evidence of an epic before 400 B.C.... That the epic was practically completed by 200 A.D." 

M.Winternitz comments, "Between the 4th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D. the transformation of the epic Mahābhārata into our present compilation took place, probably

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2. Ibid., p.8 (Foot Note 25). 
3. Ibid., p.8 (Foot Note 75). 
gradually.\textsuperscript{1}

Different views expressed by Western scholars regarding the date of the Mahābhārata are not universally acceptable to the scholars.

\textbf{Indian Traditionalists}

Indian traditionalists believe that the Mahābhārata came into being at the end of the Great Battle. The date of the Great battle is, therefore, the deciding factor of the date of the great epic but unfortunately the date of this war is also immersed in controversy. B.P. Roy has mentioned the following divergent views regarding the date of the outbreak of the Great Battle.\textsuperscript{2}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Basis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pargiter</td>
<td>950 B.C.</td>
<td>On the basis of average duration of the ruling dynasties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitanatha Pradhana</td>
<td>1151 B.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Sharma Shastry</td>
<td>1260 B.C.</td>
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<td>Wilson</td>
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<td>A.S. Altekar</td>
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<td>Roy Choudhury</td>
<td>1412 B.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.P. Jayaswal</td>
<td>1424 B.C.</td>
<td>On the basis of the Pauranic genealogy</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.C. Vaidyabhushana &amp; L.M. Kara</td>
<td>1922 B.C.</td>
<td>On the basis of a statement by Kalhana in Rajatarangini</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.S. Bhattacharya</td>
<td>2400 B.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karandikar</td>
<td>1931 B.C.</td>
<td>On the genealogical basis as given in the Vāyu Purāṇa.</td>
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\textsuperscript{1} Winternitz, M., \textit{A History of Indian Literature} (Vol.I), p.475.

\textsuperscript{2} Roy, B. P., Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahābhārata, p.9 (Foot Note 26).
B.P. Roy concludes, "According to these scholars, the date of the Bhārata battle ranges from 950 B.C. to 3137 B.C., so the date of the composition, according to these traditional views, ranges from 950 B.C. to 3137 B.C., but, we can not accept this period as the time during which the epic may be supposed to have been composed."

The views of the following scholars about the date of the grand epic can not be ignored:

Chintamani Vinayaka Vaidya Between 320 B.C. and 50 B.C.
Lokmanya Tilak & Belvalkar Between 557 B.C. and 477 B.C.

Although, no one date can be fixed of the composition of the Mahābhārata, yet it may be concluded with Arthur A. Macdonell that this memorable work had acquired the status of a didactic compendium before the beginning of the present era.

The Mahābhārata, the great epic, was authored by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. The life history of Vyāsa is shrouded in darkness. His mother was Satyavati, the step-mother of Bhīṣma and wife of Sāntanu. The name of his father was Parāśara. Krishna Chaitanya writes about the meaning of the name Vyāsa, "Krishna seems to have been his given name unless, as some believe, he was known thus because he was dark in complexion. He was called Dvaipāyana because he was born in a river island (dwīp means island). He came to be known as Vyāsa because—according to tradition—he was the man who first separated, arranged, edited (the word implies all these) the vast corpus of orally transmitted Vedic material into four great compilations which are the form in which they have come down to us." Vyāsa’s other name is said to be Bādarāyaṇa due to his having resided at Badarikāsrama which was situated in the land of Utṛā-khand.

A set of scholars regard Vyāsa not the author but the arranger of the Mahābhārata. Monier Williams observes, "But the Hindus invest this personage, whoever he was, with a nimbus of mystical sanctity, and assert that he was also the

2. Ibid., 1/57/71.
arranger of various other celebrated religious works, such as the Vedas and Purāṇas. He is called Vyāsa, but this is, of course, a mere epithet derived from the Sanskrit verb, Vyāśā, meaning 'to dispose in regular sequence, and therefore, would be equally applicable to any compiler'. 

Arthur A. Macdonell writes "When the Mahābhārata attributes its origin to Vyāsa, it implies a belief in a final redaction, for the name simply means 'Arranger'." Hopkins considers Vyāsa the editor of the Mahābhārata rather than the author.

Vyāsa taught Mahābhārata to his disciple Vaiśampāyana. Vaiśampāyana recited this work to Janamājaya during the Sarpa-satra (snake-sacrifice). Sāstra told that he would recite the enlarged edition of Mahābhārata during the sacrifice of Śaunaka. Vyāsa's place of work was Badrikāsrama. It was the same venue where he imparted the education of Śāstras to his four disciples named: Pail, Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini and Sumanad. Sūka is also said to be the disciple of Vyāsa.

The Vyāsa cave is situated near Saraswati river.

3. Hopkins, F.W., The Great Epic of India, p.56.
5. Ibid., 1/1/18,57.
6. Ibid., 1/2/29.
7. Shastri, Jitendra Chandra, Bhartiya Sanskrit Sahitya Ka Saral Subodh Itihasa, p.68.
Vyāsa authored all his works in this cave. Some scholars are of the view that Vyāsa breathed his last in the holy land of Badrikāsrama.¹

1.2 Importance

The gigantic poem Mahābhārata is not only a narrative of the Bharatas but also a great epic in which spiritual, religious and ethical ideas, social and political ideals and culture of India have been knit together with an artisan's skill. Sri Aurobindo remarks, "The Mahābhārata especially is not only the story of the Bharatas, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India."²

Sudhasankar Bhattacharyya writes about the significance of this grand epic, "The Mahābhārata is regarded as the store-house of political wisdom, - the repository of philosophical doctrine, - the container of religious dogmas, - and at the same time, a specimen of literary art, exercising tremendous influence on different forms and patterns of subsequent literary compositions in Sanskrit."³

The Mahābhārata is, therefore, like an ocean into

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which multifarious social and cultural streams of India have merged.¹

