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INTRODUCTION

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Sanskrit Literature

Sanskrit Literature is the oldest and earliest literatures existing in the world. It has two divisions. They are Vedic Literature, and classic Literature. The worldly things both living and non living things is deliberated in attractive manner. The Vedic literature is distinguished by refinement and beauty of thought and the skill in the handling of language and metre. Veda is the first literature in Sanskrit. It is not written. It is spread through listening with ears. So it is called "ruti". All scholars and researchers accepted Vedic literature as the oldest and very knowledgeable. Veda is derived from the root "Vid-to know". The word Veda means sacred lore or from where knowledge is known that can be called as Veda. The other names of the Veda are āmnāya, ṇ gama, and ruti. From the beginning of Vedic period to present modern period, the valuable things like Karma and dharma are brought from Veda in a beautiful manner by different authors.

We learn from the later literatures like Purć´as and Ithihäsas the dharma which we learn from Vedic literature.
In the field of Vedic literature the words have particular in their notes of sound. It is highly phonetic in nature. They are called *abdapraddhaṇa* this means that words constituting them are important. Proper words produce correct meaning in Sanskrit. In the *Vedas* very intellectual thoughts were made in typical style of proper words. It has different svaras (pitch). They are *Udātta, Anudātta* and *Svarita*. It can be understood by the speakers and listeners.

To invoke the blessings of Devas, *Mantras* help us where are *Bṛhmáśas* describe mantras in detail. It is the prose form.

The *dharmaś* described in the *Veda* are explained in *Samhita*, the *Bṛhmáśa*, the *ráyaka* and in *Upaniṣads* in suitable words. They are *Satyam vada, Dharmam cara, Mṛṯdevo bhava, Piṯdevo bhava, ċṛtyadevo bhava, Athitidevo bhava* etc., Thus the *upanisās* are given sacred place in Sanskrit literature.

The four *Vedas* *ṣk, Yajur, Śma* and *Athrváaveda*. The *Bṛhmáśas* and *ráyakas* and the prime ten *upanisās* namely *Pa, Kena, Kaśha, Praṇa, Muūaka, Mṛkṣya, Taittiṟya, Čṇdogya, Aitareya* and *bhaḍráyaka* are jointly called as Vedic literature.

The composed *a₂a¬gas* or six limbs or auxiliaries to the *Vedas* by our great sages are *iṅkṛt* (Phonetics) *Vṛkṣa (grammar), Chandas (metre) Nirukta (etymology), Jyotiṣa (astronomy) and Kalpa (religious practice). Again *Kalpa s† tras* is classified under four heads - *rauta, Ghyya, dharma* and *ulva.*
From Upavedas are *yurveda* or medicine correlated to *śkṛtveda*, *Dhanurveda* (archery) affiliated with *Yajur*, *Gṛndharvaveda* (music) linked with Sama and *Sthūpatyaveda* or mechanical science (*Vēṣṭi̯veda*) associated with *Atharva-veda*.

Classical literature is the modified form of Vedic literature. The *dharmas* in the *Vedas* are described in a simplified manner to make the common man understand the *dharma-śstra* literature. The important preachers of *dharma-śstra* are *Manu*, *Gautama*, *Yājñavalkya*, *Bodhīyana Parśava* and others.

The life of all inhabitants is present with problems and sufferings. Everybody wants to live in a luxurious way. Everybody tortures others to attain their selfish goals. Poor persons are always getting troubled. Due to this behavior we can’t differentiate between animals and human beings. Some bad behaviours destroy the world. Our sages have written *Dharma-śstra* to product our society.

*Dharma-śstra* has (four vargas) on "caturvarga‘. They are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kṛma* and *Mokṣa*. Those who follow each varga is categorized as *Brahmacīrya*, *Gīhaustha*, *Vṇapraṣṭha*, *Sanyāsa* and the duties are also clearly stated in the *Dharma-śstra*.

*Bṛhma-ām* explains the effectiveness of *Mantras*, its meaning and its importance. Sages saw these *mantras* through their divine eyes "*Mantradraṣṭrā munaya*‘."
The life lead by sages in forest called Vṛṇaprastha and explained the dharmas in Vṛṇaspratha called Īra´yakam. Upaniṣads explain the nature of soul and the method of its union with Almighty.

The religion which has ""Veda' as their religious book is called 'Vaidika matam.'

Pṛṇini

Though Veda is in Sanskrit language, the Sanskrit in the vedic period and in the modern period has many differences. The great grammarian Pṛṇini wrote grammar for Vedic Sanskrit and Sanskrit prevalent in later period.

Sanskrit in Vedic period and in later period

In Vedic language if Udattam, Anudṛttam or Svaritam changes, its meaning will differ. In later period this difference is not found. In Vedic language many word forms are coined using suffix (pratyayas). In later period only a few forms are taken in grammar.

In Vedic language ""Upasarga'' comes separately from its meaning. In later Sanskrit it comes with the word. In Vedic period the sentences are written more in ""active voice.'' But in later period the sentences formation is more in ""passive voice''.

