BOOK ONE.

BHAGAVAN VYASA AND MAHABHARATA
I. THE NATION'S MAGNUM OPUS.

Bhagavan Vyasa's Mahabharata is the magnum opus of Indian literature. There is no literary work in any language in the world which is equal to the Mahabharata either in magnitude or in variety of content. Mahabharata is eight times the Iliad and the Odyssey put together. It says all about human life and though what is said here might have been said elsewhere, what is not said here is not said anywhere. The encyclopaedic nature of the work has not reduced its charm as a piece of poetic art. Even as a piece of poetic art it has no parallel. It is a master Kavya. The best poets call it a Mahakavya. The encyclopaedic nature of its content and the unparalleled poetic beauty of the great epic had its captivating influence on the later great poets.

1. अदि कृष्णिस्त तदन्तः कले कृष्णिस्त्वन तभिषित । आदि ६२-५३
2. अद्य कृष्णव् कल्याणोऽनि समस्याः विद्यापितः । आदि २-३४०
3. सत्त्रूत महादिवस । राज्य ज्ञात सर्वभृत्ति । आदि २-६२०
4. ताष्ट्रव्य कल्याणवा तुंगवेदवा । आदि २-३४१
5. वद्यध सत्त्रातमातद्भो नन्याये अन्तर्गुद्धः । आदि २-३४५
There are many celebrated works in Sanskrit and other languages based on Mahabharata. The subject matter of the great epic was chosen either partly or wholly, and fine works of literary value were created. Even by the time of Panini (6th century B.C.) the epic became very popular. Names like Krishna and Arjuna—the characters of the epic are mentioned in Panini's Sutras. A Nasik inscription of the 1st century B.C. describes the valour of a local hero as equal to that of Rama, Kesava, Arjuna and Bheemasena. It has been the subject of attraction to the poets in all the ages in all the prominent languages of India. Islands like Java and Bali in South East Asia were also attracted by the great epic. According to the inscription of Raja Dharma Vamsa (A.D. 1000) the great epic was translated into prose in the Javanese language in ancient times. Of all the Sanskrit works Mahabharata attracted the Moghal Emperor, Akbar so much that he got it translated into the Persian language.

The epic enjoyed such popularity through the ages that it became a model for great religious teachers in propagating their religion. Even religions like Jainism and Buddhism began either fabricating the epic stories on the lines of Mahabharata or recasting the same epic to their advantage.

Indian tradition respected the epic so much that it called the Mahabharata the Fifth Vedas. Many later puranas have praised the epic in high terms. Almost all the celebrated works in

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6. अन्नामुर्सिन एटीक्सर्स्म्यान निम्बाऴवर्ती पवित्रकृत्। आदि 2-388

7. That he was the avatara of Narayana was known to Panini who on the analogy of Nara and Narayana of the Mahabharata, recorded in close association in the Sutra.

"KARNATA HARIDASA SAHITYA" Page VII by Dr. R.S. Panchamukhi.

8. Ibid.

9. "आजका और लोकों दृष्टित महाभारत।" विक्षण्डौता महाभारतांक

10. Jain puranas like Mahapurana and Harivamsapurana.


12. अगवन। भाषाक्याण सोंसै नैसै महाभारत। शूनी परमेतम।
Vedanta, Dharma, Rajaneethi and the other branches of Indian knowledge have profusely quoted lines from the great epic either to support their view or to popularise their own school of thought.
A close study of the life history of many an Indian King reveals the fact that they necessarily possessed the knowledge of this great epic. The reason in all possibility is that it narrated in detail all about the political science essential for a ruler. Further the sentiment of polity and valour are portrayed in their best colours in it, and it became a guide and a source of inspiration to the ruling class. Kumarila the 8th-century Mimamsa expresses the view that the descriptions of battle were only used for the purpose of rousing the martial instinct of the warrior caste. Many Indian Kings got this epic translated into their mother tongue and they found pleasure in hearing and reading it. The inscriptions written after the 5th century A.D. in and outside India refer to Mahabharata as an authoritative text for rewarding the donors and for punishing the wicked. From Kamboja an inscription of 600 A.D. states that copies of Mahabharata were presented to a temple there and arrangements were made for the daily recitation of the epic.

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15. do do by A.A. Macdonel Page 292.
The great epic was one of the most popular works in South India from very early times. In the early Sangam literature (150-300 A.D.) many references to the epic are to be found. "The Poems of the Sangam attest to the anxiety of all of them (the monarchs of the Chera Chōla and Pandya lines) to connect themselves with the events of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The first Chera monarch, we hear of Udiyanjeral (A.D. 130) is said to have fed sumptuously both the armies of Kurukshetra, and thereby earned for himself the title Udiyanjeral of the great feeding. The same honour is also claimed in other poems for the Pandyas and Cholai.

Even as early as the period of Sangam, Mahabharata enjoyed very high regard in the minds of the South Indian monarchs. An inscription of the 10th Century A.D., while recording the achievements of the early Pandyas, speaks of the translation of Mahabharata into Tamil and the establishing of a Sangam at Madura. How great a task it was and what an amount of regard the task enjoyed can be understood by this. What demanded the Pandya Kings to undertake this task, we do not know, but history has recorded it on a par with the great achievement of establishing the Sangam at Madura.

In this manner the great epic enjoyed popularity through the ages in and outside India. It became a model and a source-material for many great literary works in different languages of India. In Sanskrit alone there are more than forty celebrated works in different forms based on Mahabharata. Vernacular versions of the great epic are also many in number. It is interesting to note the variations in form and treatment, though the theme remains the same.

2. THEOLOGICAL EPIC.

Before making a comparative study of the variations of certain such versions, a brief review of the form and treatment of the original work is appropriate.

Mahabharata of Bhagavan Vyasa is in the form of an "ITIHASA". It is a long narrative poem. The narration generally is simple and

18. See Appendix A history of the Sanskrit literature by Dr. Varadachari.
lucid.* The Bhagavan though capable of chiselling his poem more excel-
lently than any other poet, has not done so all along the epic. His purpose is not to produce a piece of literary art. He wanted to edu-
cate his people in plain outspoken narrative medium; he wanted to present before his reader (audience) a real-to-the-core life of a man with its merits and demerits, virtues and follies. So the long human story has a beginning, a middle and an end. It is a life size portrait of human life. Here and there the reader may come across a close-up show of a character or a microscopic vision of a sentiment. But the author even in such places ceases to be a subjective lyricist. The poet being a great sage could be impersonal from beginning to the end. He has no sympathy for any character. He is an impartial spectator, detached from the characters he created; he is an impressive story teller. The great sage-poet, the son of the Vedic soil, is second to none in mastery over Vedas. He had already done the greatest task of editing the Vedas and earned for himself the name of Vedavyasa. His great epic thus composed in the dense atmosphere of Vedic culture is later to be called the Fifth Veda.

The mission of Indian Itihasa literature is to enlarge the Vedic ideals. If it is the nature of an Itihasa, which else than Mahabharata fulfills the mission better? So it is aptly called the Fifth Veda.