The work consists of 18 parvas. The Adi-parva narrates the early life of the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, Draupadi's marriage and the Pāṇḍavas' familiarity with Kṛṣṇa, the hero of the Yādavas. The subject-matter of the second parva is the prosperity of the Pāṇḍavas at Indraprastha and the losing of everything, including Draupadi, by Yudhiṣṭhira in a play of dice with Duryodhana. The Pāṇḍavas agree to go into exile for a period of 12 years and to remain in disguise during 13th year. The forest life of the Pāṇḍavas for 12 years in the Kāmyaka forest has been described in the Vana-parva. The Virāṭa-parva narrates how the Pāṇḍavas spent the thirteenth year in disguise as servants of Virāṭa, the king of Matsyas. The preparations for war by the Pāṇḍavas have been narrated in the Udyoga-parva because the Kurus deny their just demands. The next five parvas give detailed account of the great war in which everyone except the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa dies. The funeral rites of the dead have been dealt with in the 11th parva. The subject-matter of the next two parvas is the lengthy discourse of Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira on Rajadharma. The Āśvamedha-parva deals with Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation and horse-sacrifice and the 15th parva with the resort to forest of Dhrtarāṣṭra and his queen Gāndhārī. The internecine conflict of the Yādavas and

accidental death of Kṛṣṇa at the hands of a hunter is the subject matter of Mausala-parva. The 17th parva narrates how the Pāṇḍavas get tired of life and make the great departure to the Meru mountain. The Svargarohaṇa-parva narrates the ascent and admission to heaven of the Pāṇḍavas. Kṛṣṇa’s ancestry, adventures and the future corruptions of the Kali age have been described in the Harivamsa-parva.

The Mahābhārata, contains a huge part of ancient Indian culture and history of thoughts. As S.N. Dasgupta and S. K. De remark, "It is a criticism of life, manners and customs and of changing ideals.... the entire life of ancient India is reflected in it as in a mirror... it is a great store-house which holds within it at least implicitly a large part of ancient Indian culture and history of thoughts."¹ A picture of ideal civilization has been portrayed in the epic. As Swami Vivekananda writes, "In fact, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization which humanity has yet to aspire after."² According to H. R. Aggarwal, "... it also informs us of the stage of civilization that the Aryans were then passing through."³

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3. Aggarwal, H.R., A Short History of Sanskrit Literature, Munchi Ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, 1963, p. 27.
The Mahābhārata lays stress on the principle of the equality of men and women. As C. Kunhan Raja puts it, "In the Mahābhārata we find... an attempt to revive the doctrines of the equality of men and their equal opportunities. Women come into active life, with their own wisdom and with their own abilities, without being compelled to be dependent on men and without being condemned by men."^1

The epic inspires men to lead a useful and active life. As C. Kunhan Raja observes, "This is the culture which the epic presents to the world to lead men into a useful life of intensive activity with a goal and a purpose, when new codes of life like renouncing the world and seeking a goal of absolute happiness outside and beyond the world, were being preached by priests patronized by kings."^2

Mahābhārata has anticipated long ago the modern Western humanism. This concept finds a beautiful and succinct expression in the following verse-

नाहै शंति: प्रवीणमार्मिक कविताः दयं द्वारे क्रयूस्तस्येक वेदिम्।
उद्ग्राहे जाबं तत्त्वं वो जूयमिनि न नान्याभां ख्यातारं दी विकित्वं।।

"Retaliation is not my cup of tea even when I am being cursed. My consideration is that the self-control is the door of immortality. I am going to unveil a great mystery that humanism is par excellence."

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3. Quoted from Essays on Sanskrit Literature, p.155.
The concept of One World without using even a modicum of force is beautifully enunciated in the Atharva Veda—  

"Just as a family with its members speaking different languages and holding divergent views remains an undivided unit— similar should be the case of our earth inhabited by persons of different languages and opinions. Only then this earth will provide wealth in many (thousand) different ways like a cow who yields milk in thousand streams."

Yajur-Veda also declares:

"Harkye, all men, children of the Immortal Divine! Descendants of common heritage, that ye are all one."

This type of concept is reflected in the Mahābhārata in the form of the fundamental unity of Bhāratavarṣa in a narrower sense. S. RadhaKrishnan writes in this matter, "By bringing together the social and the religious ideas of the different peoples assembled on the soil of India, it tried to impress on the minds of men the fundamental unity of the

Bharatavarsa.¹

Originated different Varṇas (castes) from one Supreme Being permeating this universe—

“Created the Brāhmanas (intellectual class philosopher) from 'His mouth, Kṣatriyas (warrior class/soldier) from His arms, the Vaiśyas (businessman class/traders) from His thighs and Sudras (working class/labourer) from His feet.”

The names of four Varṇas find a clear mention in the following Mantra

वत्तारे वे कण: ब्राह्मणो राजनवे कैय: सुधः: ³

"The number of Varṇas is four—Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Sudra".

Different duties were assigned to different castes—

“For learning pursuits were the Brāhmaṇas created, for protection the Kṣatriyas, for trade the Vaiśyas, and for the physical labour Sudras.”

4. Śukla Yajurveda-Samhita, 30/5.
Swami Vivekananda was in all praise for the original caste-system, "Caste is a very good thing. Caste is the plan we want to follow. That is the only natural way of solving life. I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading the Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head. What caste really is, not one in a million understands."¹

The significance of Mahābhārata lies in the fact that a reversal in roles of various classes is evidently visible in it. Deep-rooted has become a spirit of revolt against the hereditary caste-system as says C.Kunhan Raja, "There is introduced into the epic a spirit of revolt against the hereditary caste system that was taking root in the social organization following the new culture. Kings again become wise, discoursing on philosophy; persons with the heredity of learning and wisdom become great warriors. Others kept outside the field of learning and wisdom are brought in as the most learned and the wisest. Droṇa and Āśvatthāmā were Brahmins according to family-traditions and they fought like great heroes in the War. Sanjaya and Vidura were outside the pale of learning according to the tradition and they come in as the best counsellors of the kings, as the wisest, with the best form of practical wisdom."²

² Raja, C.Kunhan, Survey of Sanskrit Literature, p.64.
The epic makes man familiar with the art of peace as well as with the art of war. As H.R. Aggarwal says, "...it gives us copious knowledge not only about the arts of peace but also of the arts of war."¹

The importance of the Mahābhārata is exhibited in its recognition of the phenomenon of suffering. Margaret Chatterjee remarks, "The realism of it all lies in its recognition that suffering continues. There is no end to it. The heroes fear neither life nor death. Their ethos is a tough-minded one. We see men, women, kings, beggars, even gods, experiencing sorrow, hardship and disaster. Even in battle the winner has a hollow victory."²

The importance of the great epic can not be ignored from ecological point of view. Vyāsa has foreseen the most penetrating analysis of modern times in his views on ecological balance. As Krishna Chaitanya puts it, "Vyāsa notes the predatory ravage that creates ecological imbalance and uses his literary genius to stimulate antipathy towards it by touching the affections, triggering associations of the numinous and the sacrilegious."³ Krishna Chaitanya has quoted many instances to support his viewpoint such as the

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1. Aggarwal, H.R., A Short History of Sanskrit Literature, p.27.


stay of the Pāṇḍavas was too long (about a year and eight months) in the Dvaita forest during the period of their exile. Consequently the game animals were almost killed. Yudhiṣṭhira had a dream that the few remaining animals came to him and requested for saving their various rare species and also pleaded that men should have the feeling of mercy for wild life. This made Yudhiṣṭhira decide to go to another forest, the Kāmyaka woods. Krishna Chaitanya further writes, "Vyāsa is never less expressive when he refers to the bonds forged between nature and the sensitive spirit of man." He gives an example that when Yudhiṣṭhira left Kailasa mountain after a prolonged as well as pleasant stay, he looked back at it several times and proclaimed that he would come back again after attaining and ruling his kingdom.

