Chapter - I

Introduction

Ramayana and Mahabharata are the two immortal epics, which have provided substance for many a later compositions and even now they are read and praised. Among these two epics, Mahabharata is the most remarkable work in sanskrit literature. It is a unique epic and also one of the greatest repositories of Indian culture. This can be justified by the sloka mentioned in the epic itself. It is rightly said that whatever that is in India, it is there in the Mahabhara and whatever that is not in the Mahabhara is not in India too. The central story of this Great Epic presents a multitude of characters, including various types of women characters. This epic depicts the life of Indian woman in all its aspects.

The entire creation consists of the two species - male and female. The latter, termed commonly as the better half. As a daughter, wife and mother she has kept the universe going. The woman is the object of love and affection. She is the queen of the house, loving mother and ideal mistress. After marriage, couples lose their separate individuality and become one for which Ardhanariśvara form of Uma and Mahesvara is the

1. "यदिहासि तद्यासि यक्षहासि न तत् कषित्।" - Mbh.आदि.62.53
prime example. The credit of this non-dualistic thinking mainly goes to the women folk as they are the very embodiment of self-surrender, compassion, forgiveness, tender feelings, loving attitude and every thing that can be claimed pious and good.

The present thesis is an attempt to present a clear picture of various prominent women characters of Mahābhārata like Gāndhāri, Draupadi, Kunti etc. with reference to the aspects of education, social, political, economical conditions and marriage and family life of women etc. The female deities of the Mahābhārata are also dealt with. Since ancient times, the Indian woman is searching for her identity in the male dominated society. The epic includes the characters of Draupadi who reveals the most touching profile of Indian woman. Gāndhāri and Kunti as well as Devayāni, Sāvitri and Damayanti are the most inspring characters. Mahābhārata attains the sublime through such women characters. It is a pleasure to study such great women characters.

Women are worshipped in Indian society. Manu has rightly said,

यत्व नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता: ।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सवर्षाद्भ्यः क्रिया: ॥

- Manu.III.56

"God resides there where women are worshipped." They
are worshipped as mother, for which Vedas give prominent place. This epic has enshrined for us certain imperishable ideals of Indian womanhood. These women abode faith in Dharma and proved that there was a Dharma or the moral law ever present and ever active, which regulated the universe. Even in the hours of supreme crisis, they embraced the cause of virtue and righteousness. Gāndhāri could utter these ever memorable words to her son Duryodhana ("victory is there where there is righteousness.") The women preserved the unity of the family by their good behaviour, virtues, sincerity etc. They lead their life as an example for others.

The great epic Mahābhārata is an embodiment of such eminent characters, and records the popular religious traditions which have been the perennial source of various aspects of Hinduism. The Mahābhārata teaches the lesson of reality of life. Hence, it can be a guide to everyone for achieving success in all the stages of life. It is the most remarkable work in sanskrit literature next to the Samhitās. The teachings of this epic are useful not only for Indian people, but also for men and women of all the places at all the times.

**Meaning of Mahābhārata:**

Mahābhārata is reckoned as Itihasa, means 'History' which tends to be a record of facts about important individuals and
events. The expression such as "तत्र इतिहासं आचर्यते" (Nir.II.24) states a traditional account, shows that the word *Itiḥāsa* signifies the traditional lore. The word *Itiḥāsa* can be explained as *iti-ha-asa*, which means "This was so", "This happened so" or "This was the tradition."

The word *Itiḥāsa* occurs in the Atharva-veda², which mentions *purāṇa*, *gātha* and *nārāsāṃsi* along with *Itiḥāsa* as following *Mahāvaranāya*. The *Mahābhārata* is considered as *purātana itiḥāsa* or the history of ancient period and is as sacred as *Veda*.³

References to *Itiḥāsa* occurs in the Brhaddevata, which is later than *Yāska* and earlier than *Pāṇini* and ascribed to about the 5th century B.C. Brhaddevata, in fact contains in verse a large number of legends connected with the hymns of the *Rgveda*, and comprises the oldest and systematic collection of legends which we possess in sanskrit literature. It narrates for instance, the *itiḥāsa* of *Devāpi* and *Samtanu* already related by *Yāska*. At a later stage, this story appears as a part of wider tradition in the *Mahābhārata* where a third brother is mentioned.