The sentence is also a lengthy one by combining many words (samśa) in later literature.
The duties of the kings, the help which the ministers should provide to the kings mentors, the duties of priest (who perform ritual rites) commanders-in-chief, spies (who secretly collect and report information of enemy), workers are written in detail in dharma\textsuperscript{c}stra. Kings should always protect the people. People should respect the king as their father. These are told in dharma\textsuperscript{c}stra. In RV \textit{K\c{c}lid\c{c}sa} explains ""Dil\c{c}pa"" the king as the father of the people.\textsuperscript{1}

If the duties are for kings only the ordinary citizens need not worry. But dharma\textsuperscript{c}stra contains some common duties and special duties to each category like Br\c{c}min, k\c{c}atriya etc., The duties for women are also explained clearly. As in the Vedic literature the science and dharma are explained in detail in pur\c{c}´as with a friendly approach.

The pur\c{c}´as are mainly eighteen. \textit{Li\c{c}gha, Skanda, Agni, Matsya, K\c{c}rma, Vi\c{s}u, V\c{c}yu, Bh\c{c}gavata, N\c{c}rada, Garu\c{c}a, Padma, Var\c{c}ha, Brahma, Brahmc\c{c}’2a, Brahmavaivarta, M\c{c}rkan\c{c}a, Bhavi\c{s}ya, and V\c{c}mana pur\c{c}´as.}

Eighteen Upapur\c{c}´as are there Sanatkum\c{c}tra, Narasi\c{c}ha, N\c{c}rada, \textsuperscript{1}iva, Durv\c{c}sa, Kapila, M\c{n}ava, Auo\c{c}anasa, Varu\c{c}a, \textit{\c{c}di\c{c}ya, Mahe\c{c}vara, Bh\c{c}rgava, Vasi\c{s}ha, K\c{c}lika, S\c{c}mba, Nandi, Saura, Par\c{c}\c{c}ara Pur\c{c}´as.\textsuperscript{1}

The R\c{c}m\c{c}ya\c{c}a and Mah\c{c}bh\c{c}rata are called epics. The Dev\c{c}bh\c{c}gavatham, Vi\c{s}udharmottaram are other sub-pur\c{c}´as. All pura\c{c}´a literature preaches
stories with another sub-stories. Vaidika karmas are also written suitably in a beautiful way. The seed of dharma in Vedic literature is explained in detail as a full grown tree in purânas.

Let us see now Râmâyana and Mahabhârata. Râmâyana explains Râma’s story who was born in “Sîryavamâ” (i.e.) descendent of Lord Sîrya. It is called Valmîkirâmâyana since it was written by first Indian poet Vîlmîki. Sage Vîlmîki was very compassionate with all creatures and nature.

Once he went to the river Tamasa for bathing. He saw a hunter who shot at one of the pair of a birds. He became so sad and sang a song in a rhythmic manner. He cursed the hunter in the poem. This âloka is the basic for the eternal Râmâyana. Vîlmîki has taken sorrow as the theme, and unable to identify the sorrow in one direction, explained in a new style.

Though in the §k Veda and Vedic literature metre is prevalent, a new metre is present in the âloka by Vîlmîki. This metre is contributed by Vîlmîki to Sanskrit literature.

The great poet Bhavabhuti says that Karu’a is the only Rasa and other eight Rasas are formed from this Karu’a Rasa.

So from the first poem of Vîlmîki the sorrow of Karu’a Rasa is experienced. Sthâyibhâva of Karu’arasa is the main Rasa of Râmâyana.

The authority of “Alankârastra Da’i defines in his Kavyâdarâ the rules of Mahâkâvyâ.”
The hero of R̄ma a kṣatriya descends from Śrīryavamsa, Dhiraṇatta nṛyaka. Dharma, Artha, Kṛma, Mokṣa, are depicted according to Alākra ṛṣtra. Dawn, Dusk, Sun, Moon, Night, Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Hunting, Mountains, Seasons, Forest, Ocean, Battle, Journey, Marriage, Child birth etc. are described therein.

Poet Vṛmāki is great in describing everything beautifully and naturally.

The great scholar of Alankra ṛṣtra Mammaścṛṣya says that for a literature three basic requirements are needed. It is present in Vṛmāki R̄ma a naturally. The ṛloka of Mammaścṛṣya explains the three requirements. The knowledge of kingdom of land, animals, birds and other creatures and their behaviour are basic requirements.

So the poet of Mahākavya should posses the knowledge of the stable things like mountains, trees, etc. and movable things like animals, birds and other creatures and their behaviours.

By reading Vṛmāki R̄ma a one can appreciate how Vṛmāki has observed stable things like mountains, lands, etc. and movable animals like deers, elephants and monkeys etc. and how he depicted those from his point of view.

Mahābhārata:

Let us see the beauty and richness of poetry in Mahābhārata too. Vyṛṣa, the author of Mahābhārata who classified all the Vedas. Mahābhārata is the
equal status of Rṇmṇya’a in Alankṛstra, Rasas, Dharmastra rules of Mahākṛvya, the description of stable things, animals, Devas, gandarvas and yakṣas also. He is also the author of eighteen purṇas. There are eighteen chapters called parva in Mahābhṛata consisting one lakh 100,000. In Bhagavatgṛta eighteen adhyāyas are there. The history of the Kauravas and the Pṛṣṭhas is the main theme of Mahābhṛata. Both of them between the war was eighteen days. Let us see Mahābhṛata little elaborately later.