The major pursuits of life have been classified into four groups of values viz, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. The leading motive of the great epic 'Dharma' is couched in the simplest yet in the most attractive and powerful language. Dharma is a very subtle and difficult word to comprehend. The sage Vyāsa says:

1. Mahā., 3/244/2 to 13.
"The discernment of 'Dharma' is as difficult as the footprint of a snake."

'Dharma' finds itself defined in the Mahābhārata in the following words-

"Dharmar (Righteousness) takes its origin from its typical peculiarity the maintenance (of all creatures). All living beings are maintained by Righteousness. That, which is best-owed with the characteristic of maintenance (of all creatures), is none other than 'Dharma'."

Kāma is used for libido/sex or desire which is the motivating force of life. Atharvaveda writes about it-

"First of all was born Kāma. Kāma, therefore, ranks very high. It is Viśwahā (the destroyer of the world), so 'O Great Kāma,' I pay my obeisance unto thee."

Dharma, Artha and Kāma have collectively acquired a famous name 'Trivarga'. According to the Mahābhārata all the worldly activities are motivated by them. The act of pursuance of Dharma, Artha and Kāma should be in close proximity.

1. Quoted from Essays on Sanskrit Literature, p.152.
2. 轨迹, 12/11/11.
3. Atharva-veda, (Part II), 9/2/19.
4. Mahā., 12/16/1/2.
cooperation with each other.\(^1\) Advocates Mahābhārata-

अनर्थय न कामोदितीत तथा कर्माधिकारिन्य इति: 9
tasmat tādiḥ lokā bhūyādhi yā vandhuḥ: 11\(^2\)

"There can be no gratification of Kāma of a person who is bereft of artha (wealth), likewise, one, who is destitute of Dharma is unable to acquire Artha. Consequently, the people who are devoid of Dharma and Artha groan under suffering."

The attainment of Mokṣa or final emancipation is possible only by an escape from Trivarga-

त्रिवर्ग्य निवृत्तिर मोक्ष उच्चे 14

The Mahābhārata is a monumental work of Economics, Politics, History, Philosophy, Theology, Morality, Law and various other subjects. As Robert Antoine calls the epic, "a mirror of Indian life throughout several centuries, a mirror in which popular beliefs, social customs, religious practices and speculation folklore, civil and criminal law are reflected," developed in course of time into "a vast encyclopedia."\(^4\) But the poetic value of this work is also unsurpassed. M. Winternitz says, "But in this jungle of

2. Ibid., 12/161/24.
3. Quoted from Essays on Sanskrit Literature, p. 154.
poetry, which scholarship has only just begun to clear, there
shoots forth much true and genuine poetry, hidden by the wild
undergrowth. Out of the unshapely mass shine out the most
precious blossoms of immortal poetic art and profound
wisdom."^1

According to Sauti, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana has called this
work a great Kāvya. Sauti further says that, according to
Brahmā, Vyāsa did not tell a lie and therefore, his utterings
can not be baseless; Vyāsa's work undoubtedly occupies the
place of a Kāvya and the writing of a great poet will never
be in a position to surpass the poetic merits of the
Mahābhārata.

Vyāsa highlights the characteristics of the epic as
enshrined in the following verse:

\[ \text{"Emblished pith elegant expressions composed}
\text{in various meteres (poetical measures) and}
\text{resplendent with conversations-divine and}
\text{human-Mahābhārata is mental food of great}
\text{delight for the intelligentia (the learned)."} \]

The characterization of the Mahābhārata is par
excellence. "What heroes!" marvelled Romesh Chander Dutt in
1899, "In the delineation of character the Mahābhārata is far

1. Winternitz M., A History of Indian Literature (Vol.I),
(Translated by Ketkar, S.), Oriental Book Reprint
Corporation, New Delhi, 1972, p.326.

above anything we find in later Sanskrit poetry. Indeed, with much that is fresh and sweet and lovely in later Sanskrit poetry, there is little or no portraiture of character. All heroes are cast much in the same heroic mould; all love-sick heroines suffer in silence and burn with fever, all fools are shrewd and impudent by turns, all knaves are heartless and cruel and suffer in the end. There is not much to distinguish between one warrior and another, between one tender woman and her sister.\(^1\) C.Kunhan Raja hints at the individuality and variety of its characters, "The character delineations are superb, each character keeping up his individuality. Their feelings and emotional manifestations and their experiences and reactions to various situations, and the large variety of characters that come together in the field—all such features make the work a study of human nature."\(^2\)

The reigning force of the epic is the sentiment of quietude (śānta rasa).\(^3\) As J.P.Sinha writes, "--- the inmost import of the Mahābhārata from the literary standpoint is the sentiment of quietude (śānta rasa). This śānta rasa seen in the Mahābhārata through the literary spectacle is integrated with the highest human attainment of 'freedom' (mokṣa) as the central theme of the Mahābhārata seen through


2. Raja, C.Kunhan, Survey of Sanskrit Literature, p.61.

the philosophical spectacle." The sentiment of pathos (Karuna) is also prevalent in the Mahabharata. The importance of the paramount quietude sentiment (santa rasa) has been stated by J.P. Sinha in these words, "The quietude (santa), it seems, orders the intricate plot of the Mahabharata for the poet. It is a controlling force behind the vast characterization that the Mahabharata is. It as well tastes in the various tastes of the heroic offered by the Udyoga, the Bhishma, the Droṇa, the Karna and the Śalya parva-s. Following the stream of the santa, the reader forgets the length of the arduous journey through the Mahabharata, a śāstra in externals but a Kāvya in its core."