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2. *Atharva Veda* XV, 6.10

3. इत्य श्रवयामुतमं चेतुं पुराणम्प्रतिविपत्तिः।
श्रवयामुतमं चेतुं पुराणम्प्रतिविपत्तिः। - *Mbh.आदि* 62.13
- the name of the father is different - and Šāmītanu has become Šāmītanu. It is probable that a part of the lost *Itihāsa - purāṇa* literature was incorporated in the Mahābhārata, the nucleus of which must be put in the early stages of classical Sanskrit literature.⁴

Mahābhārata is self-explanatory by its name. Bharata is acclaimed as the first emperor of Bhārata. The theme of this great epic is the fight between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas belonging to the dynasty of Bharata. That is why this book is called Mahābhārata.⁵

The great size of the volume and its contents have contributed much in getting the name Mahābhārata. It is rightly said ‘‘महत्त्वाद् भारवत्त्वाद् महाभारतमुव्यते।’’ (Mbh.आदि.1.274). Here two compound words Mahat and Bhārvat are used. Being a voluminous (Mahat) work and (Bhārvat) heavy to lift and carry, the great epic came to be called Mahābhārata. It is the longest literary work in the history of literature. Once the devas put the Mahābhārata in one pan of a balance and the vedas in the other pan. Then the devas were convinced that

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⁵ भरतानां महाजनम् महाभारतमुव्यते। - Mbh.आदि.62.39
the Mahābhārata weighed more than all the vedas put together.6

The Author of the Epic:

Bhagavān Vyāsa is believed to be the author of Mahābhārata. He was a contemporary of the Pāndavas and the Kauravas. Many of the events of the Mahābhārata were personally witnessed by Vyāsa. He took three years to write this book.7 The original name of Bhārata which Vyāsa composed was 'Jaya'. The first śloka of the Great Epic8 supports this statement.

Vyāsa was the son of Parāśara and Satyavati. He was born in the island of Yamuna river.9 He was called Dvaipāyana as

6. पुरा विष रुपे सर्वेऽ समेतच तुल्या धृतम् ।
   चतुर्थ्ये सर्वत्वे यो वेदद्वेयो ब्राह्मणो यदा ॥
   तदा प्रदुपि लोकेशस्मिन् महाभारतमुच्यते ।
   महत्वे च गुहते श्रीप्रभाण यतोड़विक्रमस् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.272-273

7. त्रिविवर्ध: साधृत्वायी कृष्णदेवपायस्य मूनि: ।
   महाभारतमाच्रायाने कृत्वदानिदबलम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.52
   त्रिविवर्धःथाकाम: कृष्णदेवपायस्य मूनि: । - Mbh.आदि.62.41

8. नारायण नमस्कृत्य नाना चैव सरस्वतीम् ।
   देवी सरस्वती ग्यास्त ततो जयमुद्रिवेत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.1

9. पुराणरेण संयुक्तो सययो गर्भ तुपावा सा ।
   जाले च यजुनानाथे परामाय स बीर्धवान् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.84
he was left in the island (Dvipa) of Yamuna river by Parāśara and Satyavati in his childhood. He told her to remember him whenever necessary and started his penance. He was called Vyāsa as he expanded the Vedas. The important themes of Vedas in the form of stories were narrated in the Mahābhārata. So it was very popularly known as the Panchama Veda. The disciples of Vyāsa, i.e. Sumantu, Jaimi, Paila, Suka and Vaiśampāyana gave this book great publicity.

The Himalayas were the land of penance for Maharshi Vyāsa. The Ashrama of Vyāsa at Badri was well established. Thousands of people visit frequently Badri today also for getting mental peace. Vyāsa was the principal Guru of this Ashrama, where the teaching of the Vedas and Vedic literature was imparted to his disciples. But the working place of Vyāsa, in general, can be said to be the whole of India.