Sanskrit Poet and Poetry

Kṛvya is the work of a poet. Kṛvya var’ane he describes the things in the world more beautifully than its original state. Mammaśa says “Lokottaravāraṇāntṇipu’a kavikarma tat Kṛvyaḥ.” A poet presents a thing to the reader which the reader knows already in a new way and makes him see in a different angle. He introduces the things by describing in a creative manner. For this the poet should possess create skill and thinking ability. For this he should have observed living and non-living things keenly. He should see the beauty in each thing. He creates everything beautifully.

Though God creates everything, the poet creates again by observing its beauty and presenting through his words to the world. So Mammaśa defines kṛvya as description of the poet through this angle of view. Likewise many jā-lā-kṛikas express different opinions. Some say kṛvya as consisting of abda and artha, while others as vṛkṣya that gives suggested sense. Jagannātha says where ever the suggested sense is prevalent in a abda that kṛvya is supreme.
Mamma°a in his kavyaprk°a defines kavya as word with meaning, free from defects and full of gu´as and also consisting of abd¢la–k¢ras and arth¢la–k¢ras.8

Again Jagann¶tha criticizes Mamma°a : He says that Gu´a and Ala–k¢ras in relation to abda and Artha are not to be specified as the characteristic features of a kavya. Though 'The sun has set' doesnot contain Ala–kéra or Gu´a either abda and Artha. Here Vya@ana V¨tti gives rise to the cognitions such as 'Sandhy† is to be worshipped now' in the case of a celibate to a merchant, 'The shop must be closed' and for a young girl 'The lover should be met.' So he says these type of kavyas are also great9. Hence Jagann¶tha concludes that it is only abda which rise to give extra empirical delight that is kavya.10

After Purªic literature Kavyas are of two kinds. They are d°yak¢vyay and ravyak¢vyay. D°yak¢vyay is audible and visible. It is called r¶paka (Drama).

R¶paka in Sanskrit literature is of ten types namely n¢°aka, prakara´a, bh¢´a, prahasana, ²ima, vy¢yoga, samavak¢ra, vªthi, a–ka and bh¢m°ga.1 ravya k¢vyay means the k¢vyay which is listened and which is studied. They are three kinds Padyak¢vyay, Gadyak¢vyay and Ubhayak¢vyay which is also called camp¶.

A sentence with metre is called Padyam. Especially a k¢vyay in poetic form is Padyak¢vyay. If a k¢vyay is a prose form it is called Gadya k¢vyay. In a k¢vyay of Gadya and Padya are found together it is called camp¶ k¢vyay. In
Padyakṣvyas are three kinds namely Mahākṣvyya, Khaṅkṣvyya and Subhākṣāta types. In Gadyakṣvyya itself there are two kinds Katha and Akhyayika. For example the story of Kṣdambari is totally found the mere imagination of the poet. In Kṣdambari the description of mountain, forest, animals, birds are very rich. This is an example of the story (katha). Kṣvyya is present from very old period onwards. Now first we can see the author of Pañcamahākṣvyyas.

Bhṛravi

His original name is Dēmodhara. His only kṣvyya 'Kiratarjunyam' is one of the Pañca Mahākṣvyyas. Its main theme is Arjuna’s obtention of Pṛṣupatastram from Lord Parameśvara. The source of the story is taken from Mahābhārata. He was in 7th century.

Mṛgha

He is the author of iubclavadha. This is also one of the Pañcamahākṣvyyas. Mṛgha was one of the scholar is king Bhoja’s court. This story is also based on Mahābhārata. It has 20 chapters. It has got more than 32 commentaries. Vara is the chief rasa of this work.

rharśa

He wrote Naiṣadhy Mathākṣvyam. It is popular with the phrase "Naiṣadham Vidvad auśadham." This is also taken from Mahābhārata.

Another well known work of his Khaṅkṣanakhaṅkṣadya. He was a member of the literary assembly of king Jayacanda of Kanauj.
Kṣlidcśa

He is one of the prominent poets in the poetic world. He wrote the other two Mahākāvyas Raghuvaṃśa and Kumārasambhava. Raghuvaṃśa is based on Rāmāyaṇa. Kumārasambhava is the birth of Lord Muruga who killed the asura Sīrapadma. He excelled simly always. So his famous name is "Upamc Kṣlidcśasasya'. He wrote three famous dramas and two khaṭa kāvyas.

Kṣemendra

Kṣemendra, a Kashmirian poet who belonged to 11th century A.D. wrote Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata in a brief manner in his Rāmāyaṇamaṭjarṣa and Bhāratamaṭjarṣa. He is the author of Daṅvatṛṣṇa also. In his Bhāṭkathāmaṭjarṣ 19 chapters and 7500 poems are present. He has included many stories prevalent in his period in Kaṃṭa in the Bhāṭkathāmaṭjarṣa

Deva Vijaya gani

Deva Vijayagani who came after Kṣemendra wrote "Pṛṣṭa avacaritam' by making some changes in the Mahābhārata story.

Devaprabha sṛi

He is a jain poet. He belonged to Kaṃṭa. He wrote "Pṛṣṭa avacaritam mahākāvyam' in 18 sargas based on Mahābhārata.