Rajasekhara in his Kavya Meeamsha explains the Itihasa form of Indian literature as follows:-

PARAKRIYA PURA Kalpa ITIHA SAR DWI DH
SYADEKA NAYAKA PURVA DWITEEYA BAHUNAYAKA. 20

Madhusudana's Vivrithi follows :-

PURANA VISESHAYEVA ITIHA SASAH YEKANUBANDHI KATHAVISHESHHAH
PARAKRIYA ANEKAMBANDHI KATHA VISHESHHAH PURAKALPA
DHARMARTHA KAMA MOKSHANAMUPADESA SAMANVITHA
PURVA VRITTA KATHA YUKTAMI ITIHASAM PRACHAKSHATE

ITIHA SASA narrates the past (history) connected with one or more (heroes). It is of two types. First it is of one hero and the later of more than one hero. For the Itihasa of one hero the example is

19. "Itihasa Puranabhyam Vedam Samupa Brimhayet". This is from Mahabharata Adi. 1. 267.
20. Sastra nirdesadhyaya.
In the Indian soil the ITIHASA form of literature flourished to enlighten the people with the Vedic knowledge, which helps them in their march towards the goal of life. Man is born on earth with a purpose; it is not an accident, and he has no right to fritter away his life in vain. There is fourfold purpose: He must live a righteous life (Dharma) He must earn (Artha) He must desire for, and experience the joys of life; and finally he must equip himself during his life time to go up the ladder to the ultimate in the life after death. ITIHASA must teach the man in all these branches of human knowledge. With this spirit all the itihasas are composed. Especially Mahabharata syrphs the purpose so well that it richly deserves to be called the Fifth Veda.

Indian ITIHASA is a parallel to the English Epic. The Oxford Dictionary defines the epic exactly as Rajasekhara does. "Poem narrating continuously achievements of one or more heroes". C.M. Gayley's definition of the epic in his "Principles of Poetry" contains all the qualities attributed to an Indian epic, or the epic in general ancient or modern, may be described as a dispassionate recital, in dignified rhythmic narrative of a momentous theme of action fulfilled by heroic characters and supernatural agencies under the control of a sovereign destiny. The theme involves the political or religious interests of a purpose or of mankind; it commands respect due to popular tradition and to traditional ideals. The poem awakens the sense of the mysterious, the awful and the sublime. Through perilous crises it uplifts and calms the strife of frail humanity.

A comparative study of the Greek epics and the Indian epics reveals one striking difference. There the art of epic poetry is concerned with the great doings of human beings. It is purely anthropocentric valour that is glorified. Again the epic bard "tells the stories because men like to hear them. The poet wishes not to instruct but to delight his audience." But in the Indian epics the poet's task

21. The invocation Muse in Homer's Odyssey begins like this: "Tell me Muse of that man...."
Though all the Indian epics are not the war poems as the Greek epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana are war poems. Some critics of the Western line of thinking are of the opinion that the Mahabharata was originally a war poem and the theological element crept into its fabric as time passed on. One cannot summarily brush the opinion aside. But the antiquity of the religion dominated composition of the epic is so great that no version of that so called original war poem or any nearby version of that kind is found so far in any part of India or outside India. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute with its galaxy of eminent scholars toiled for decades and prepared the critical edition of the great epic. They have collated a number of manuscripts both Indian and foreign. Even among them no version is found to be of that size and temperament. So it is futile to bother about the yet to be seen or irretrievably missing original of the epic. Recorded history knows the epic of a size many times bigger than the biggest Greek Epics and theologically dominated.

In the vast sky of this epic body are strewn twinkling stars of theological expositions. The head light of Indian theology Bhagavad Geetha shines like the sun in the great epic. All the vernacular versions and the others of the epic, however artistic and LAUKIKA in treatment, could not ignore this particular element in the epic. The Kannada Poet Pampa, when he said that he would present the epic in the laukika spirit, perhaps forgot and through his pet characters like Kama began exhorting a kind of philosophy. Mahabharatha might have originally been a war poem, but as it is available to us from times immemorial, it is mainly an epic in which theological element plays a dominant roll. Prominent religious scholars have taken shelter under it to propound their line of thought. As has been already said Jainism and Buddhism have either recast the epic to their taste or constructed stories on its lines. Its greatness as a theological exposition is praised by many religious teachers.

23. Vikramarjuna Vijaya 12-142.
The dominating sentiment "Rasa" in the epic is SANTA, the sentiment of Peace. The sentiment of peace is the outcome of the spirit of Dharma. This Indian epic, though it glorifies the sentiment of valour like any Greek epic, the sentiment of valour is purely Dharmic. It is DHARMAVEERA; it is not YUDDHAVEERA. In the six cantos of the great war-story in KURUKSHETRA the YUDDHAVEERA is well unveiled; but ultimately it culminates in the Dharmaveera sentiment. The sentiment of valour is subservient to the sentiment of peace. If the science of poetry calls Dharmaraja, the hero of the poem, his heroism is Dharmic heroism - Dharmaveera.

Cynosure

2. BHAGAVAN VYASA - THE Cynosure of the Day.

The author of the epic was a sage, a great Vedic Scholar and a great personality who had occupied a place of high respect in contemporary society. He had a number of disciples apart from innumerable admirers. Apart from his incalculable abilities in the fields of philosophy and literature, his magnetic personality had attracted all classes of people and it had earned him unparalleled support and service from all sides. He was the cynosure of all eyes. He identified himself with the task of propagating the finest ideals of the great Vedic lore. When Kings, Sages and even common people got doubts or disputes they were referred to him and his word was final. When there was no Progeny and when a royal line was dying, he was to come and save it. When there was a doubt under the marriage pandal and the parties of the bride and the bridegroom lost in disagreement, he was to come and settle the dispute. When an old king who had lost everything in life, still lingered on to the worldly life, he was to come and advise him to retire to the forest to save his soul. When the Royal Queen suffered an abortion he was to come and artificially hatch the premature progeny.

Bhagavan Vyasa was a sage, a royal adviser, a religious teacher, a great educationist, a great philosopher and a great epic bard. Unless one remembers these qualities of the author, one cannot meaningfully estimate the treatment of the theme by the author. The conception of Viswarupa, teachings of Bhagavat Geeta, detailed discriptions of the great war and the portrayal of the hundreds of characters with different psychological backgrounds are all the wonders one sees in the great epic.
The epics of the western world are famous as great narratives. But in them the religious and philosophical elements do not play a role as important as human valour. C.M. Bowra gives the same reason for not saying anything about the old Indian epics in his work, Heroic Poetry. "I have excluded any literature which is not strictly heroic in the sense which I have given to the word. That is why nothing is said about old Indian epics in which a truly heroic foundation is overlaid with much literary and theological matter" says he.

This great Indian epic portrays not only life, but life after death as well. So it will be useful and interesting both to the common man and to the man who wants more than the worldly things. The epic poetry satisfies all strata of humanity by giving them what is good and useful. Wherefrom did the poet get the inspiration to compose such a marvelous epic?

4. BACKGROUND AND TREATMENT.

As has been already said he was in close touch, and was more conversant than any other, with every aspect of the vedic world.

The bare story of the epic is small; it is the theme of a feud between cousins in a royal family with which the poet has close relationship. The feud ended in a great war in which the entire nation got involved. It was the most important incident in the history of the country. Not only at that time but for centuries to come people remembered it.

Thus when the sage poet wanted to compose a great national epic this great historical incident became the theme of it. The ancient history of the royal lines of which the epic poet wanted to describe in his poem was famous even by that time. The Vedas have sung in praise of persons like Yayati and Puru, the forefathers of Pandavas and Kauravas. The solar and lunar royal lines which play a prominent role in the epic, are well known to the Vedas. The important incidents and the characters are very much historical. The sage poet took advantage of the national incident and, the antiquity and the greatness of the royal line involved in it, and conceived an epic par excellence. Thus the theme of the epic became the story of the people of a nation of their political interests. But Bhagavan's aim does not end with this. His purpose was not merely to nar-
rate the war story with its earlier and later developments. His intention was to hand over to the future generations a complete human story and through it a message - the message of the Vedas. The unparalleled art of the author lies in the logical and harmonious blending of the didactic element and the realities of life.

