Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

The Mahābhārata is one of the two great epics of India, and the longest in world literature. It is an encyclopedia of ancient India as it deals with different subjects in different context. It was enlarged at different periods by persons of different regions, times and mentalities.

The Mahābhārata is regarded as the store-house of political wisdom, the repository of philosophical doctrine, the container of religious dogma, and at the same time, a specimen of literary art, excercising tremendous influence of different forms and patterns of subsequent literary composition in Sanskrit. In the novel manner of the Mahābhārata, the author Vyāsā has taken the great trouble of supplying us with useful information about the social custom, economic condition, literary progress, political situation and other socio-religious environments of that forgotten period. An analysis of the nature of stories, imparting to us the knowledge of different aspects of early Indian civilization will be of great help to understand the manysided character of the great epic.

The bloody battle between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas occupies the most prominent position in the epic and all other stories of variegated nature have developed gradually and uninterruptedly centering round that main heroic song.

In the dramatic history of the children of Pāṇdu, the episodes contained in it help to relax the mind made tense by the tumultuous emotions of the principal action. These are like Oases filled with shade and freshness, like peaceful halts in burning deserts during long and painful journeys.

The Mahābhārata includes so many legends, fables and folk-tales. The net work of episodes and stories interwoven around this is important also from the
sociological point of view. These stories enshrine old wisdom and history. These were first handed down through memory by sages, bards and ministrals and were later put down in writing by various composers of the epics who sometimes adapted them according to the condition prevailing in their times. These should be taken as depicting the condition of societies at different times. It is certain, therefore that these stories provide us with opportunities for the study of various cultures and societies and speak for the various contradictions in the great epic.

The Mahābhārata is an invaluable treasure house of Indian lore both religious and secular. It is a song of victory commemorating the deeds of heroism in a war that was fought to maintain the just rights of a dynasty that combined together the four quarters of India into one empire. It is a magnificent work, which describes in inimitable language the stories seen, sages of bearutive and chaste wives of brave warriors and saintly kings. It is thus an authoritative book on law, morality, social and political ideals and philosophy.

It is certainly a mine if perennial episodes Vyāsa teaches that Dhārma (duty and righteousness) should be our supreme aim and attainment. It is alone will lead us to wealth and pleasure (artha kama) as also the joy of spiritual liberation, God realization and God-Union.

In the ancient scriptures of India the term 'Dharma' includes everything that is denoted by culture. It has been an expression for the way of life and social and individual. The vast literature known as Dhārama Sutra is related not only to the transcendental or spiritual aspects but it covers the entire field of life from birth to death. It discusses the duties related to every walk of life. The religious sermon is given only for the rise and welfare of mankind. Hence certainly is Dhārama conducive to the attainment of the progress and welfare of
humanity. Dharama is thus called because it is derived from the root Dhr which means to support. It sustains all. It protects the lives of all, saves from their downfall.

The main purpose of the episodes is to guide to right acts in every day life. They deal elaborately with the acts, rites and ceremonies that each person had to perform with reference to his station in society. Taking together, the episodes are highly valuable for the insight they provide on the different phases of India's ancient culture.

The Mahābhārata presents some difficulties also. They are caused by its numerous and different accounts, and by contradictory statements of facts according to varying contexts. This defect, however does not lessen the importance of the work, especially when one bears in mind the vast time factor, the changes and redactions that it has undergone in different ages resulting in the voluminous size has attained.

Writers in almost all the Indian languages have used the Mahabharata in different contexts that it is difficult to make a full and comprehensive listing. For poets, novelists, dramatist, and short story writers, the epic has been an inexhaustible source material of symbols, stories, metaphors and archetypes. Infact, many of the characters in the Mahābhārata have archetypal characteristics and they have been used in many a modern context to delineate a modern situation.

V. S. Khanderkar's 'Yayāti' (1959), which won the Sahityaya Academi Award as also the Bharatiya Janapith Award, used the Mahābhārata character as a central symbol to explore the entire range of the modern man's craving for sensuality and carnal pleasure as the ultimate aim of life and self-realization. The secret of eternal youth and visuality was the ultimate quest and goal of the
Mahābhārata character. In the novel, he represents today's man who would stop at nothing in buying his pleasure. The myth of Yayāti delineates in a modern context man's quest for eternal youth, passions and physical pleasure.

Sri Aurobindo's Sāvitrī, a Mahākāvyya in English, is a widely acclaimed literary masterpiece, based on the episode of Sāvitrī, one of the major Upākhyānas of the Mahābhārata. In his hands, the legendary tale has become symbolic of the conquest of Death and of the perfecting of human life on earth, its epic theme being adventure of consciousness evolving towards its fulfillment in Divinity.

It won't be out of place to consider the Mahābhārata as a major source of modern Indian literature by providing a number of mythical and archetypal patterns of fundamental importance. The Mahābhārata has become the property of the Whole Indian people and scarcely has any other poem in the entire literature of the world, influenced the thought and poetry of a nation for centuries.

The episode of Mahābhārata have considerably influenced the masses in giving moral lessons. The simple language in which all the stories of the Mahābhārata are narrate, or philosophical truths and moral lessons are given expression to, distinguishes them particularly from later Sanskrit compositions ornamented with artificial graces. They have given inspiration to many writers for the composition of Mahākāvyās and dramas. The general influence of the episode of Mahābhārata is wonderful indeed, but its literary influence on later Sanskrit literature is all the more astonishing. The Mahābhārata has been the safest refuge for poets of all ages.
It is an over flowing stream where a poet can delve deep together gems of worth for his compositions.