10. एवं ब्रेमश्च जशे सत्यवत्तां परासरात् ।
   न्यातो श्रीपै स यद बालतत्साधु ब्रेमपात: स्मृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.86

11. स मातामनुषात्य तपस्यैव मनो द्वेश ।
   स्मृतोऽहं दैवविष्णुमि कृत्वेष्विति च सोऽस्रवीत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.85

12. ब्रह्मणो ब्रह्मणानां च तथानुग्रहकः ॥
   विव्यास ब्रेदान, यत्सात् स तत्सात् द्वित्र इति स्मृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.88

13. ब्रेदान्यायप्रमाणम् महाभारतप्रमाणः ॥
   सुमन्तं जैमिनि पैदं शुकु चैव स्वामजम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.89
Especially the Pāṇḍavas were impressed by the teachings of Vyāsa. Indian critics have paid great respects to Vyasa in the following words.

नमः सर्वविद्ये तस्मै व्यासाय कविवेधसे ।
चक्रे पूण्य सरस्वत्या यो वर्षभिव भारतम् ॥
अचतुर्वृद्धो ब्रह्म विवाहवपरे हरि: ।
अमाल्लोचन: शम्भुर्भगवान् बादरायण ॥14

Contents of Mahābhārata:

Mahābhārata is encyclopaedic in character. In this great epic, the poet Vyāsa has touched every subject which is present in the whole world.15 It contains a reference of all the four puruṣārthas namely Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. It is rightly said "Whatever is here, may be found elsewhere; what is not, cannot be found anywhere else."16 This Itiḥāsa contains the story as victory of Pāṇḍavas over Kauravas.17

The Mahābhārata has passed through three stages of

15. व्यासोचित्रं जगत्सर्वं । Cf. S.P.Gupta, K.S.Ramachandran, Mahābhārata: Myth and Reality, Agam Prakashan, Delhi, 1976, Page No. 4
16. धर्मं चार्यं च कामेच मोक्षेच च महत्मं ।
   यदिधाति तदन्यथा यथेहाति न तत् कथितः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.53
17. महाभारतमायां पाण्डवानं विवाहकरम् । - Mbh.आदि.59.6
evolution. This book is known by three names; viz. Jaya, Bhāratasamhitā and Mahābhārata.\(^{18}\)

There are three different opinions regarding the total number of ślokas in the Mahābhārata. The first one by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa who has composed only the very essence of Mahābhārata comprising 8,800 ślokas\(^{19}\) and that work was known as 'Jaya' as referred to in the first invocatory verse of the epic. The second by Vaiśampāyana, comprising of 24,000 verses is known as Bhāratasamhitā.\(^{20}\) The third (the present form) composed of a lakh of verses called the Mahābhārata was given to us by Sūta\(^{21}\). The epic which is now currently available with us contains a lakh of verse and it took perhaps centuries to get this transformation of the book from 'Jaya' to 'Mahābhārata'.

In Mahābhārata, the author Vyāsa has described not only

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18. जया नामति हरि द्वायं श्रोतव्यो विजिज्ञीयुष्ण || - Mbh.आदि.62.20
    चतुर्विश्विनिसहर्षः चक्रेभ भारतसंहिताम् || - Mbh.आदि.1.102
    उपास्यानीर्दिना ताबद्ध महात्म प्राच्यते बुधे: || - Mbh.आदि.1.103

19. अत्र श्लोकसहस्राणि अत्र श्लोकसहानि च ||
    अहं वेदिन्त शुकी वेत्ति सख्यो वेत्ति बा न या: || - Mbh.आदि.1.81

20. चतुर्विश्विनिसहर्षः चक्रेभ भारतसंहिताम् || - Mbh.आदि.1.102

21. एकं शतसहस्रं तु मानुषेषु प्रतिहितम्।
    नारदो आयमद्विद्वेय देवानासितो देवलः पितुन्। || - Mbh.आदि.1.107
the secret meaning of Vedas, but also upaniṣads which are the parts of Vedas.  Here, he described briefly itiḥāsa and purāṇa and also past, present and future. The old age, death, fear, disease and the roots of other elements are also explained here. The duties of the four varṇas namely Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra, and also the basis of purāṇa are described.