Because the human character is not all-perfect, many codes of conduct are ordered to regulate it. The literature makes the reader realise the values of these codes of conduct. In this process of making the reader sympathetic to the message, the approach is two-pronged. (1) The poet creates an ideal character for leaving lasting impressions on the reader. The mind of the reader is tuned for the further responses. The creation of almost all the characters in Ramayana by Valmiki is one such. (2) Another way is the humanistic approach. In this process the characters look very real and near to the reader. By the humanistic method of erring and correcting, the characters gradually reach the goal of perfection.

4 (a) **HUMANISM** :-  

Bhagavan Vyasa's Mahabharata is of the second type. Yudhishtira is not as perfect as Rama. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita - each of these characters in Ramayana has an ideal before it. Rama sacrifices his boundless love for Sita in his service to the people as a king. Lakshmana does not even think of Urmila, his wife, for fourteen years in his dedicated service to Rama, his elder brother. Sita neither hesitates nor feels ashamed to undergo the ordeal of an AGNIPARIKSHA in obedience to her husband. All these characters in Ramayana are so fast bound by strong principles that they at times look mechanical.

In Bharata it is different. Yudhishtira the ideal man, could not but forget the tenets of Vedic ideas, and play a game of dice and lose himself in the vice. Bhimasena, in a fit of anger, could not but forget all his respect for Dharmaraja and ask Sahadeva to get fire to bum his hands, which indulged in the game of dice. Arjuna though aware of Krishna's Godliness could not but forget all his devotion and play with him. Why? Even Draupadi known for her PATIVRATYA (devotion to her husband) could not but forget all her respect for Yudhishtira and call him a gambler in an open royal court. Dhritarashtra's
In this humanistic treatment even a hero like Yudhishthira looks like a common man, when he loses all his restraint and falls a prey to a common vice. By describing the power of certain vices at length can the poet be really effective as a didactic author? Yes! This technique is such. It must be handled with devoted skill. Otherwise it not only ceases to be didactic but like a wild fire it proves suicidal. It is like integrating the cobra's poison in preparing certain life-saving drugs. A skillful humanist-author is invariably most successful than an idealist-author in reforming humanity for the better. In Mahabharata Bhagavan Vyasa proves himself a matchless humanist-author. The epic being different from the Veda in its functions, its characters are also different in their nature. The epic is a mass medium of instruction of Vedic knowledge. Bhagavan Vyasa invented the new device to bring the fruits of the Veda home to even the lower strata of humanity. In this new popular scheme of epic art the devine vedic characters undergo anthropomorphic treatment. They become men and women of a mark different from common people. Because the characters are humanized, the reader will have natural sympathy for them. Because they are marked human beings, he will have respect for them and he feels that he has to learn from them. The anthropomorphic treatment is one aspect of the humanistic approach that paves a smooth road for the reader to catch the line of instructive thought of a theologic or a didactic author.

This humanism in the Indian epic is not a modern scepticism. It is a new and effective medium through which the vedic poet wanted to educate his people. In those days, perhaps this must have been a new and revolutionary technique that the powerful epic poet introduced into the world of Indian literature. In the bulk of Vedic authoritarian literature, we do come across fine episodes of natural human touch. But this commanding tone of the authoritarian tenets in Vedas eclipses such human lyrical narratives, and one has to gather them with effort. Bhagavan Vyasa had caught the beautiful art in these gentle, natural and attractive hide-outs, to be introduced into his new epic in the making. It worked well with him. The new art seems to have been universally welcomed because there are internal evidences to say that the great epic became very popular within a
short period of its publicity, not only in the land of its birth but also in the other worlds.

4 (b) EPISODIC POEM - (Upakhyana Kavya)

In this art for every authoritative structure (विरिति) or a taboo (विलेखि) in the Vedas, an episode of soft narration is sung. Thus the epic became an episodic poem of great magnitude. There is no single work anywhere in the world in which one can see so many episodes as in Mahabharata. Some people say that episodes are the later additions. It is clearly said in Mahabharata that Bhagavan Vyasa's work as published on earth contained 1,00,000 slokas.

If the episodes are not taken into account the epic cannot be of that magnitude. That Bhagavan Vyasa wrote the "साहस्यारंभिग्नायक विशाल" is said both in the epic itself and in other works.

The episode (Upakhyana) is an important instrument in the hands of a theological author to achieve his goal. There are different types of episodes like Didactic episodes, allegorical episodes, satirical episodes and commemorative episodes. Each has its own technique and each has its charming influence on the reader to tune his mind to the clear understanding of the main stream of thought. Some episodes are directly connected with the main story and some are not. But every episode is important in keeping the reader or the audience alert to the purpose with which the poet is presenting the epic.

In the early chapters of Mahabharata we come across an episode in which the obedience and devotion of a disciple to his teacher is described at length. A teacher called Dhoumya wanted to test his student Upamanya. He asked him to look after the cows. Looking after the cows during the day he came to the teacher in the evening and bowed to him. He asked Upamanya, "you look quite strong. What are you doing for food? He said that he was taking food by Hadhukara (elms). Then he asked him to give away to him(what)all he earned. He obeyed. Still he was strong. Again the teacher asked him how
he could be so strong. He said that he was begging for the second time and eating. The teacher stopped his doing so saying that he should not tease the people by begging again. Then he lived on cow's milk. When the teacher came to know of it he stopped it too saying that the calves will be deprived of their share. Then he lived on licking the foam of the milk that was left on the mouths of the calves. The teacher asked him to stop even licking it, saying that it would cause pain to the calves. Finally the disciple resorted to eating the leaves of a forest plant (अकौकक). He lost his eyesight and fell in a deep well. Then the teacher along with other students went in search of him loudly calling "Upamanyu where are you" In reply he heard a weak sound from the deep dried-up well. He saw his there and asked him to pray the ASWINI DEVAS for getting the sight. Then Upamanyu prayed the Aswins. They appeared before him. They gave him a piece of bread and asked him to eat it. He refused to eat without giving it to his teacher. Pleased by his devotion to his teacher they lifted him up and blessed him with eyesight and golden teeth. In Rig Veda we come across many episodes in which Aswins came to the rescue of the devotees in similar troubles.

Once the Rakshasas bet a rishi called Rebha and threw him in a well. The Aswins saved Rebha.

Another Rishi called Vandana was once beaten by Rakshasas and buried. The Aswins picked him up and saved him.

Once Rujaswa was blinded by his father for giving away hundred and one sheep as food to his pet a jackal. When the jackal prayed for Rujaswa, the Aswins blessed him with eyesight.

We can understand by comparison how much influence the Vedas have thrown on Bhagavan Vyasa. So many other episodes can be quoted and similarities can be shown.

In an episodic poem generally the unity of plot is disturbed. An epic poet or an epic audience is not much bothered about it. If
each episode is instructive and interesting. It is enough. Without
these episodes Mahabharta would have been a small historical poem;
the encyclopaedic quality would have been lacking; and its dignity
as a book of theology and morals would have been lowered. It is
mainly in these episodes the common man sees his image and corrects
himself for the better living. The epic owes much of its greatness
to the episodes in it.

4. (c) VEDIC WORLD AND INIMITABLE IMPORT.