Figures of speech are the ornaments of the Mahabharata. As Sadhu Ram points out, "They are all couched in the most attractive and powerful language which is embellished with similes, metaphors and various other charming figures of speech."

Suktis are also found in this epic. The significance of the Suktis in poetry has been described by Sadhu Ram in this way, "Another test of the supreme artistry
of a poem is the manner in which felicitous ideas and expressions occurring in it pass into the national memory as proverbs and maxims."¹

The Mahābhārata occupies a very high place in the Nature Poetry of the world. Vyāsa is a skilled painter of nature. C.Kunhan Raja comments, "As Nature Poetry, it ranks very high in the literatures of the world. Mountains and rivers and trees and creepers and flowers, many reasons, the days with the burning sun and the nights with the cool moon and the sky studded with stars, birds and animals- all come together along with men, all distinctions of animate and inanimate and of lower and higher strata in creation being completely eliminated. Each responds to the feelings of the other, and there is nothing in the Universe that has no life and feelings."²

We may conclude the poetic value of the Mahābhārata in the words of J.P.Sinha, "....it may be remarked that besides being a history and a śāstra, the Mahābhārata is a marvellous work of the poetic art and Vyāsa is the poet of a very high order."³

Says Yajurveda, a jewel amongst all the holy scriptures-

1. RamSadhu, Essays on Sanskrit Literature, p.146.
2. Raja, C.Kunhan, Survey of Sanskrit Literature, pp.61-62.
Hidden is the face of truth by golden (bright and gorgeous) cover. That is, O Lord, unveil the veil in order to see the Truth (God)."

Satyavrata Siddhantalankar's explanation of the mantra is as follows:

"That is, while God is everywhere, only those can see Him face to face who can remove the veil of ignorance which is hiding his farm with the dazzling sunshine of the material world."2

The dawn of true knowledge comes only when there is combination of the physical and the spiritual wisdom. Only education is bestowed with that divine-power which is capable of unveiling the cover of ignorance. The aim of education is not merely imparting bookish knowledge but it simultaneously makes one acquainted with the spiritual side of life. All type of knowledge (spiritual etc.) is inherent in man. It

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emerges from the infinite library of the mind. Rightly elucidated by Swami Vivekananda:

"Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs."\(^1\)

The material directly related to education is hardly available in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. R.K. Mookerji throws light on this issue and explains the reasons of the non-availability of educational material in the epics. "The purely educational evidence of the Epics is, however, very meagre in comparison with the sizes of the works or the vast quantity of sociological data they furnish. This is, of course, due to the interest of the two Epics lying mainly in the realm of action and not in that of thought. The military interest of the Epics predominates over the intellectual. The predominant part in their history is also taken by the military and ruling caste. The bulk of the intellectual life of the country centred in the hermitages and homes of Rishis and Brahmins, which do not receive notice in the Epics except when they are, connected with the course of that story."\(^2\)

The sources which provide information about educational material are: discourses, descriptions of ideal students and hermitages and education of the princes or the Kṣatriya children. As P.K. Mookerji observes, "Nevertheless,

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we can wring out of such unpromising sources some quantities of interesting information bearing upon matters educational.

There are some general discourses bearing on the duties of the first Āsrama of life, the life of studentship. Secondly, there are accounts of some ideal students and schools or hermitages, the centres of learning in those days. Thirdly, there are accounts given of the education that was imparted to the princes or the children of the Kshatriya caste who were meant for the military and political career.\(^1\)

Many sterling examples of hermitages or seats of learning, teachers and ideal students are found in the Mahābhārata. The epic throws light on various hermitages where disciples were imparted education. Hermitages of Vyāsa, Vāsishṭha and Kaṇwa etc. and schools of Droṇa, and Krip were famous seats of learning.\(^2\) A hermitage situated near Kurukshetra should be specially mentioned for having two famous women hermits—one the daughter of a Brahmin and the other of a king (Śāndilya by name). Droṇa was the prominent teacher of the Mahābhārata age. Other famous teachers were: Kripa, Paraśurāma etc. There are descriptions in the epic about the ideal and devoted students like Āruni,\(^3\) Uttanka,\(^4\)


2. For detail see 3.1 of this thesis.


4. Ibid., 1/3/86-177.
During the Mahābhārata age, the women were not negated the opportunities of getting education. One of the prominent women ascetics is Sulabhā whose deep learning was recognized by the celebrated scholar King Janaka. The daughters of Śāndilya and Rṣi Gārgya have also been described as Brahmachārinis and great scholars in the epic.

The Mahābhārata also gives descriptions of scholarly congregations whose role can't be ignored in the enhancement of knowledge. The recitation of Mahābhārata by Vaiśampāyana took place at the sacrifice of Janamejaya where the number of scholarly Brahmins was in thousands. It, therefore, becomes clear that such royal sacrifices acted as agents for popularizing important literary works. The scholars established themselves as intellectuals during such congregations. The Mahābhārata gives an account of the sacrifice of Janaka where scholarly Brahmins gathered in order to listen to Brahmaghosha (recitation of the Vedas) and controversies and where Aṣṭavakra also came to prove and establish himself as an intellectual of repute.

The epic gives accounts of the education of the princes or the Kṣatriya children whose future career was either military service or politics. There are descriptions

2. Ibid., 12/308.
3. Ibid., 1/1/16.
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura who had studied all the four Vedas and different Śāstras. They were very much adept in Nītiśāstra (Polity), Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Dhanurveda and other subjects, club-fights, in the use of swords etc.¹ Drona, who was a specialist in the Science of Arms, was appointed the teacher of Pāṇḍu and Kuru princes. There are several evidences to prove the fact that these princes acquired different specializations under the noble guidance of Drona. Arjuna became specialist in archery,² Nakula and Sahadeva in wielding swords.³ The above-mentioned education was also imparted to the next generation of Pāṇḍavas. Abhimanyu was made expert in the science of arms by Arjuna (the father) himself. Elephant-riding⁴ and horse-manship⁵, chariot-driving,⁶ music⁷ etc. were the integral part of the princely education. The entire military science called Dhanurveda was studied in isolation and by practice. Blessed ones (students) also got help from their teachers in learning the use of different arms while one Ekalavya got this skill by making an earthen idol of his ideal teacher Drona by worshipping it and

¹. Mahā., 1/102/17-10.
². Ibid., 1/125/22/25.
³. Ibid., 1/173/41.
⁴. Ibid., 1/124/27.
⁵. Ibid., 1/124/27.
⁶. Ibid., 1/124/27.
by way of continuous practice.\textsuperscript{1}

There are many glaring examples about the education which was imparted to the Brahmins and there are also descriptions of their centres of learning. The education of the Vaiśya and the Śūdra was such as could prepare them in performing their duties well.