Mahābhārata contains over a lakh of verses. There is no subject on earth which is not dealt with in the Mahābhārata. None of the world’s epics is so big as Mahābhārata. In size the Mahābhārata is double that of Homer’s Illiad and Odyssey put together. The following śloka about it is worth mentioning now:

यथा समुद्रो भगवान, यथा मेल्ल्हंगिति: ।
उभो यथाती रत्निन्धी तथा भारतमुच्यते ॥

-Mbh.आदि.62.48

22. भ्राम्नं वेदरस्यं च यथात्वत् स्थायित मया ।
   साधौपिनिषदं वैव वेदानां विस्तारितः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.62

23. इतिहासपुराणानामेव निर्मितं च यत् ।
   मूलं भव्यं भविष्यं च ज्ञितं कालसंक्षिप्तः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.63

24. ज्ञामुम्यंस्वयाधिभाष्याभिविनिश्चयः ।
   ज्ञितं धर्मं स्वयं भ्रमणां च वक्षणम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.64

25. चातुर्वृण्यबोधानं च पुराणानं च कृत्यमां ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.65
Mahābhārata is a whole literature in itself containing a philosophy which has been an unfailing and perennial source of spiritual strength to the people.

The whole Mahābhārata is divided into eighteen books, each book being called a parva. The parvas are named so as to give a hint of their central theme. They are as follows:

1) Ādi Parva
2) Sabhā Parva
3) Vana Parva
4) Virāta Parva
5) Udyoga Parva
6) Bhiṣma Parva
7) Droṇa Parva
8) Karna Parva
9) Śalya Parva
10) Sauptika Parva
11) Strī Parva
12) Śānti Parva
13) Anuśāsana Parva
14) Āsvamedhika Parva
15) Āṣramavāsika Parva
16) Mausala Parva
17) Mahāpraṣṭhānika Parva
18) Svargārohaṇa Parva
The main theme of Mahābhārata seems to be the victory of righteousness (Dharma) over viciousness (Adharma) as declared in Gāndhārī’s blessings to her son "victory is there where there is righteousness" which is the universal advice for all men and women at all times. By the characters of great women in Mahābhārata, we can realise that righteousness (Dharma) could be reached in human beings. The English term Religion does not convey the full connotation of the samskrta word Dharma derived from the root Dhṛ meaning 'to hold together' or 'to preserve'.

Hindu Dharma is called sanātana dharma which means 'Eternal Religion'. The 'Ancient Law' is based on the Vedas. According to the author of the epic Vedavyāsa, Dharma is associated with sustenance. It is our sanātana dharma that teaches us to love our motherland and also our mother in the

26. यतो धर्मस्तत्ततो जयः।
28. वेदोऽस्थिते धर्ममूः स्मृतिशीते च तिद्वरम्।
   आचार्येव साधूसामात्मनस्तिहिरेव च || - Manu.II.6
29. धारणाद्वृत्तं इत्यात्: धर्मो धारण्यते प्रजा:।
   यत् स्माराणसंयुक्तं स धर्मं इति निर्मच्य: || - Mbh.Karna.69.58
same spirit and devotion. This is applicable to the entire world even in the present day circumstances. It is to be noted that the problems arising today are due to the absence of love and devotion as mentioned in our sanatana dharma. Mahābhārata suggests different types of dharma to men and also to women. After marriage, man follows Grhastha Dharma and women follow pātvratya. The men and women of Mahābhārata proved that Dharma protects all and also preserves all that is created.

Keeping in mind the domestic, social humanistic and spiritual functions of religion, the followers of Sanatana Dharma advised the people to stick to their proper duties by all means. They warned them not to leave dharma even during the pains of death. According to Manu smṛti Ačāra (good

30. आ यदृ वामीपर्यंत संत्रं ब्रह्मचर्य च समुचयः ॥
   व्याहिते बाहुपावे यतं महि रक्षाये ॥ - Rgveda.V.66.6
   जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नानाधर्मायं पृथिवी वर्नकसम् ॥
   सहस्रभारात्र द्विवर्णमै नुहां भूमे भ्रूवेन भेयुर्भुवसुर्भुली ॥ - Atharva Veda.XII.1.45