The art of Bhagavan Vyasa in importing the Vedic world into his
epic is inimitable. Having the directional world of Vedic expression
and transforming the unapproachable authoritarian commandments
into reconcilable and friendly forms of advice through conversations
and episodes the epic author created a popular world of Veda.

We see plurality of Gods in Vedas. There are three categories
of Divinities in the Vedic world; (i) Gods of Earth, (ii) Aerial
Gods and (iii) Heavenly Gods. Agni, Prithvi, Soma, Nadi, Brihaspati
are the divinities of the Earth. Indra, Vayu, Agmanapat, Rudra, Marut,
Vata and Agni are the divinities of the aerial region. Dhvah, Varuna,
Natra, Surya, Savitru, Pushan, Aasit, Ushas, Ratri, Adityah and
Vishnu are the divinities of Heaven.

Bhagavan Vyasa has imported almost all the gods of the Vedas
to play either a human part or a divine role in the great drama of
his national epic. The Vedic idea that there is an inevitable and
cordial relationship between the divine beings and the human beings
dominates the epic. Nowhere do we find any disjointed construction
of the divine - human tale.

(i) Journey after death: One finds a vivid description of
the life and life after death in the Vedas. The man after death
goes to the Pitruloka. To reach this world several rites are pre-
scribed to be performed after the death for the deceased man. In
Rig Veda AURDHWA DAIHKA SUKTA (3.35 to 3.67 धृतपार) there is enough ac-
count of this world. About the long journey of the soul from this
world to Pitruloka and about the Lord of that world, YAMA, we know
many things in this part of the Veda. Bharata speaks of these things
in many of its UPAKHYANAS. Yama’s pets are two dogs an owl and a dove. In Mahabharata a dog follows Dharmaraja all along his journey to Swarga. There Dharmaraja begs admission to the dog into the Swarga. This is symbolic of the Vedic content.

(ii) HUMAN BIRTH:

The Vedas emphasize the view that human birth is the best opportunity given to a being. It should be made use of for reaching the higher levels to attain the eternal bliss. The same view is magnified both in the fabric of the story and in the several theological passages in Mahabharata.

(iii) IMMORTAL WORLD:

There are two worlds according to Rigveda. One is the mortal world and the other immortal (अस्रूतविका). Being grateful to the Almighty for having given the being the human birth one must strive hard to reach the immortal world. The story is symbolic of this journey.

(iv) VEDIC VIRTUES:

Vedic virtues have found respectable place in the Mahabharata. Truth, Dharma, Charity, Kindness and not harassing others and such virtues are advocated by the Vedas. Bhagavan Vyasa creates characters and anecdotes to magnify the greatness of these virtues.

Self reliant and independent spirit of living is respected in the Vedas. Bheema’s character represents this spirit.

(v) YAGNAS:

There are several types of Yagnas described in the Vedas. Some of them are in honour of divinities and some others are for invoking evil spirits. The YAGNIK institution was well established even by the time of Rigveda. In Mahabharata also we come across several such types of YAGNAS. Drupada’s PUTRA KAMESHTI, Dharmaraja’s RAJASUYA and ASWAMEDHA are a few among many such yagnas that

27 (a) पापा संत सहि अष्टवत असचाह । असचाह देव ॥ ८४ ४

Sinful and untruthful people go to hell.

(b) A ग्राया असचाह अयनु ता सिन्नति ॥ ८४ ४

Adityas plot the truthful to pain

28 साहुः सक्रियः नस्तस्य भ्रेत्तयुः भृद्भुत्वाद अविभो वृद्धास्वामी ॥ २७ १७

Let us not go to others expressing our poverty and let us not beg them for help.
are described in Mahabharata. While these are for fair purposes, we come across yet another type of yagnas like Jayamangala’s sarpa-yaga, Parasara’s Nakshatra Sutra and Chyavanas home in which an evil spirit Dana is invoked to attack Indra. The main war-theme is depending on the Raasuya, because after performing this yaga a great-war and a large destruction of population has to follow. Narada clearly tells this nature of the sacrifice to Dharmaraja.

(vi) EFFICACY OF MANTRAS:

The efficacy of the MANTRAS is described in the Vedas. When a deity is invited by devotionally chanting the MANTRA the deity would come even leaving his own important work on hand. The episode of Kunti inviting Surya in her childish desire to test the efficacy of a mantra and Surya appearing before her blessing her with a son and again Kunti inviting Dharmo, Indra, Vayu and Awinls to beget Pandavas represents this aspect in the Vedic system. Apart from this episode there are a number of other episodes which carry this notion.

(vii) SWAYAMVARA:

The Swayamvara style of marriage in the royal families is well-known to the Vedic literature. "The bride chooses her husband from among the people in the SWAYAMVARA STYLE. This style of marriage is much honoured in Mahabharata. Bhishma brings Kasi kala’s daughters from the Swayamvara-Pandal to marry them to his brother Vichitra-vierya. Arjuna wins the hand of Draupadi in the same manner. Karna and Dur-yodhana are said to have possessed their wives in the same manner. Damayanti is married to Nala in the same style.

29. दुरु दिन्त्र सन्यथा सुतेन लिङ ली वे दिल माटि पालतया ग्रं
पाश्च सुमस्तपच्च बायतरस्य मोम त-सुता दिन्त्र (बृहिपालिको) क्रमेण 7-33-2
Vasishta’s son by the power of chanting the mantra made Indra, who was at that time drinking Soma in the Somayaga of Pasadayma, to come down to Sudasa’s sacrificial pandal.

In Mahabharata, when Kunti called Dharaa he came immediately on account of the power of the ‘Mantra’

30. तन्स बहु भविजि यहुः के राजः
रव्यत्सा सिन्हा वादुत्ते अनेजिने
In the Vedic world the system of marriage and the married life have very great importance. Meeting of the man and woman to make the existence of human life meaningful is a moment of unparalleled importance in the human society. Rigveda deals with this subject at length in 85th Sukta of the 10th Mandala called Surya Sukta which is called VIVAHA SUKTA. Almost all the marriages described in the Mahabharata reflect the several aspects of this social custom described in the Rigveda.

When the marriage of a bride is settled, the bride is mentally wedded to the man and she, from that time of settlement, used to think that he is her man. While commenting on the 10th Mantra of this Sukta Sri. N.S. Anantharangachar in his Vaidika Sahitya Charitre says:

Immediately after the marriage of Gandhari was settled, by her parents, Gandhari took Dhritarastra as her husband and she is said to have tied a piece of cloth to her eyes to artificially blind herself, as her proposed man was blind.

Besides, the father of the bride should give cows, horses and many other presentations to the bridegroom (X-85-13).

Drupada also gives all these things to Pandavas.

Performing the marriage in the presence of Agni (Fire) is there both in the Vedas and the Mahabharata.

While receiving the bride, the elders use to shower their best wishes on her. The text of the wishes goes like this:

"You enrich your husband's home with children, being the mistress of it."
Let your looks on your husband be soft (with love). You live for his welfare. Be kind to animals. Be good at heart and bear a bright countenance. Become a mother of valiant sons. Bear devotion to Gods and kindness to animals."

Such wishes resound in Kunti's welcoming speech to Draupadi.

A verse of Rigveda text appears verbatim in the Bharata text (1-198-7) along with the other wishes.

The purpose of the marriage is to beget male children to keep the race surviving and to jointly (man and woman) serve the society.

These ideals honoured in the Vedas are advocated all along the epic story.

(viii) DEVARA:

Vedas advocate DEVARA SYSTEM of begetting children to save a race from extinction. The Kuru Pandava race flourished only in the Devara System of progenition.