Bhāṣa

Bhāṣa a very prominent dramatist in Sanskrit, occupies an important place in dramatic literature. It will be discussed in due course.
After Kṣīdrīṣa Bhavabhūti is placed by the dramatic field. Bhavabhūti who was patronised by king Yaovarmen of Kanauj of the early eighth century A.D. is the author of Māhāvīśacaritam, Mālatimḍhavam and Uttara-rṇmacaritam. He was a great scholar in vedas and ṛṣstras. His plays were enacted during the festivals in the Māhākślevara temple of Ujjayinā. Bhavabhūti excelled in developing sentiment of Karuṇā.

Bhaṭṭanārṇya is the author of Veṣaṇaiḥbcra a famous drama describing the great events of the Māhābhṛṣṭa war ending with the binding of Draupadī's braid of hairs by Bhāmasena. He should have lived in the middle of 7th century A.D.

Ala-kṛṣṇastra (jalakṛikas)

Bharata

Naṭyastra is written by the famous sage Bharata in 36 chapters. The work deals with the origin of drama, its definition; its purpose, the construction of theatre, Stage arrangements, rules of writing and staging dramas, make up characters, speech, gestures, poses of dance, dramatic conventions, sentiments, emotions, styles of acting, dance, music, (Nūttam, Sa-gṛtam) defects, merits and figures of speech etc. in most authoritative manner. Bharata attaches great importance for Rasa and Bhūva in Naṭyam.
Bhêmaha and Da´²i

Bhêmaha is the author of Kêvyêla–kêra. Da´²i is the author of Kêvyêdarâ and Dâakumêtracaratam. Most probably both of them belonged to the 7th century A.D. Bhêmaha criticizes that not only Rasa in Nêya but Rasa in Kêvy also. Da´²i describes that Lord Vi³µu is the word Da´²a in first (namaskriya) loka of his work Gadyakêvyâ Dâakumêtracaratam. In the critics view this poet is called Da´² in because he compares the leg of Lord Vi³µu with Da´² a11.

Udbha°a

He is the author of Kêvyêla–kêrasêrasa–graha also called Udbha°clankêra. He stresses the importance of Rasa in poetry and recognizes řntarasa. He has written a commentary on Bhêmahêla–kêra and Bharata’s Na³yaôstra.

Abhinavagupta

He has written exhaustive commentaries on Na³yaôstra of Bharata called Abhinavabhêratâ and on the Dhvanyêloka of ñandavardhana called Dhvanyêloka locanam.

Vidyênttha

He is the author of Prataparudraýam in early 14th century. The author was patronized by Vêtarudra of the Kêkatrya dynasty and all the verses in the work were composed by the author praising his patron. He is also the author of Bêlabhêratam, a Mahêkêvyâ in 20 cantos.
Mamma°a

Mamma°a is the author of K¢vyaprak¢ºa. He must have flourished before 1294 A.D. because after that a commentary on that work by name Jayanta was written by one Jayanta.

¡nandavardana

He is an author of Dhvany¢loka. The Dhvani Theory is briefly expounded in about 120 verses called Dhvani k¢rikas and he has written an elaborate commentary (V¨tti) to those k¢rikas called ¡loka. Both together is known by the name Dhvany¢loka. He lived in the 9th Century A.D. in the court poet of king Avantwarman of Ka¾mir.

Bha°°an¢yaka

He wrote a commentary of Na°yaº¢stra. He expounded a new theory of Rasav¢da by three Vy¢p¢ras. Abhidh¢, Bh¢van¢ or Bh¢vakatvam, Bhojakatvam. By Bh¢vakatvam the expressed ideas are generalized or universalized and they are enjoyed by the function of Bhojakatvam.

¹r¤ºa¬kuka

He was in 9th century A.D. who wrote a commentary on N¢°yaº¢stra brought Rasav¢da or the experience of sentiment in Anum¢nav¢da. He has pointed out Rasa is not only dance, drama, music but also of K¢vyam.
Villiputhurar

Many poets have written *Mahabharata* in Tamil. A poet called Perundevanar in 9th A.D. wrote it in poetic form to honour the request of the king, Villiputturar who wrote 10 parvas of *Mahabharata* till ¹alya parva in Tamil. He has written 4500 songs. Then came a poet called Nallapillai and completed all the parvas by writing many poems. Totally it contains 11,000 songs.

There is deviation from the original text of *Mahabharata* written by Vyasa, in the books that came later on. Though the characters are same, there are changes in the incidents. For example, Kar`a was born to Kuntä when she tested the efficacy of the mantra initiated by sage Durvåså. She herself was a child of six years when she served sage Durvåså. This is the age of spending time in playing and nobody ever have served as she did. Pleased by her service and knew about the curse she would get in future, sage Durvåså initiated the mantra. As children have curiosity, she tested the *Mantra* and Kar`a was born to her.

But in later epics like *Bhåratamåjarå* and *På avçcarita* it is written that Kar`a was born to Kuntä and På only. They got married by way of “*Gåndarva Vîçha*‘ and fearing of societies admonition she left the baby in the Ganges.

The common information given in all books is Kar`a was the son of Kuntä and she placed him in a box and left in Ganges.
I feel the deviation in the story is a trivial matter and the important thing is Kar´a’s attitude, his valour, his gratitude etc.