31. न जातु कामात्र भवाय जलात्-
   धर्म स्येद्रहीवित्स्यापि हेतुत: ॥
   नित्यो धर्म: सुखेद्रु: वनित्ये
   जीवो नित्यो हेतुद्वत्व वनित्य: ॥ - MBh.Svargārohaṇa.5.63
   नाहि कामात्र सार्वनाथ द्वेषायार्थ कारणात् ॥
   न हल्वादाद्हलाभाद् वा धर्म जायां क्रमबन ॥ - MBh.Udyoga.91.24
conduct) is the highest Dharma. According to Sanatana Dharma, women are worthy to be respected by not only her husband, but also by the other family members. They should respect and enrich her with ornaments. One should worship women to please the God. Because Gods abide in those homes where women are worshipped. Where they are not worshipped, all activities of such persons prove futile.

Date of Mahābhārata:

The kali varṣa starts from 3102 B.C. The great Mahābhārata war was fought at a period when the end of Dvāpara Yuga merged into the dawn of kali yuga. So, it can be said that the great war was fought round about 3102 B.C. Pādavas ruled the country for 36 years after the war. Vyāsa wrote this divine epic, after the death of the Pāndavas. Vyāsa took three years to complete this work. Therefore, it can be

32. आचार: श्रम: धृतुः: स्मार्त: एव च || - Manu.I.108
33. पितृभिभूतिशतः: पतिभिद्वैरत्थः ||
   पूज्या भूपितन्माश्च बाहुकल्पकमीप्रतिभः || - Manu.III.55
34. यद्य नार्यर्थु पूज्यन्ते राज्ये तत्र देवता: ||
   यवेतात्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वस्त्रापः: क्रिया: || - Manu.III.56
35. अन्तः चैव संप्राप्ते कल्याणविरोधूत्वः ||
   समन्तपादमः युः कुशाणविद्योतनस्योऽ || - Mbh.आदि.2.13
concluded that Vyāsa wrote the epic in 3100 B.C. The Pāṇḍavas commenced their Mahāprasthāna after entrusting the administration of the state into the hands of Parikṣit. This must have happened in 3102 B.C. Parikṣit ruled the country for 60 years and so his son Janamejaya became king in 3042 B.C. It was after two years of his becoming king he concluded that Vaisampāyana first expounded 'Jaya' (Mahābhārata) to the sages assembled there.36 Foreign chronologists argued that it was in the 10th century B.C. that the Mahābhārata battle took place.37 According to them, after the war between the kurus and the pāṇḍālas, it was a period of hero-worship and songs on the heroes of kurus and pāṇḍavas were sung and landed over from one generation to the other and gradually those songs took place in the form of the Mahābhārata.38 The Persian translation of the epic (Dās Mahābhārata) by Holtzmann in the medieval period was another contribution to the study of the Mahābhārata.39

37. Ibid page No. 123
38. Ibid
39. Cf. Tiwary (Diwakar), The concept of state in the Mahābhārata, Vidyanidhi Delhi, 1990, Page No. 1
Many scholars, who studied Mahābhārata belong to different schools. There is a school of thought which states that during the golden period of Buddhists Brāhma had a hold on Hinduism. Therefore, it can be said that the Mahābhārata was written during the 6th century B.C. Then there were 8,000 verses in the Mahābhārata.\textsuperscript{40} Towards the second stage of Mahābhārata, the epic grew into 24,000 ślokas. During this stage, the epic got a vaiṣṇavite colour and Śri Kṛṣṇa was adored as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Megasthenes who visited India in 300 B.C. records that the majority of Hindus were Vaiṣṇavites at that period. Therefore, a set of foreigners conclude that those portions of the Mahābhārata could have been written only after Buddha and after the attack on Bhārata by Greeks i.e. by 300 B.C.\textsuperscript{41}

The third stage of the epic, is its present form and it was at this stage that it included new philosophy in it. Manusmṛti became popular in the fifth century A.D. And therefore, the third stage of the Mahābhārata must have started before that, in the 3rd century A.D.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Vettam Maṇi - Purānic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasidass Private Limited Delhi - 1975, Page No.123

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid
Scholars, who studied this Great Epic belong to different schools i.e. the Theory of Analytical school, The Synthetic School and the Traditional School.43

1) The Theory of Analytical School:

Lassen,44 who belonged to this school, places its dates about 350 B.C. According to Hopkins,45 there was no epic at all. His approach to the study of the epic is known as atomistic approach. He considers the time of the epic as more advanced one. He fixed the time of the epic between 400 B.C. to 400 A.D.46 According to him, the Bhārata (kuru) was composed in 400 B.C. to 200 B.C.47 He views that the epic was in a developmental process, though it was a tale of Pāṇḍu heroes. During this period i.e. from 400 B.C. to 200 B.C., no instructive form of the epic had existed. He considers Kṛṣṇa as a demi-god. He further places the period of the epic between 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. In this stage, more matter was added to the Epic and Kṛṣṇa came to be known as all-god. Even the purāṇic material was incorporated into the epic.48

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43. Cf. Tiwary (Diwakar), The concept of state in the Mahābhārata, Vidyanidhi, Delhi, 1990, Page No. 31
44. Ibid
45. Ibid, Page No.32
46. Ibid, Page No.33
47. Ibid
48. Ibid
2) **The Synthetic Theory**:

According to Dahlmann who is the main exponent of this school, the epic is a unified work. The supporters of this school fixed the date of the epic not later than the 5th century B.C.

To reach a probable date of the epic, the account of war has been considered. The date of the epic, as suggested by Hopkins is acceptable on two grounds. It is quite balanced and it has been generally accepted by the scholars.

3) **The Traditional School**:

According to the traditional Indian view the Mahābhārata was composed just after the Great Battle by Vyāsa who was the father of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Pāṇḍu and Vidura by Niyogavidhi and had witnessed the war. Most of the views of scholars have based their calculations on the geneologies as given by the Purāṇas. According to these scholars, the date of the Bhārata battle ranges from 950 B.C. to 3137 B.C. So, the date of the composition, according to these traditional views, ranges from

49. Ibid, Page No.34

50. Ibid
950 B.C. to 3137 B.C.\textsuperscript{51}

**Foreign Tribes:**

The Mahābhārata contains many references to the foreign tribes in many contexts. The Hūnas are referred to as being defeated by Nakula in the western direction\textsuperscript{52} beyond the Indus river and again the epic shows them as having come to offer present to Yudhiṣṭhira.\textsuperscript{53} The epic refers to the Romans in the south.\textsuperscript{54} A large number of Roman coins and potteries belong to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D. have been found at Arika medu, two miles south of Pondichery. This is the oldest occurrence of the

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52. द्वाराधर्म च तरसा बसे चक्रे महाघुटि:।
रामधर्म हारहुणांश्र प्रतीच्याश्रेय ये नृप।॥
तान सर्बानु बसे चक्रे शासनादेव पण्डवः।
तत्रस्य: प्रेषणयासार वासुदेवाय भारत॥ - Mbh.समा.32.12-13

53. जातरमनवर्य च ददुरस्ये क्षापणः।
चीनाच्छाकारस्या चौक्रुया वर्धर्म, वनासिनः॥
वाण्णायान छांड्रौणांश्र कुण्णान हैमवतप्रत्यः।
भीपापन्नधिकतवान विविधान, द्वारवारितन॥ - Mbh.समा.51.23-24

54. आर्द्रो च पुरी रम्यं यवनानं पुरं तथा।
दूसरेऽव बसे चक्रे करं चैतानदायत॥ - Mbh.समा.31.72
name of the Romans in Indian literature. The Indian trade with Rome was in full swing since the beginning of the Christian era, and it continued up to the 5th century A.D. both through the land and sea routes. These evidences clearly show south India's close contact with the Romans at least from the 1st century B.C. to the 4th century A.D., and this, in our view, should be the probable date of the composition of the particular portion in the Sabha parva.

Mahabharata refers to the Rishikas and Tushāras which help us in fixing its date. The Rishika people were conquered by Arjuna beyond the Vakshu river which flowed through the Saka country. The process of Arjuna's victory in the north direction shows that the Rishikas resided in central Asia, as the former had defeated them in the north after defeating the Vālhikas, Kambojakas, Dardas, and the Lohas.