Male progeny is preferred to a female one in the vedic world. In Mahabharata also this preference is maintained.

(ix) WARS:

In Vedas we come across a number of wars between DEVAS and ASURAS. The central theme of Mahabharata is also the same. Duryodhana and his supporters are called the ASURAS and the Pandavas and his supporters are called the DEVAS. In the section named "AMSAVATARA" it is clearly said who is born of whose AMSA regarding the prominent personalities on both the sides.

(x) STEALING HERDS:

Stealing of herds and battles in that connection are also described in the Vedas. The strategy of Duryodhana to pull out Pandavas from incognito is one such similar anecdote in Mahabharata.

(xi) GAME OF DICE:

One section of Rigveda called "AKSHA SUKTA" describes at length the game of dice and its evil effects, in the form of a soliloquy of a gambler. It is interesting to note one MANTRA which looks like

31. विभक्तैन्द में है देवराण
the source of an important incident in Mahabharata.

"Gambler's wife runs the risk of being manhandled by other gamblers and all the relations of the gambler disown him". In Mahabharata Dharmaraja's wife (a gambler's wife) is being manhandled by the other gambler. Bhagavan Vyasa's epic story revolves on the pivot of this social anecdote, which of course is almost a forgotten section in the Vedas to-day. It is only remembered as a tenet of taboo (निषेध). In the same SUTRA there is another MANTNA in which the playing of the game of dice is put under taboo. "अश्लील्याँ दीपिक्याँ". "Do not play the game of dice". The hero of the epic indulges in an act, put under taboo and, the lesson he learns is the rest of the story. An anecdote which is neither important nor popular in the vast world of vedic literature plays a pivotal role when it is transmigrated into the world of Bhagavan Vyasa's epic conception. Bhagavan Vyasa's marvelous ability to delineate sequences and the characters from the nook and corner of the vedic world bewilders even the sophisticated critic. A thorough comparative study of the Vedas and the Mahabharata, if it is done, will unlock the hidden treasures of the epic poet's revealing art.

(xii)DIVINE INVISIBLE :-

The Vedic thought that the invisible thread of divinity which links up characters and incidents and enslaves all of them to toil untiringly to evolve an uncommon finale dominates the epic. This is the special contribution of the Indian epic bard to our experience. It is for this that any thoughtful reader reads the epic and forgets himself in praise and devotion to the author. There are many literary works based on this epic; some are unparalleled artistic; each one of them has some uniqueness of its own but some of them could present this particular aspect of the author in its entirety. The story of man and this supremely supernatural agency is well woven into the fabric of this epic. The fundamental theory that man's destiny is ultimately decided by the Supreme Being, that man is all at His mercy and that He is all kind to him if derived from the Vedas. Man must surrender himself to that Supreme Being
and sacrifice his self in His service. "This is a kind of Yagna. (Rig. X 101.2)" The implements of outer sacrifice in the Vedas are used as symbols of inner sacrifice and self offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the truth. Our sacrifice is a journey a pilgrimage and a battle - a travel towards Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner flame as our faith finder and leader."

The philosophical introvert sees the supreme Being everywhere and in every thing and every act of his, he thinks, is in service of that Supreme Being. He is not unaware of the invisible thread that binds all and plays the universal drama in which every one is a puppet. THE PURUSHA SUKTA in the Rigveda means the same thing. In Mahabharata VISWARUPA DARSHANA visualises the same theory. Whether one wants to do it or not it matters little. Every thing is predestined and things take place inspite of anybody's likes or dislikes. On account of ignorance, man's ego struts untimately to surrender. The more you fuel your ego with wealth, power etc., bigger the devil you become. The war between the devil and the divine in the man will always end in triumph of the divine. The Supreme Being always takes the side of the divine and the human drama is always a divine comedy. This symbolism is beautifully maintained in the epic. In the process of maintaining the symbolism we find the visible and the invisible He at work. The visible He is Krishna - the Supreme Being of the VEDAS. Throughout the RIGVEDA His description follows the SAGUNA theory.

The exploits of VISHNU or PURUSH in Rigveda and the exploits of Krishna in Mahabharata are similar. This visible divinity plays a prominent role and brings ruin on ADHARMA and Victory in DHARMA. His invisible influences are more changing than the visible influences. Gandhari understood Krishna's invincible second self which was the sold case of war. Vidura, Bhishma and Karna -- all of them have under-

33. Purusha is Narayana. Purusha Sukta is also called Narayaneeya Sankara in his Geetha Bhashya questions and answers.
stood Him well. Karna knew that he was being washed away in the strong current of His influence. The visible divinity pleads peace as a political diplomat, between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. But the invisible divinity had already drawn an irrevocable blue print of the great war. The very existence of Sri Krishna is for the purpose of bringing about the great war. But he himself openly goes on a mission to the Kauravas to make peace between them and the Pandavas. A study of the two sides of Sri Krishna's character, the invisible and the visible, will reveal the theological and the humanistic loveliness of that wonderful character and the heights of Bhagavan Vyasa's creative abilities.

No version of the great epic, whether in Sanskrit or in any other language could present the character in its fulness as in the original. A critic of Mahabharata will experience great joy when he gets at the beautiful process of elucidating the supreme divine personality of Sri Krishna from that of the human frame. For a common reader, who is unaware of the background of this supreme character and the supernatural skill with which the epic poet shaped it, it remains a paradox. A man who looks afraid of Jarasandha brings victory to Pandavas against eleven AKSHOHINI army; a man who saved Arjuna several times from the fatal weapons of physical prowess and spiritual invisibility allows his own sister's son Abhimanyu to die a death by any standards unjust and miserable; a man who saved all Pandavas and the Pandava progeny which had already succumbed to BRAHMASTRA allows his own kith and kin - all the Yadavas to die fighting among themselves. What a Paradox! The more we understand Krishna's character the better we appreciate the skill of Bhagavan Vyasa.

34. The greatness of this Indian epic lies in this kind of subtle treatment of the divine characters. Neither in the Iliad nor in Odyssey do we come across Gods in this shape. They look more like men. They have strong likes and dislikes. More than a principle their personal likes and dislikes drive them to act in favour of one character or the other. The difference between Zeus in Homer's epics and Krishna in Bhagavan Vyasa's epics clearly shows how the theological conception of the Indian epic bard is far more evolved than the theological conception of the Greek epic bard.
Bhagavan Vyasa’s Krishna is none else than the Vishnu of Rigveda. In Rigveda Vishnu is praised as the friend of India. During war times he joins India. When they are together they only win; never is there a defeat for them. The friendship and the exploits of Vishnu and Indra in the Vedic literature are brought into play in Mahabharata. Krishna and Arjuna and their exploits against the evil forces are as important and as magnificent as they are in the Vedas.

In fact it is Bheemasa who killed all the Kaurava brothers. It must have been a historical fact. Why then is Arjuna given more prominence in the story? The relevant answer to this question is that the Vedic influence at times eclipses the history in the epic.

"Now show me that form of yours" says Arjuna to Krishna in Mahabharata. Its counterpart is there in the Rigveda. 

"Do not remove this form of yours from us. You were with us in the war in another form (helping)."

In Rigveda Vishnu is praised for his three paces which occupy the whole universe. This aspect of Vishnu is delicately symbolised in Sri Krishna’s role. This god of heaven (Vishnu) when descended to earth has retained his characteristic namely occupation. In Vedas it is said that He with one foot occupied the earth. The dispute between the cousins is concerned with the land. With the help of Krishna the Pandavas occupied their land. Becoming a charioteer symbolises occupation as the chariot is an instrument of forward motion. Krama denotes forward motion. Akramana is the character of a Charioteer. The nature of Vedic Trivikrama is symbolically maintained in the Mahabharata.