1.3 Mahābhārata as Fountain of knowledge:

Mahābhārata, the great epic of India, is a vast ocean of knowledge. One has to take a deep immersion into it for acquiring the same. Deeper the immersion, greater the knowledge. The description of four Vidyas or four branches of knowledge finds place in this epic. These are: the triple Vedas; Ānvikṣikī (logic); Vārta or the means of subsistence viz., agriculture, animal husbandry, trade and commerce; and the Dandanīti or the science of Govt.\textsuperscript{2} No Vidyā is of less significance than the other and each of them proves to be an useful instrument in bringing prosperity to the society.

1.3.1 Veda

There are ample examples to prove the fact that Mahābhārata is repository of Vedic knowledge. Mahābhārata quotes Veda in order to solve controversial matters.\textsuperscript{3} Vyāsa quotes Vedas to support his views to prove the legality of

\begin{itemize}
  \item[1.] Mahā., 1/127/12 to 14.
  \item[2.] Ibid., 12/59/33.
  \item[3.] Ibid., 1/98/5; 12/32/".; 17/194/16.
\end{itemize}
the Niyoga-vidhi because Vedas are the source of Dharma. This fact is proved by the expressions such as Sruti etc.

Hopkins observes, ".... the epic cites freely or parodies Vedic document. The free rendition in Veda-like verse of the older hymnology is not uncommon. Thus in V.16, the opening hymn is not strictly Vedic, but it is very like a collection of Vedic utterances put into popular form and these verses are called brahma mantrah, č1.8. Apart, however, from such instances of more or less exact imitation of general Vedic verses, we find a number of verses plainly initiative of extant Vedic passages or almost exactly reproducing them."

Hopkins supports his above-mentioned views by citing some examples such as:

"Rig Veda x, 117, 6.

mogham annam vindate apracetaḥ

Mbh, v, 12, 20.
mogham annam vindati ca py acetah

Rig Veda vii, 89, 2,
dṛṭir na dhmato, adrivah

Mbh.iii, 207, 47; xii, 95, 21,
mahādṛṭir ivā dhmataḥ

(pāpo bhavatihityadā, iii, 207, 47)"

Upaniṣad

The Mahābhārata derives inspiration from different...
Upaniṣads such as Chhāṇ-dogya, Aitareya etc. Hopkins has written in this regard, "... while pointing out that it is historically of little importance whether the oldest Upanishads are cited if we can satisfy ourselves that the epic draws on Upanishadas of the second and third period, not only sporadically but connectedly. In regard to the earliest works, it is enough to refer to the passage condensed from the Brhadāraṇyaka and cited above. This is the only one of the oldest Upanishadas certainly cited, though the Chāndogya, Aitareya, and Kāuśītaki have many parallels with the epic, as have among the later works of this class the Kena, Muṇḍaka, Praṇa, and a few others. Oddly enough, the Māitrāyaṇa has been scarcely compared, but I purpose to show that this and the earlier Kāṭhaka were certainly copied by the later epic poets."¹

Hopkins has set his sight on many examples both from the Upaniṣads and the Mahābhārata to prove this point. He writes, "From the Katha, iii, 10, indiryebhyah para hyārtha, arthebhyac ca param manah, manasas tu parā, buddhir, ’ buddher atma mahān paraḥ, and ii, 19, nā'yaṃ hanti na hanyate, the Gita, 3, 42, has indriyāni parāṇy āhur indriyebhyah param manah, manasas tu parā bud-dhir, yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ (the Sa is higher than intellect); and in 2, 19-20, it inverts and modifies the na jāyate and hantā cen manyata hintum stanzas... the third chapter of the Upanishad is epitomized in a section of Cānti. The later feature begins at

¹ The Great Epic of India, p. 27
Hopkins gives another example, "This Māitri Upanishad is found reflected in the epic at iii, 213, and in a later imitation in the twelfth book. The former epic section is based entirely on the Upanishad, and the preceding sections appear to be due to an expansion of the same material. The order followed is in general that of the Upanishad."  

1.3.2. Ānyāksikī (Philosophy)

Different philosophical systems such as Sāmkhya, Nayāya are traceable in the Mahābhārata. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes about the Sāmkhya philosophy as depicted in this great epic, "In cosmology the Mahābhārata accepts the Sāmkhya theory though not consistently.... The evolution of the world is described after the Sāmkhya system in many places in the Mahābhārata..... The Sāmkhya enumeration of the elements is accepted by the Mahābhārata."  

Dr. Radhakrishnan criticizes the views of Deussen regarding Sāmkhya philosophy as contained in the Mahābhārata in these words, "We do not agree with Deussen in his view that epic philosophy constitutes the transition between the idealism of the Vedānta and the realism of the Sāmkhya. Both

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2. Ibid., p. 33.  

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are assumed in it. Though the Sāṃkhya had not in the epic developed many of its characteristic features, still the essentials were all there. The Yoga philosophy is assumed, though the technical terms of Patanjali's system are yet absent.1 2

Dr. Radhakrishnan further writes about other systems of philosophy besides Sāṃkhya, "Generally the Vedic scriptures are considered to be valid. Pratyakṣa, or perception, anumana, or inference, and agama, or authority, are recognized. Sometimes the four canons of the Nyāya system are mentioned. It certainly opposes those who repudiate the authority of the Veda. The nāstika creed of the dissenters is refuted by Pancaśikha, a follower of the Sāṃkhya. The lokāyatas are also mentioned. The dialectical pundits (hetumantaḥ), who deny the reality of souls and despise immortality, "wander over the whole earth." A reference to the Jains may be found in the passage where a priest is said to have "tramped around Benares, astounding the people, clothed in air... like a mad man." Opposition to Buddhism is also found. "What makes you so glorious?" asks one woman of another, and the reply is: "I did not wear the yellow robe or bark garments, nor go shorn or with matted hair." Heresy and repudiation of the Vedas were thought of as landing us in hell and a cycle of low births. "The reason why I was born a jackal," says a character in the Mahābhārata, "is that I was


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a counterfeit pundit, a rationalist and critic of the Vedas, being devoted to logic and the useless science of reasoning, a proclaimer of logical arguments, a talker in assemblies, a reviler and opposer of priests in arguments about Brahman, an unbeliever, a doubter of all, who thought myself a pundit."