I have explained in detail the differences in the story told by different authors. This helps me to analyse what the author wants to emphasise. I also feel that, in later books the author made some changes to influence the society in the period they lived. Otherwise the society will indulge in unnecessary arguments about the birth of Kar´a.

The later authors might have felt that the mainpoint to be brought out to the society is each character’s loyalty, braveness, gratitude, steadfastness, adhering to dharma whatever happiness etc. This will help society to modify themselves. Always the aim of writer is to influence each individual and help him/her to live according to their role model. It is the duty of poets and authors to shape the character of individual as a good citizen by making their character in the story so influential.

We know how Bh¢ratiyar (Poet in Tamil 20 C.E) inspired the people by his poems and awakened our people to fight for freedom. So it is not the ruler, but the author who mould the society.

Then I have explained the “Rasa Theory”. That is what impact it creates in the minds of reader for example when a person reads how Kar´a was ready to hit the target in the tournament, his valour is shown. Here the V¢rasa depicted. In the same tournamental field, when he was insulted on the basis
of "lowcaste" his mind was vexed. This is Karu’a rasa. When Duryodhana crowned him as the king of Agadeºa it creates a relief in the minds of reader. He protected Kar’a from the indignation. Now Kar’a and Duryodhana became inseparable friends. This is sneha rasa. So even one incident makes several rasa in the minds of reader. So the reader judges his role models in each situation and shapes his character.

Though Arjuna, Yudhi¾°hira, Bhama all have appreciable qualities it was Kar’a who was insulted often not because of his fault appeals everybody. Bearing the insults, he doesnot relent in upholding his good qualities. Even at the time when he was slained in the battle field by Arjuna, he donated all his merits (pu´yas) to K¾a. This shows how stead fast he was in adhering his principle of donating to others.

We see from his life nothing is a barrier for him to uphold his mission of giving everything to others.

He inculcates that there should be some purpose for everyone to live. Everybody should have an aim to serve the society and at any caste he should do that. Kar’a’s character will imbibe them that they should live for the society.

Knowing that the loss of armour and earrings attached to his body is an act equal to suicide himself he donated that to Indra in Mahêbhrata by Vyºsa. So he has attached more importance to giving alms than to his life.
He underwent many misfortunes in his life. Rejected by Dróa to accept him as his disciple, he went to Paraºur¢ma. When he came to know that Paraºur¢ma would not accept a K¾atriya as his disciple, he pretended to be a Br¢hmin. Paraºur¢ma accepted him as his disciple and taught more astr¢s and Brahmcstram also.

When Guru took rest lying on his lap, a worm pierced Kar´a's thigh and gussing blood from it. Guru woke up and immediately understood that he was a K¾atriya since Br¢hmins have no patience to bear such a pain. So he cursed him that he would forget the mantra of Brahmcstram at the opportune time. This was a great misfortune he sustained in his life.

_Bhagavadgıt¢_ is preached by K¨¾´a to Arjuna in the battle field. The theme is "Do your duty and not to claim their fruits." In the battle field Arjuna hesitated to kill Kinsmen. K¨¾´a chided and convinced him to do. But Kar´a knew that Arjuna was his brother. Then too he looked him as his opponent and fought bravely. After Kar´a was slained, Kunt¤l lamented that he was her first son. At that time K¨¾´a praised Kar´a in front of Arjuna that Kar´a followed _Bhagavadgıt¢_ which he preached for Arjuna. Kar´a also follows K¨¾´a's word in his last moment.

The message we get from the above incidents, one should do his duty in a steadfast manner. Kar´a donated anything from his right hand...
before knowing left hand. He said that the life is very temporary anything may happen. So he wanted to give immediately before changing his mind.

Life is impermanent. Though we all know, it won't reflect in our day to day life. When we resolve to do a thing we should be very quick in implementing. This also we learn from Kar´a.

Another important incidents are to be quoted here to know how much Kar´a has balance of mind, his judging power, his quality of praising even the rivals.

When Lord K´ar´a came as representative of P´avas, Kar´a instructed Duryodhana not to under estimate the Valour of Arjuna and Bh¯ma.

When Kunt¯a came to Kar´a’s palace to prove him that she was his mother, he was longed to know his identity. But he asked Kunt¯a if Duryodhana knows that he is the son of Kunt¯a he might suspect his loyalty. To avoid this, he did not want to say his identity at that time. Though he knew his identity at least at the later years, he was unable to disclose to everyone. In the Kurukṣetra battle he was eager to fight for the sake of Duryodhana even after knowing that the rivals were nobody else but his own brothers.
MAHÍ BHÍ RATA: AN INTRODUCTION

Structure and Development

Mahábháratás was authored by Maharáñí Káñéa Dvaipáyana who is also popularly known as Vedávyása. Since thousands of years, the whole world is breathing the teachings, the puráś as, the Mahábháratas - the vast stories being handed over from one generation to the next. This name comes from ""Káñéa" meaning ""dark"" and ""Dvaipáyana" born in ""dvípa" or ""island". He was Vyása who divided the Vedas into four parts and preached his disciples about its contents. Hence he came to be known as Vyása or Védávyása. He is named as Bódaríya by his parents Maharáñí Parásara and Satyavátí.