This visible Supreme Being of Mahabharata is the hero of the epic. It is called Narayanakatha and Krishnavedha. In the character
Of Sri. Krishna we find certain irrecconcilable movements. While killing Bhishma, Drona and Karna, Krishna instigates the Pandavas to resort to ways which are not fair by any ethical standards. One cannot see pure heroism in these cases. It is the approach of Pragmatist. It can even be called the opportunism. Here Krishna looks completely deviating from the path of heroism. One has to go in search of heroic idealism in this character. Homeric heroes live and die for their personal glory. Krishna is not at all a hero according to the Homeric measure. Scrupulously following the norms prescribed by the Vedas or SASTRAS adds to the glorification of a man. In all these instances where Krishna violates the human code of heroic conduct, Bhagavan Vyasa hints to the reader who might have forgotten that, Krishna is the Supreme Being, to realise that truth. The reader is alerted to think of that Supreme Being who commands the emergence, existence and extinction of the entire universe. One should not judge the justification of any movement of this Almighty Omnicent character confining it to any given context. Its vision should not be limited to any fraction of place and time (earth and its history). It is the vision of the character high above. It is the cosmic vision, the whole view. So the judgment is also of the cosmic nature. Shdn we are very near a mammoth object we can get only a glimpse of it and our judgment will also be destined to be partial. Whenever it looks as though Krishna is violating the earthly ethics - the sage poet is presenting the valuable other side of the coin.

In the same way as Vishnu of the Vedas is transmigrated, many other Vedic divinities also are transmigrated into the epic.

Next to Krishna come the Pandavas. In fact Mahabharata is the story of Vasudeva and the Pandavas. Vasudeva's greatness, the truthfulness of the Pandavas and the evil nature of the sons of Dhritarashtra are said in Mahabharata by Bhagavan Vyasa. The five brothers are historical figures. The Jain version of the Bharata-Harivamsa Purana of Jainasena does not admit the divine origin of these characters. According to this epic the five brothers were not born as the counterparts of Yama, Vayu, Indra and Aswins. Historical loyalty of the Jain author is appreciated by the modern critics. But Bhagavan Vyasa as has been already said, has anthropomorphised the Vedic divinities.
who occupy very important places in the Vedic world. Yama or Dharma appears as Yudhishtira; Vayu or Vata appears as Bhamasena, Indra appears as Arjuna, and the divine doctors, the Twins, Asvins, appear as Nakula and Sahadeva.

If in the the theological scheme, Sri. Krishna is the hero of the epic, in the scheme of ahuman story, Yudhishtira become the hero.

Yama-Yudhishtira : Yudhishtira is Yama of Rigveda. In the Swargarohana Parva the story of a dog following Yudhishtira is there. Among the pets of Yama two dogs are mentioned to be protecting the path of Pitruloka in AURDHWAIIHIKA SUKTA. Thus Rigvedic concept symbolised in the episode of Yama and the dog in Swargarohana Parva of Mahabharata. Yudhishtira’s character is highly symbolic in the epic. Bhagavan Vyasa wants to present the character of an ideal man in him. Though the epic generally calls him by the name Yudhishtira, on several occasions he uses the names like Dharmaraja, Dharmarat, Dharma-prabhava and many such names with the prefix “Dharma”. This symbolic expression not only suggests the origin of the character but also sounds the ethical heights of the character. The word “Dharma” has a wide meaning. It is difficult to find a parallel single word in English. The word has a wide connotation. One doing one’s prescribed duties is Dharma. There should not be any sort of impropriety in doing one’s duties the way of doing, time of doing, place of doing etc. All sorts of proprieties must be maintained. If there is any shortcoming anywhere there will be a fall and the man has to pay a heavy price for it. This is the complete sense of Dharma.

It is said that Mahabharata story is maintained on one pivotal incident - the hero of the epic Yudhistira playing the game of dice.

The great war took place in the concluding years of DWAPARA YUGA. After Dwapara KALIYUGA begins. It is the period of transition from Dwapara to Kali. In the declining years of Dwapara the DHARMA loses its stability and suffers in Kali. Kali growing stronger at the cost of Dharma is the symbolism in the story of Dharmaraja playing the game of dice and losing to Duryodhana. Dharma and Kali are anthropomorphised into Dharmaraja and Duryodhana respectively.
In the game of dice Sakuni acted as a catalytic agent. Dwapara is anthropomorphised into Sakuni.43

Rousing the instinctual desire to indulge in the acts put under taboo by the Vedas is the main nature of Kali. The preceding Dwapara assists the succeeding Kali in his endeavours.

We come across a secondary episode which is parallel to this main episode of Dhanaaraja and the game of dice. It is the episode of Nala which occurs in Vanaparva. Nala the great king of Nishada possessed all the vedic virtues.

In the Swayamvara style of marriage Damayanti the princess of Vidharbha chooses to be her husband. Indra and other "Dikpalas" are returning from the Swayamvara. Kali on his way to Vidharbha with the desire of winning her had in the Swayamvara meets Indra and others. When he knows that the Swayamvara is over and ended with the marriage of Nala and Damayanti he gets very angry. He wants to trouble Nala. He expresses the intention of cursing Nala. Then Indra says:

"Look here Kali! Whoever wants to curse such a virtuous man as Nala will be cursing himself and the fool will be killing himself."

Then Kali wants to bring the fall of Nala by a different device. He wants to induce him to the game of dice and bring about his ruin. Kali asks Dwapara to help him.

"You please get into the dice and help me." Both of them come to an agreement and proceed. Kali himself in the form of a brahmin invites Nala for a game of dice with Pushkara.

Then the game begins. How Nala is lost in the game of dice is beautifully described by the author.44. He loses everything inclu-
As fate would have it, he loses even Damayanti. He suffers incognito. Finally the episode ends with reunion of the pair and regaining of the lost status.

This episode is narrated to Dharmaraja to console him by sage Romasa. This secondary episode with all its similarities with the main episode throws light on the symbolism maintained in the main episode.

In both the episodes the heroes are tempted to indulge in the game of dice. Both of them forget all sense of propriety and bring ruin to themselves. Both of them are driven to the forests. Both of them suffer incognito. In both the cases Kali and Dwapara join to humiliate the heroes of Vedic Virtues. In narrating this episode to Dharmaraja Romasa's aim is not only to console him but also to bring to his knowledge the bad effects of the indulgence in the vedi-cally prohibited acts.

We face a problem here. Playing the game of dice is sanctioned to Kshtriyas in the section dealing with Somayaga in the Vedas. Dharmaraja might have played the game under that sanction. How is it wrong? Somayaga or any other yaga is performed to attain Swarga. "Svarakamayajeta" one who wants to go to Swarga must perform yaga. The desire for attaining Swarga (the land of pleasures which will not accommodate the man after exhaustion of his "Punya" is a base desire. Man's aim should be to attain the eternal bliss and not the momentary happiness. This eternal bliss can be attained only by "निविद्यानवीनै" 'desireless acts'. It is the theological quintessence of Mahabharata. So the specific taboo in the Rigveda "Do not play the game of dice", (आस्तशैलविन्य ) is honoured and symbolised in his work by the author.