1.3.3 **Dandaññiti (Science of Govt.)**

The Mahabharata is not devoid of the knowledge pertaining to Dandaññiti (Science of Govt.) for which different terms have been used in it. These are: Rajadharma, Rajaśāstra, Daññanñiti, Arthaśāstra, Arthavidya, Rajanitiśāstra.

And how charmingly Vyasa describes the significance of Dandaññiti-

"Understand ya, that Vidyas are triple in number—Trayi (three Vedas), Varta (agriculture etc.) and Dandaññiti. Proper pursuance of these Vidyas can be of immense help for the maintenance of the world with case."

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3. Ibid., 12/58/3.
4. Ibid., 12/75/29; 12/64/7.
5. Ibid., 12/52/5.
6. Ibid., 12/49/11.
8. Ibid., 3/149/31.
Dandanīti acts as a saviour of Dharma and it is of great help for the King in bringing the people back to the right path.\(^1\) The Santi Parva throws light on the scope and subject matter of Dandanīti. Although it is primarily concerned with the state-craft, yet the four-fold objectives of human life are dealt with in it.\(^2\) Mahābhārata advocates—

\[\text{"As the foot-prints of the elephant embrace the foot-prints of all other living beings within their fold similarly all the dharmas can't be excluded from the fold of Raja-dharma what-soever comes."}\]

Dandanīti is linked with all kinds of limitations of conduct and knowledge. It has widened its scope due to the inclusion of various subjects in it and it is, therefore, beyond the boundaries of measurement.\(^4\)

1.3.4 Vārtā

Military science, medical science, veterinary science etc. are included in Vārtā. The king is instructed in the Mahābhārata to promote the Vārtā—agriculture, veterinary science, trade and commerce which is very much essential for the existence of the human society.\(^5\) Vārtā touched new

1. Mahā., 12/59/77, 72, 80.
2. Ibid., 12/57/29 to 74.
3. Ibid., 12/63/25.
4. Ibid., 12/64/19, 21.
5. Ibid., 12/68/35.
heights in the Kuru country owing to the expertise of Yudhishṭhīra.¹

**Dhanurvyeda (Military Science)**

The Military Science was at its peak during the Mahābhārata times. The other name given to the Military Science was Dhanurvyeda or in other words Military Science and Dhanurvyeda are synonymous. R.K. Mookerji says, "The entire military science and art of the age seem to have been comprehended by the generic term Dhanurvyeda, the dhanu or bow being regarded as the type or symbol of all weapons or methods of warfare."² To acquire knowledge of Military Science one had to seek the blessings of the learned Guru. There are descriptions in the Mahābhārata of Droṇa and Parasurāma as renowned and outstanding teachers of Military Science, Droṇa made Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas perfect in this science.

The account of varied weapons is found in this great epic which are in no way less destructive than the weapons of modern age. Arjuna³ and Pāṇḍu⁴ excelled in archery and Nakula and Sahadeva in the wielding of swords.⁵ Two categories of weapons have been mentioned in the epic.

1. Mahā., 2/70/3.
4. Ibid., 1/102/11 to 19.
5. Ibid., 1/123/41.
Divyāni (divine) weapons and Mānuṣani weapons (used by the human beings). Divine weapons include: Āgnyaya, Vārūṇa, Vāyavya, Vaishnava, Aindra, Pāśupata, Brāhma, Pārameśṭhaya, Prājāpatya, Dhūtra, Tvāstra, Sāvitra, and Vaivasvata. Human-war-instruments were: sword, bow, spear (Śakti), Javelin, Kunta, Tomara, Bhindipāla, Arrow, Yamtras, Battle-axe or Parasu, Gada. Defensive weapons also find mention in this epic—Armours or Kavachas, Angulitrāṇa, Shield or Charmā. The weapons were kept in Ayudhagras. There were four wings in the army: the infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariots.
Ayurveda (Medical Science)

Ayurveda (Medical Science) finds a prominent place in the great epic Mahābhārata. There is a description in the epic that the physicians were given due regard. Essential medical facilities were provided for maintaining a high standard of the health of the people during the age of the Mahābhārata. There are instructions for the king to collect all kinds of medicines and appoint four types of physicians. B.P. Roy states, "It (Mahābhārata) does not refer to the particular types of physicians, but probably there were doctors who cured those who took poison. There were surgeons who cured the wounds. Physicians cured patients with the application of medicinal herbs. The doctors versed in witchcraft removed the spirits and epidemics by performing rites and reciting the Atharvavedic hymns." There is a mention in the Mahābhārata to the Aristaśāla in which the preservation of the fire was done carefully. B.P. Roy further writes, "This refers to maternity house or hospital in general. The forgoing description reveals that the state took much care for the health of citizens by providing them with

2. Ibid., 12/09/54, 57.
3. Ibid., 12/69/57.
5. Mahā., 12/69/47.
medicines, doctors and hospitals."\(^1\)

There is a mention of Pāṇḍavas employing doctors\(^2\) in their army. They hired the services of hundreds of proficient physicians who were equipped with all kinds of provisions.\(^3\) A large number of efficient surgeons were invited to extract the arrows from the body of Bhīṣma.\(^4\) Different kinds of medicines like viśālyakaranaṇī were used for curing the patients.\(^5\) Besides this, the chariot-drivers were also given training for providing the first aid to heal the wounds of chariot-soldiers.\(^6\)

**Veterinary Science**

Besides the development of Ayurveda or Medical Science, the progress of Veterinary Science is also visible in the Mahābhārata. Śalihotra is regarded as the founder of this science, Kṛṣṇa and Pāṇḍu's son Nakula acquired proficiency in curing the diseases of horses. Sahadeva was one of the prominent veterinary doctors of the Mahābhārata age. The supervision of the training of the army-horses was undertaken by the Aśvādhyakṣa. Bāhuka\(^7\) who was the

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2. MAHĀ., 5/149/50.
3. Ibid., 5/149/78.
4. Ibid., 6/115/51.
5. Ibid., 6/77/10. Ibid.,
6. Ibid., 8/28/7
7. Ibid., 5/64/2,6.
Aśvādhyakṣa of King Rūtapaṇa of Ayodhya and Granthika
(Nakula) who was Aśvādhyakṣa and Aśvabandha of King Virāṭa
were famous for imparting the best training to the horses as
well as for their medical treatment. There is also a mention
in the epic to the Hayajnah who were considered proficient
in finding out the nature of the horses, their training,
methods to control them and their medical treatment. Such
type of training made even the wicked horses disciplined.