Modern Critics always discuss and debate on whether ""The Mahábháratas" is an epic or history by itself? It is full of religious, social, cultural, political and economic situations, traditions and ideas that these would be effectively suited to our present day times. Hence Mahábháratas is an epic, the most trustworthy, ideal and utmost book of our culture and tradition.

The Mahábháratas also is a ""live"" epic, in the sense that many authors and writers have created (expanded) the seeds of stories woven into it. Some examples are -

- BHí RAVÍ'S KIRÍ TÍ RJUNÉYAM
- BHA JANÍ RÍ YA SA VENÉSAMÍ RAM
Hence the name of "Big, important, heavy full of Mahattva and Mahabhara" was given.

Mahabharata contains the essence of all 18 Purvas, the Dharmastra, the Veda with its aargas, all in one. Whatever is there in Mahabharata is also elsewhere but what is not here, is not anywhere.

In fact a learned man who follows rituals meticulously is not a scholar if he does not know the Mahabharata. For it is both history and epic and also in economics, dharmastra and science of desire (both to overcome desires or fulfill them). In a Nutshell it is the science of living beings either animal or human. The highest goal of life can be attained by path shown by this epic.
Vyṣa took 3 years to write this epic.¹⁹ (The 3 years may be the twelve months of each year or 1 day for each month). But he had already carved out the "Dictionary of different types knowledge" in his mind. He asked Brahmṇ to help him to write this composition Brahmṇ refered him to Lord Ga´eṇa. Lord Ga´eṇa appeared before Vyṣa and agreed to write the work out but the condition was that his pen should not stop writing. On that Vyṣa said "that Ga´eṇa should understand every stanza with its meaning and then only put it down. Whenever Vyṣa wanted sometime to think of what to say further, he would put forward some puzzling stanzas. Ganeṇa would take time to think over the meaning and meanwhile Vyṣa would be ready with further lines. This was the first written form of the great epic. Vyṣa named this Kṛvya "Jaya".²⁰ In the ādiparva of The Mahābhṛata, the number of ोlokas are given.

There are 8800 puzzling ोlokas for which the meaning were known only by Vyṣa, ¹ukadeva and may be Saṅjaya.²¹ Further Vyṣa made 1,00,000 ोlokas called Bhṛtasaṃhitā hitc.²²

He precisely marked 24,000 ोlokas after removing the smaller stories and also a concise story of just 150 ोlokas.

Originally he started with 60 lakhs ोlokas, 30 lakhs was given to Deva loka, 15 lakhs to pit`loka, 14 lakhs to Gandharvas, yakṣṣas and 1 lakh was to spread around earth.
He first advocated to ¹uka, his son then his disciples Vai²ampçyana. Nçrada told the story to Devas and Asitadevala to Pit¨s. ¹uka told the story ot Gandharvas and Yak¾as. Vai²ampçyana came to the Sarpayçga of Janamejaya the great grandson of Arjuna. Janamejaya wanted to know about ""Rajadharma"" and the answer was this story.

Later for twelve years, a yaj®a was performed by ¹aunaka in Naimi¾ranya. The Son of Lomahar¾ana called Ugraºrava-Sauti narrated this story. In those days it was the general practice of narrators to add vividity and expand the topics subject to their own imagination. But in Mahçbhçrata, each parva is so intricately woven that however imaginary one may be, the basic ( Ç ı) Principle ( Ç ñ ı) is not lost. Hence Mahçbhçrata attached probably to itself many more stories of history and thus has become an epic of one lakh 9lokçs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Occasion / purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vyçsa</td>
<td>Jaya</td>
<td>8800</td>
<td>to celebrate the victory of Pç² avas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vai²a¾pçyana</td>
<td>Bhçrata</td>
<td>24000</td>
<td>Sarpasattrra of Janamejaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauti</td>
<td>Mahçbhçrata</td>
<td>1,00,000</td>
<td>Dvçdaºavçr¾ika sattra of ³aunaka</td>
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The other names of this epic are ""Kçvya', ""Bhçrata', Mahçbhçrata', ""Kar¾aveda' and ¹atasçhasrasamhitã. Whatever be the name - the main story was only presented in various forms.
This is the "best gem of the East" according to western scholars. Many westerners have acclaimed it as the biggest epic. Two large poems both Homar's Iliad and odyssey of together to form just 1/8 of *Mahãbhãrata*.

The disciples have handed over the stories from generation to generation through story telling and preaching. For many centuries the story was carried on either wholly or partly orally, and invention of printing made the *Mahãbhãrata* take the written (form writing and later manuscripts).

The oldest editions are

1. **Kolkata Edition** - Published in 1834-1839
   brought out by Pratapcandra Roy's in 1882.

2. **Mumbai Edition** - 1862 brought out with Nãla ka´ho's Commentry
   was similar to Kolkata Edition.


4. **Poona Edition** - Oriental Research Institute Library brought
   out this Edition in 24 parts. It was edited by
   R.N. Dç´dekar and Dr. V.S.Suktha´kar

Many more Edition have comeout. Other famous ones are those of Pçrdi
(Gujarat), Geetha Press Gorakpur (6 Volumes) are very famous because of
Hindi translation and low cost.
DATE OF THE MAHI BHJ RATA

Many views have been propounded since the main story was only orally transcended, the period of the events is very difficult to decide Mahabhcrata finds its mention even in 9valayana G”yasatra and Bodhayana G”yasatra. The Vi3¼usahasran%ma and Bhagavadgqta find mention in both these Stras. Early poets like Bhbsa wrote smaller portions of this epic vividly and later history tells us about Guptas period when Mahabhcrata cameout in written form. Pa”ini, the grammarian gives examples of characters from Mahabhcrata in his Stras.