It also suggests that the 'KARMA MARGA' is only a means to an end and the means are always perilous when one identifies himself with it. "Fighting a battle is perilous and grievous. But these perils and the grief will not harm the main when he does it without desire and self identification." This is the teaching of Krishna in Bhagavatgeeta. Here Dharmaraja indulged in the game of dice with desire and self identification. Taken for granted that it is sanctioned as YAGA - it should not become an indulgence. When it becomes an indulgence the result will be suffering. This is the lesson taught by the author through these moral episodes. The philo-
The philosophy of the "KARMA" and "GNANA" paths advocated in the Vedas is suggested here. To support this theory we have an anecdote in the Vanaprava itself. When the Pandavas are in the forest, Krishna, for the first time, meets them there. While consoling Draupadi he says "at the time when Dharmaraja played the game of dice I was not in Dwaraka. So these sufferings came to you all". The reader will be baffled at the statement. Had he said that he was not in Hastinavati it would have been meaningful. In what way his presence in Dwaraka would help the Pandavas who were in Hastina? Here Neelakantha presents his commentary like this: "I was not in Dwaraka, the city with nine gates (the body of Dharmaraja). This means that Dharmaraja forgot the Supreme Being and identified himself with the act of gambling and brought ruin. This says that one should remember Him always, whether he is playing a game or performing a Yaga. All such teachings portrayed in several episodes are put together in one section Bhagavatgeeta.

Dharmaraja plays a game of dice for the second time. It is unpardonable on the part of Dharmaraja to indulge again in the vice which had once brought insult and ruin on him. Traditional commentators give an explanation to it which alone looks apt. In Rigveda God is called by a name YEDHAMANADWIT. It means "enemy to those who grow great". This attribute apparently looks silly. How can he be called God if he is such. The commentators make a fine reading in between the lines of this vedic text. The text means, according to them, that God is an enemy to those who grow great beyond their capacities. Growing great beyond one's own capacities is suicidal. To such, God is harsh in their own interest.

The spotless hero Dharmaraja worthy of his name had performed Rajasuya in a manner that was beyond his abilities. His charities too were more magnificent. By being scrupulously truthful and virtuous he had earned PUNYA more than what he could bear. There, the divine agency makes its interruption to cut it short in his own welfare. For such a fall of the virtuous hero of Dharmaraja's stature no other interpretation stands meaningful. The reader will be taken by surprise, to see such uncommon behaviour of the faithful vedic hero if he is unconscious of the divine scheme in which the characters and the incidents independently of the human reason move to a preordained end.
Though the divine agency mobilises everything, in a human 
drama, a balance of crime and punishment is inevitable. Dharmaraja 
though rendered helpless by the divine agency could not escape the 
punishment. That man is governed not only by his ownself but also 
by some supernatural power is established in the story of Yudhishtira. 
We see humanism in his deviation from the righteous path. We see the 
interference of the invisible divine agency in his struggles; and 
support of the Supreme Being in his victory. The later two are evol­
v·ved in the vedic world and the former from the revolutionary poetic 
art of the great epic bard.

**INDRA - ARJUNA**

Indra of Rigveda is Arjuna of Mahabharata. Indra is one of 
the highly praised gods in the Vedas. He appears in Mahabharata as 
Arjuna. He is as prominent in Mahabharata as Indra is in the Vedas. 
Though as a hero he does not kill any of the Kaurava brothers, the 
real culprits, his place is not less important in the epic as an equally 
important and unparallelly valiant hero Karna had to be fought by 
him. As has been already observed, in shaping his character Vedic 
influence seems to have eclipsed the historicity and we see the Vedic 
Indra in this character, more than the historic Arjuna. The impor­
tance of Indra is so much in the Vedic world that one fourth of the 
Rigveda is dedicated to praising him. Two hundred and fifty Suktaa 
of Rigveda go in praise of him. In Mahabharata his birth story is 
narrated with special importance. All the gods came down to earth, 
they sang, danced and showered honours on the infant. This 
pompous celebration and setting is not to be seen in the birth story of any 
of the other Pandavas. Going to Swarga with the corporal body, 
sharing the throne of Indra and returning to earth is an unique honour 
bestowed on this character.

Arjuna's rival Karna is not an evil soul like Duryodhana and 
Sakuni. He is the Sun-God of the Vedas. In the scheme of the 
Supreme Divinity one cannot understand how the course of one's life 
evolves. Such a bright and divine character as the Sun to stand in 
support of evil forces and to fight Krishna and Arjuna is inexplica­
ble. This paradoxical situation is being explained by the traditional

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45. Yaidika Sahitya Charitre Page 237 of Sri.N.S. Anantharangachar.
46. See later half of the Adhyaya 122 of Adi.
commentators taking shelter under the tenet of Rigveda "ैवरस्ता ईश्रमुदिलः" (He is enemy to those who are growing great). He has been made a tool in the divine scheme. Sri. Madhavacharya the famous Dwaita Philosopher says:

अधिकारिः कृत्तवीर्यं ते कृत्तवीर्यं नालात
कण्या निःश्रीमती ईश्रमुदिलः प्राच्यं धर्मं भ्रमणेतर

Bharatha Tatparya Nirmaya 2-47

"Here the principle of reducing the excesses is resorted to regarding the characters like Karna. Also the theory of two souls (one good and the other evil) working in one person is also there." Surya as Sugreeva in TRETAYUGA had done a great service in the mission of God to bring down the evil forces and earned 'PUNYA' beyond his abilities. So the YEDHAMANADWIT. God balances it here in Dwapara by putting him in the camp of the evil forces.

After the successful encounter with Siva, Arjuna was taken to Swarga. A pompous reception was given to him. He was given the honour of sharing the throne of India the Lord of the Paradise. Urvasi the celestial courtisan was specially ordered to entertain Arjuna. Second to none in beauty, Urvasi, all amorous to him arrived in his lodge. To her surprise she saw a different man in Arjuna. Passionately she invited him to share her bed. Her offer was rejected by him. He said that she was his mother and referred to her relations with Pururava in the past. She argued that it was a different world, and explained to him the amoral nature of the land. Her arguments are strong and convincing Arjuna's past history also says that he was not less amorous in such circumstances. Why then should Arjuna refuse? Here the reader misses the beauty of Bhagavan Vyasa's depth of the art, if he does not understand the delicate suggestion made therein. For a proper understanding one must have studied the story of Pururava described in the SAKVADA SUKTA of Rigveda. Urvasi the divine lady lived for four years with Pururava a King on the earth. She bore children to him also. One day she disappeared causing sorrow to the King. Pururava went in search of her. He found her bathing in a pond with other divine ladies. He spoke to her of the days when they were together. He explained to her how love sick he was. He requested her to come back. She could understand how ardently he was in love with her.
But she could not once again go to Mm. She advised him to realize his responsibility to fight the enemies (Yasukas). Merely for the sake of women one should not give up the duties and responsibilities said she. In the light of this Vedic episode to which "Arjuna makes a reference let us understand Arjuna's character.

The love of Urvasi might intoxicate him (Arjuna) to surrender himself to her for ever. Then it was Pururava; now it might be he! He is shouldering a great responsibility of winning a war against a mighty foe for which he is equipping himself with divine weapons. The very thought of love sick Pururava had taught him - what he should do now. The propriety of his refusal will be more meaningful in this background.

Indra is praised as the most valiant of the Gods in the Vedas. So is Arjuna portrayed in Mahabharata. Foes fear him much. He is the destroyer of the Asuras. Such statements are many in number in the Vedas. All these qualities are attributed to Arjuna in Mahabharata. Arjuna destroys; even in the human form, the invincible demons Kalakeya and Nivatakavacha.