Agriculture

The development of agriculture can take place only
when the king is able to please the agriculturists. This very
cause of concern finds a place in a question which is put by
Nārada to Yudhishṭhira. According to Nārada if the people were
unhappy, the destruction of the State was unavoidable. The
necessity of adequate means of irrigation is also stressed in
a question of Nārada in which he asked Yudhishṭhira whether
the rain was the only source of irrigation in his country or
some other arrangement had also been made by him. While
levying taxes on the agriculturists, the king should see that
the people did not get annoyed due to the imposition of heavy

1. Mahā, edited by Sukthankar, Vishnu S.,
Bhandarālar Oriental Research Institute, Poona,
1956, 4/3/2.


4. Ibid., 2/5/67.
taxes. There is a mention in the epic that a promise was made by the people to offer $\frac{1}{10}$ of their agricultural products.

**Trade and Commerce**

Trade and commerce are the main sources upon which the foundation of the State's economy is laid, therefore, the *Mahābhārata* instructs the King to behave nicely with the merchants and to engage the people in trade and commerce. A network of roads had to be built by the king throughout the empire for the promotion of the same. The merchants were looted by the dacoits on high-ways, so it was the duty of the king to make necessary arrangements for their safe journey in his empire. There is a reference in the *Mahābhārata* to a Sārtha (a merchants' group) going to the Chedi country from Vidarbha under the leadership of Sārthavāha. The utility of the waterways can't be ignored in promoting the trade. The state levied taxes on the persons by whom the rivers were crossed by boats. The *Mahābhārata* mentions that sometimes

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2. Ibid., 12/67/23.
3. Ibid., 17/08/34 to 37.
4. Ibid., 12/87/23.
5. Ibid., 12/88/38.
7. Ibid., 3/61/106 to 125; 3/62/1 to 12.
8. Ibid., 12/69/23.
heavy taxes were imposed on the merchants, as a consequence of which the state suffered financial loss. There is a description of Śulkopajīvin in the Mahābhārata whose duty was to realize taxes from the merchants.

Industry

There is a description in the Mahābhārata that the king should work for promoting the industry and for attaining this aim he should employ artisans and make the raw material available to them. The king used to employ skilled and reliable artisans in his workshops upon whom the quantity and quality of products depend. There is a mention of many artisans residing in the cities of Kuru country in the epic. The industries which were patronized by the state included mining and preparation of salt.

The role of the artisans in the prosperity of the state is very significant. The facts worth considering by the king at the time of levying taxes on the artisans were: the products of art and crafts, the material used, cost incurred, maintenance of the artisans, wealth needed for the production of articles and their financial positions.

1. Mahā., 12/33/11; 12/70/22.
2. Ibid., 2/5/103.
3. Ibid., 2/5/107.
4. Ibid., 2/5/107.
5. Ibid., 2/5/25.
7. Ibid., 12/69/12.
after the determination of the out-turn and the amount of labour required for production that the king should impose taxes on businessmen because lack of incentives would certainly be a hindrance in the progress of industry.¹

**Astrology**

The descriptions pertaining to astrology are also available in the *Mahābhārata*. Such acts as: crowning-ceremony, march towards battle-field, marriage-ceremony, the starting of journey etc. were performed at the time suggested by the astrologers. Another brahmin made a forecast that Kunti would be blessed with sons through the blessings of god² and the name proved true.

**Astronomy**

Astronomy has been assigned a significant place in the *Mahābhārata*. The epic mentions that it is the duty of the king to patronise great astronomers. Various constellations have been referred to in it. Vyāsa advised Yudhishṭhira to marry Kṛṣṇa on a particular day because the moon was moving towards constellation Pusya on that day.³

The aforesaid description is more than sufficient for proving the fact that the *Mahābhārata* is really a fountain of knowledge.

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¹ *Mahā.*, 12/08/11.

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1.4 Studies on Mahābhārata

Although cowebs of doubts have been woven around the date author etc. of the legendary Mahābhārata, yet this great epic has virtually turned into a heaven for editors, translators, transcreators and writers and also a boon for researchers due to its encyclopedic nature. Consequently many editions, translations of Mahābhārata and independent research works on its various aspects have come into light.

1.4.1 Editions

The following editions of the Mahābhārata are available:

**English Editions**

The Mahābhārata

(i) Edited by V.S. Sukthankar, 1933

(ii) (Without text) Translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli, 1981.


**Hindi Editions**

Mahābhārata

(i) Gita Press, Gorakhpur, (without date).

(ii) Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2029.

(iii) Edited by Sripada Damodar Satvalekar, 1980.

(iv) (With the commentary of Nitkantha) Edited by Sri Jivanyasa Tirtha, 1983.

(v) Translated by Jagdisvarananda Saraswati, 1984.

(vi) Sriman-mahābhāratam (with the commentary of Nilkantha), 1988. The Mahābhārata edited by V.S. Sukthankar is considered the most authencnic.
1.4.2 Commentaries

M. Krishnamachariar has referred to various commentaries; "There are commentaries on the Mahabharata by Nilakantha, Arjunamisra, Sarvagna Narayana, Vegganarayan, Vaisampayana, Vadiraja, Srinanda, and Vimalabodha. Aufrecht gives the names of the following commentators: Anandapurna, Vidyasagara, Caturbhuja, Nandikesvara, Devabodha, Nandanacarya, Paramanandabhadhacarya, Ratnagarbhha, Ramakrsna, Laksmabhatta, and Srinvasacarya. Besides two anonymous commentaries, NigudhapadbodhinI and BharatatippanI, the Oriental Manuscripts Library of Madras contains Bharatavyakhya by Karinda and Lakhslokalkarka of Vadiraja. Srirdharacharya has commented on the chapter Moksaardhama."

Nilakantha is considered to be the most authentic commentator on Mahabharata. J.P. Sinha writes about his commentary, "...the Bhavadipa has a mission which is to distil the idealistic Gita-philosophy from the Mahabharata. The author seems to offer Advaitic reconstructions by way of criticism of Madhvaacarya's Bharatataparyani which points to the core of the Mahabharata-philosophy as dualistic."