Some astrologers23 have tried to calculate but the theory that still holds good in that Mahabhcrata took place at the end of Dvapara yuga and beginning of Kaliyuga. That is when Vybsa was mortally present on earth.

Dr. Suktha’kar says Mahabhcrata is for all ages. It has no age. It is only the search of the internal truth of human life and display the highest ideals of Bhcrat's tradition.

The Dramas of Bhbsa which are based on Mahabhcrata the timing of which is 450 B.C.

P”ini has described characters Yudhi3¼hira, Bhma around 5th Century B.C. With all the above information about Mahabhcrata's timing it is evident that the dating of this epic goes back to 500 B.C.
But there is also evidence that the time period is 500 A.D. based on the following. A Greek writer has written that India has epic with 1,00,000 ⁰lok¢s in 50 A.D. Aºvagho³a who is from 78 A.D. has quoted ⁰lok¢s from Mah¢bh¢rata.

Many other authors quoted the ⁰lok¢s from Mah¢bh¢rata in 700 A.D., 600 A.D. and 442 A.D.

**COMMENTARY**

Many commentaries are there.

The best one ¡ccbrya Baladev's commentary. Some other well known commentators are A. ZÝV Ñ× A O Œ, A nZÝX, M V Ñ Œ, X d - nM, Z rb H $E R > h nZÝX n W β ' k Z ma˚l U , a m H $H $a, a m H ŒU , a m Z W , b õ U , d aX , d mǃX a mO , ĆÚmgmJa, ĆÚmgmJa, e§H$amMm`©, lrZmW, gd©kZmam`U, g¥{ï>Ya etc., some of them wrote some parvas.

The famous writers Vimala Bodha, Nilaka'ha, Arjun Miœra and some others wrote the commentary to the whole book 18 parvas of Mah¢bh¢rata.

*The main annotations*

*Mah¢bh¢rata* has essentially has been annotated by 36 scholars.

Some of the well known are Vimalabodha, Arjunamiœra, NÝaka’ha, Caturdhar, ¹ a–karçccbbrya, ¹ rœñtha, Rœµnuja and others.
WORLDLY VALUES (*Mahabharata* the world Dictionary)

Whatever is available in *Mahabharata*, was present even before its appearance and also exists even now and for further times to come. It is not monodrama or monologue or a unilateral bind. Vyasa has only picturised the secrets of the Vedas, the knowledge of Upanishads, the equation of historic novels, the ages, the fear of life death, old age, disease and caste fractures. He called it the "Fifth Veda". Vyasa himself says that since ladies, ¹udras, and lower brähmins were not accessible to Vedas, taking pity on them, he authored this book.

*Mahabharata* truly balances both the earthly and Metaphysical thoughts of the living. Even today the two kingdoms of Kauravas and P¿z avas can be preceded with the countries of this century and the teachings of Bhagavadgita applied to get rid of many social and dharmic evils prevalent in society. The cultural epic is so sweet to hear that any story other than the *Mahabharata* does not stand before this, just as the crow cannot sing as sweetly as the cuckoo.

The main teaching is "Never leave the path of dharma. Not because of fear, desire or anything else. Do your duty just as light would shine whether you want it or not. This is the essence of Vedas, the best means is to control your senses. This is the root and the base of Philosophy."
HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

It is a long poem comprising 9lokas and has many characters and hence called a ""Purçkalpa"". There is no doubt regarding the existence of historical evidences of the Mahçbhçrata. The war between brothers are just not old incidents only but bear testimony for the present and future. It is superior to any history. It is Itihçsottama.

LITERARY IMPORTANCE

Mahçbhçrata is a story of pipal tree which has small and large leaves of Indianness and the culture of India its branches. There are many birds on the tree tweaking away but underneath is the tranquility of education. Mahçbhçrata is a divine gift and since ages, its branches have been creating a unique ""song of life.''

All the rules required for a book to be recognised, the Mahçbhçrata has them all. Right from Bharatamuni to Bhçmaha the Mahçbhçrata is full of literature.

The flow of the languages akin to water is in the Pcçclax style.

All the navarasas are present, albeit bravery, peace and the astonishing rasas as the main out line.
The metaphors, simile, The figures of speech are eloquently placed. The comparisons and the choice of words are excellent and apt. Some chapters are purely prose but the presentation is simple yet authentic. The words of Brahma comes true as no other Kavya could ever be made by anyother poet. The attraction to it is unimaginable. Hence many poets have been carried away and have authored parts of this grand epic. Thus this is the Kalpataru - the wish granting tree for every poet that was, is and yet to be born.

DHARMIC IMPORTANCE

The book is indeed a book of dharma. The place that dharma has taken in Bhagarta is the same worldwide. Everyman has to be human, equal and independent. The main meaning of the Mahabharata is human character, his duties and thoughtful behaviour. Thus Mahabharata is important as Dharmic book too.