There is an anecdote in Rigveda which says that Indra got back the cows stolen by Parishu. A similar incident is there in Arjuna's life in Mahabharata. When the Kaurevas took away the cows of Virata Arjuna got them back defeating the Kauravas. A mention is made of the close friendship of Vishnu and Indra. Particularly in war time they join together and win the war. When they are together they only win and never be won. All these remarks about Vishnu and Indra in the Vedas are true of their counterparts Krishna and Arjuna in Mahabharata.

VAYU - BHIMASENA

Vayu or Vata of the Vedas appears as Bhimasena in Mahabharata. Vedic Vayu bears a handsome personality. Bheema is also very handsome. This is portrayed in the episode of Hidimba. Hidimba does not even mind the death of her own brother in love with Bheema. She praises his handsomeness. In Purusha Sukta Vayu is said to have been born of the life of the Supreme Being.  Vedic symbolism is maintained in Bheema's Character. Vayu is
is the killer of the demons (Rakshasas). Bhima born of his life is also a killer of demons. He kills Baka, Kimmeera, Jata, Maniman and Keechaka. He is the killer of all the hundred Kaurava brothers - all ASURAS. Bhima going to PATALA and drinking the Kunda ashtakarasa and he going to Kubera's world and getting the Saugandhika flowers represent his counterpart's (Vayu's) counterpart in the Vedas.

DIVINE TWINS ASWINS: - Nakula and Sahadeva.

Divine twins Aswins of the Vedas appear as Nakula and Sahadeva in Mahabharata. Here also they are born twins. The vedas they are said to be youngest of the gods. In Mahabharata also they are the youngest of the Pandavas. They are praised for their handsome-ness in the Vedas. In Mahabharata also they are very handsome.

AGNI - DHRISTADYUMNA.

Another important Vedic God is Agni. He appears as Dhristadhyumna in Mahabharata. "Agni" is etymologically explained as one who stands in the forefront. So he is praised in the Vedas. He is called the Devamukha. Agni's prominence is described in several places in Mahabharata. In Anasasankika Parva the sacrifice done in Agni is vividly described. Only through Api the Devas receive the offerings in the sacrifice. The Mahabharata war is compared to a Great Yaga (Sacrifice). Being the Chief Commander of the Pandava Army his DEVA MUKHATA is maintained.

BRIHASPATI - DRONA.

Brahmamati the divine teacher in the Vedas appears as Drona in Mahabharata, again as a teacher. He is not only a teacher but also a great archer.

"With mantras he wins every one. The power of his bow can withstand anything. His arrows destroy the enemies. He releases the arrows all around (at a time). His arrows are born from his ears." The last line has two meanings. First meaning is while releasing the arrow from the bow it touches his ears. Second meaning is the arrows are divine and they are released with the mantras secretly taught in the ears. It means that he is a great archer and a great teacher.
of divine weapons. All these qualities are there in Drona in Mahabharata.

Other important Vedic Gods are Maruts. They appear as Drupada and Virata. The Maruts are said to bring victory to those who praise them. Some such part is played by them in Mahabharata.

Characters, episodes, ideals, and even the social images are imported from Vedas by softening the hard ideals and humanising the supernatural characters. In popularising the theological concept Bhagavan Vyasa succeeded through his new work which is to be rightly called the Fifth Veda.

4 - MECHANICS OF NARRATION:

Commentative style. The epic bard has his own way of narrating the story. First he narrates the story or the episode in brief. This brief narration kindles the interest of the audience. Then the audience who would like to hear the story in its full length makes a request to the narrator to present it in detail. Then the real detailed epic narration begins.

The author himself explains his method of narration in the early lines of the first chapter.

Neelakantha’s commentary is like this:

"महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत तत्त्वादित्य महाभारत
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SAVALKHYA is a work written with the backing of the commentary. Mahabharata is a work with many episodes in the shape of commentary. Neelakantha further says that Bhagavan Vyasa evolved this method of narration from the Vedas and gives the example as well. Even regarding the mechanics of narration Bhagavan Vyasa has much to do with the Vedic world.
For a man who does not know the Vedic tradition it looks odd to come across repetitions. First a "Sutra" is given; then a commentary on the sutra; after that a commentary to the commentary. The reader will be thorough with what is said there. Here in Mahabharata also the method that is applied in the philosophical discourses is implemented. So the story in brief is given at the outset, then the episodes to explain the main story. This is the step by step narration to make even the most common audience understand the epic of its spirit. Keeping in view a common man the epic poet tries to be as easily intelligible as possible. In this process we come across explanatory repetitions which in reality are not repetitions. PAKVANIKRMANIK lists out the hundred parvas and the 'Parvasangraha' presents the brief details of the contents in each parva. Then the detailed narration begins. Even while narrating the detailed story, before commencing a new episode, a brief account of the episode in one or two sentences will be stated and at the request of the audience the story in detail will be narrated. The audience, now, will have a clear memory of the contents of the big work.

As the Indian epic poet's aim is to instruct the audience, he does not much care for the art. He is unostentatious, simple, familiar and acceptable.

Either short statements or long passages of ethical content are the common repetitions. Sometimes the same idea is presented in a different expressions and sometimes the same expression is repeated.

In voicing these ethical sentiments the epic poet is not mindful of the place, person, or context. Both men and women, young and old, king and the servant and even animals and the birds - all speak of ethics and Dharma. Sakunthala enters the court hall of Dushyanta and with great eloquence and emotion teaches the King the lessons of truth and Dharma. Certainly a royal poet like Kalidas cannot afford to allow his heroine to enter a court hall. The idea of a lady being eloquent and reminding a king of Dharma right in the midst of the Royal Court is ghastly to him. But in Bhagavan Vyasa's Sakuntala we see more of Dharmic identity than the delicate feminine excellence. More than the propriety of time place and the character, epic poet's aim is at the all pervasive influence of the permanently valuable
thought - a message for all times to mankind. So, lines, passages and episodes are often repeated to enlighten the intellectually backward audience (in those days generally women, sudras and the fallen brahmins).

The epic being a mass medium of instruction, contains detailed descriptions of various branches of knowledge like Geology, astronomy, war science, political science etc. The epic poet accommodates all these detailed accounts which a literary artist cannot afford to. Thus the epic becomes encyclopaedic in its content. The text itself affirms this fact. Mammaya rightly assesses it in the following lines:

Systematised to the best possible extent the epic narration aims at enlightening the audience by successive stages. The audience is introduced into the world of the epic story in full awareness and under the least possible psychological disagreement. We do not come across suspense, flippancy, or taking the audience by surprise, in the epic narration.

The epic bard does not strain his audience with emotional ebbs and tides in the narration. In the tranquil flow he sets the vessel and in fair weather he unfurls the sails. The man on board

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49. ఉషణాస్తిలేదు కనే భావించి స్తంభం మనం
నా నాగ స్తంభం ద్వారా అందమైన జీత కుండలు
ఉషణాస్తిలేదు నీం వారాయా అందచే మహయుగానినా తెలుసు.

(ఎం. 1. 3)
does not come across violent winds or treacherous whirl pools. The vast clear blue sky the eternal sheet of water, land and heaven - the whole universe of its panormic beauty and meaning shows itself off to the man on board. Before the voyage is completed he finds himself metamorphosised and he is landed in a world of peace and satisfaction - a step up in the ladder to the eternal bliss. This is the contribution of the great epic poet Bhagavan Vyasa to our experience and for this we must go to him.