1.4.3 Critical Works

The first edition of selected episodes of Mahabharata from manuscripts was brought into light by Bopp. According to

N.B. Patil, "Bopp had stated as early as 1829 that all parts of the Mb. were not of the same age."^1

N.B. Patil writes that in 1896 Ludwig emphasized on the way in which the various episodes in the Mahābhārata were joined together.² Ludwig says, "A critic of the Mb. must be on the lookout for ‘misconceived links’, ‘striking laboriousness’, ‘absolute superfluity’, ‘repetition of theme’, ‘unnatural and farfetched motivation’ etc. A critic must further study the meter, language and style."³

E. Washburn Hopkins has presented a detailed study of the great epic Mahābhārata in his book "The Great Epic of India" (1901). He is of the view that neither Rāmāyaṇa nor Mahābhārata has a definite text and that their texts have been freely altered in every recension and, therefore, the texts have suffered an irreparable loss.

The excellent index entitled "An Index to the Names in Mahābhārata" (1904)⁴ consisting of two parts— the Index proper and the Concordence compiled by S-Sorensen has virtually become a source of inspiration and guidance for the readers and research scholars owing to its informative


2. Ibid., p.3. (Introduction).


nature. The unity of the whole story made him think that the
gigantic work was authored by one person only.

The significance of the studies on the historical and
geographical aspects of the Mahābhārata carried out by
Cunningham and N.L.Dey can not be ignored. The titles of
their works are "Ancient Geography of India" (1924) and
"Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India"
(1927) respectively.

S.K.Belvalkar in his book (1939) has written about
the cosmographical episode in the Mahābhārata.

R.G.Harsha has discussed in detail the legends found
in Mahābhārata in a work named the "Arabic Version of the
Mahābhārata Legend" (1940).

Dr.V.S.Sukthankar's lectures were published in the
form of a book entitled "On the Meaning of Mahābhārata"
(1957). The importance of this work lies in the fact that the
author presents here a critical survey of the studies done by
the Indian and foreign scholars on the Mahābhārata.

C.V.Vaidya's volume "The Mahābhārata: A literary
Criticism" (1966) throws a flood of light on the Mahābhārata
from the literary and historical viewpoints.

A study of various stories of Mahābhārata has, found
place in "Legends in Mahābhārata" (1969). S.A.Dange is the
author of this work. The work is significant in the sense
that it attempts to fix the origin and development of the
stories found in Mahābhārata.

The doctoral thesis "Imagery in the Mahābhārata" (1971) by Sudhisankar Bhattāchāryya presents analysis of the representative poetical images of Vyāsa. The author has also discussed the modifications of these in subsequent literary compositions.

"Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahābhārata" (1975) authored by Brajdeo Prasad Roy embodies the political ideas and institutions as contained in the Mahābhārata. This work is of comparative and critical nature.

"Indian Society in the Mahābhārata" (1976) of S.C. Banerjee is a comprehensive study of the society of the Mahābhārata age. The description of the Mahābhārata society found in this work has its deep-rooted basis in the material of the Smṛtis.

S.B. Roy’s "Date of Mahābhārata Battle" (1978) deals with the yet unsolved riddle of the date of Mahābhārata war. Various theories and techniques of chronology have been discussed in the present work. The analysis of the merits and demerits of the chronology of the Western Indologists also remains the special feature of this book.

S.P. Gupta and K.S. Ramachandran, editors of the "Mahabhirata: Myth and Reality" (1976) have given place in this monograph to the divergent opinions of forty one eminent scholars about the problem whether the famous Mahābhārata is
a myth or a reality. The first fifty five introductory pages are the core of monograph and rest of its pages throw light on contributors' views.

"The Mahābhārata: A literary study" (1977) which has been written by J.P. Sinha deals with the literary aspect of the Mahābhārata. The author has avoided himself from getting involved into the controversial topics like its authorship, date, authenticity etc.

N. Jagannadha Rao has carefully examined the premises which were adopted by the foreign authors regarding its date in his work entitled "The Age of the Mahābhārata" (1978) from purely academic point of view. He has also tried to fix the date of the Mahābhārata battle from the Indian sources.

Syam Narayan Pande has identified many islands and countries, the rivers and mountains and various Janpadas (States) of the Mahābhārata age in his book named "Geographical Horizon of the Mahābhārata" (1980). He has succeeded in doing so with the help of references from several ancient text.

"The concepts of Religion in the Mahābhārata" (1980) of Urmila Rani Tirkha presents certainly a subjective view of the social conditions prevalent during the period of the Mahābhārata. There are detailed descriptions of various religious concepts which were being influenced by each other.
In "The Mahābhārata of Vyasa" (1980) P. Lal has transcreated into English those incidents from the famous Mahābhārata which possess dramatic qualities. He has selected only those ślokas of the great epic which help in forming a continuous narrative.

"The Folklore in the Mahābhārata" (1983) by N.B. Patil is a modest attempt to investigate the folklore elements in the largest poem of the world. The present volume presents an analytical and motifwise study of various legends found in the Mahābhārata. This work studies ancient Indian folklore with the practical application of the modern folklore methodology.

The basis of "Bhisma His Life and Teachings" (1984) by J.N. Bose is the description of the great grand old man Bhīṣma as presented in the gigantic epic poem Mahābhārata. The present study excellent from the point of view of its contribution to political thought in theory and practice.

"The Mahābhārata A Literary Study" (1985) by Krishna Chaitanya is a comprehensive and detailed study of literary aspect of the greatest poem of the world-Mahābhārata. The major characters and crucial episodes of the epic have also been analysed in the work.

The interest in astronomy and astrology forced Paule Learner to author a work entitled "Astrological Key in Mahābhārata" correspondences between the heavenly bodies and the main characters of the great epic have been brought into light in this book. Consequently astrological symbolism
proves helpful in the interpretation of the epic from a new angle.

"Elements of Poetry in the Mahābhārata" (1988) by Ram Kumar Sharma is unique in its efforts to analyse the upamāna dharamas (Tertia Comparation is) of the varied objects of comparisons available in the Mahābhārata. The significance of the study of main figures of speech lies in providing the useful material for the would be researchers.

The research articles contained in "Moral Dilemmas in the Mahābhārata" (1989) edited by Bimal Krishana Mati Lal present the theme of moral dilemma from the perspective of both Indian philosophy and literature.