DHARMA AND ADHARMA

Dharma is duty and prescribed course of conduct. Without doing harm to others if a person does his duty that is known as Dharma. Among the fourfold aims which are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma alone
directs Kṣma in the correct path. If any one transgress from this path he is set
to be going unrighteous path. From times old that is a fight between dharma
and adharma the form of Devīsura yuddha. The Lord takes his incarnation to
uphold dharma. Viṣṇu’s ten avatāras are taken to protect not only human
beings but also to other living creatures.

Ten Avatāras are -

* Matsyavatāra to protect the Vedas
* Kṛṣṇavatāra to hold serve as a base to Mandara mountain.
* Varṇa protect the mother earth from asura Hiraṇyakaśipu.
* Narasimha to give confidence to Prahlada and destroy
Hiraṇyakaśipu.
* Vāmana to mitigate the pride of Mahābali.
* Parāurāma to kill the wicked kings.
* 1st Rāmacvatāra It is saying indicates how a man
should uphold dharma in conflicting emotions arise.
* Balabhadra helps to the Kṛṣṇavatāra.
* 1st Kṛṣṇavatāra living beings. He also said in the Bhagavadgītā.

* Kalkyaṭvatāra at the end of Kaliyuga.
Protecting God Viṣṇu taking avatāra only to protect the good one while doing the protection destroying the bad ones was only a incidental work.

Kṛṣṇa not only showed the path of dharma for conducting himself but also narrated the great Bhagavadgītā for the future guidance of the people to uphold dharma one has to control the senses. Always dharma triumph. So also the Īśvā and it is permanent. Following dharma is not an easy thing. That is why so many episodes in the Mahābhārata alone talk at length about the dharmic path. Following the Bhagavadgītā, Anugītā in Aśvameadha parva, Parāśaragītā in Anti parva, Vidurantī and Bhīma’s advice in Anuśāsana parva are very good examples. The Sanatsujātiya is a text embodying the Vedantic teaching.

The story of Mahābhārata is well known. In that, Pāṇḍavas represent the dharma and Kauravas represent adharma.

Among the Pāṇḍavas Yudhīśvāhira is a personification of dharma. Yudhīśvāhira follows only dharma in peaceful manner. He stands as an inspiration to everyone that one should not swerve from the part of dharma even in difficult situations. Yudhīśvāhira represents mental fortitude, sacrifice and affection. The character of Yudhīśvāhira gives mental solace to everyone. All his four brothers are always obedient to Yudhīśvāhira and intuitively follow the advice. That is why Lord Kṛṣṇa chose to patronise Pāṇḍavas. Kṛṣṇa said "... à mU m i{h n n̄ś Â m..." He went to the extent of being the charioteer of Arjuna.
On the contrary Kauravas represent adharma. Even from the time of birth the presence of Duryodhana caused fear to others. He bray like a donkey soon after his birth. They were so many bad omens. The nature showed his resistance. Dhâtarâra was taken a back by seeing all these bad omens. Vidura advised him to leave this child for the sake of entire royal family.

It is said it is better to sacrifice a single person for family. A family for village. A village for country and for oneself the earth. But Dhâtarâra had a blind affection for his son and did not accept Karâ this suggestion. When Kauravas were growing Kuntâ got a son (Karâ) through Sun God before her marriage. Though the Pâras were following the path of dharma Karâ being the eldest son of Kuntâ joined only Kauravas. That was his fate.

Karâ became the friend of Duryodhana who tread the nonrighteous path. Instead of making him pious, he supported the way he followed.

Though Karâ knew the righteous way (dharma) he was unable to follow the way. The members of Kaurava were described in the Mahâbhârata in the following way
Duryodhana was a man of anger and was compared to poisonous tree. His friend Kar´a was like the base and trunk of the tree. We know how much the base supports the tree. Akuni was like their branches. Dh¨tar¢¾ra was compared to the root of the poisonous tree. Duºº¢sana its flowers and fruits.

In the same way P¢´² avas also were compared to a tree. A tree which is benovelant to the humanity.

Yudhi¾°hira was the righteous tree. Arjuna was the base and trunk of the tree. Bh¤ma was like the branches, Nakula and Sahadeva were the flowers and fruits of the tree. Lord K¨¾´a, Veda, and Brahma´¢s were the roots of the tree.

To endorse his faithfulness for the help he got from Duryodhana, Kar´a always stood behind him in all the atrocities done by Duryodhana to P¢´² vas.
Some of the incidents during which he stood behind Duryodhana were

(i) When he poisoned Bhima.

(ii) Making them reside in wax house.

(iii) Refused to give their share of land when P$c`$avas came after Draupad’s Svayamvaram.

(iv) When humiliated P$c`$avas while they were in dvaitavanam.

(v) While abducting cows in Vira`a nagaram.

(vi) Humiliating Lord K$\text{`}\text{`}$ when he came to ask P$c`$avas share.

Though Kar`a was born to the great parents Kunt$\text{a}$ and S$\text{r}$ and he himself a great philanthropist his character always created sympathy towards him because he could not follow the righteous path.
CHAPTER - I

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   Rçmçya´a, Bçlakç’²a, 2-15

3. UR, 3.47

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   Kçvyçdar²a, I, 14-19
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1.4.29

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