They resided in that region up to the 1st quarter of the 2nd

55. जर्जिकेलपानं वंश्यामुपमं बुध्वातििबध्यंकरं।
   तार्कायण्यंकाशिः परात्मकप्रमाण्ययोऽपि - Mbh.समा.27.26

56. तत: परमविक्रानान्तः वाव्हकान् पाकशालानि।
   महतेपरमेद्व वेदुः च ग्रामपत्रं ग्रामशाल्यन्तः।
   ग्रहीत्वा तु वेद्व सार्वो नानुनुण: पाण्डुरक्ष:।
   दद्धान्तः सह काम्यावेरज्ज्यत: पाकशालानि। - Mbh.समा.27.22-23
century B.C. Hence the date of that portion may be assigned to that period.

The Tushāras are mentioned as having offered presents to Yudhisthira. It is believed that the Tushāra-Rishikas ruled in India from the beginning of the Christian era to the second century A.D. Hence, the date of composition of the epic may be between the 2nd century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D. or even after that.

The Mahābhārata refers to the Pahlavas along with the Yavanas, Gandharvas and the Chinas; these again are grouped together with the Śaka and Yavanas, and are referred to as being defeated by Nakula in the western direction.

57. शाकार्तुप्पारः क्रवास्वर रोमशाः: शृण्णि नतः।
महाणांनां दूरमानां गणितानर्वौदाना हयानाः॥ - Mbh.मन्त्र.31.30


59. रत्नानि भूरिह्यादाय सम्प्रतये युधाभायः।
ततः तत्तमकुस्तित्वाभिः मस्क्यानन्त परमदानानाः॥
पाहानां वर्षरंश्चर फिरतामथ, युवनाव्यक्ताम।
ततो रत्नायुपादाय वहे कृत्यं च पार्थिवाम॥
न्यायस्व तुरुष्क्रेशो नकुलस्वतिरमार्गविन्त॥ - Mbh.समा.33.16-17
The Ābhiras are referred to as having settled on the banks of the Sarasvati river along with the Śudras in the Indus valley. This clearly indicates that they had settled in the Indus valley and might have lived in the 2nd century B.C.

**Numismatic References:**

The numismatic references also go a long way in fixing the date of the ancient works. In the Mahābhārata, king Rūtuparna had appointed Nala as his Āśvādhyaksha on a salary of “Satam Ṣatāh”. This may be supposed as his monthly pay: One hundred Ṣatamānas per month; Ṣaṭār means 100, and Ṣatāh means Ṣatamānas, so the annual salary would be 100 x 12 = 1,200 Ṣatamānas. These are 120000 Rattis of silver and when converted into the Kārshāpaṇas each of 32 Rttis, would be 3,750 silver Kārshāpaṇas coins.

The epic contains a very interesting information regarding the 'Prati' a coin-type. Nārada wants to know from Yudhishthira whether he distributed seed and food to his peasantry in

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60. शुद्वाबिर्गणस्वै च चाथित्य सतात्तमी ।
बर्त्यान्ति च च ते मन्त्राय च पर्वतवासिनः ॥ - Mbh.समा.32.10

61. स त्यात्तिष्ठ योंगं तं येन शीप्रां हया मम ।
भेयौरस्याय्य्योषि वेतनं ते शालं शरां ॥ - Mbh.चन.67.6
distress, and advanced agricultural relief-loans to them at the concessional rate of one Prati for each one hundred coins.\textsuperscript{62}

The existence of Prati coin by this particular name is seen from the 4\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century A.D.

The Mahābhārata refers to the Prākāraravaprakūṇḍalā\textsuperscript{63} which was put on in the ears. In Prākāraravaprakūṇḍalā the Vapra seems to be the spiral attached, and Prākara the cubical back portion of the Kuṇḍlas familiar to us in the scriptures of the Mauryan and the Suṅga periods and later as such this may be the date of the specific portion of the Mahābhārata.

The date of the Mahābhārata can be fixed on the basis of architectural details. Among these, Siśumārapurāṁ is very important. On the occasion of the Swayamvara of Draupadi, the Swayamvara mantapa built was known as Siśumārapurāṁ.\textsuperscript{64}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[62.] वासिन् भते बीजं च कर्षकत्वायासीदिति ।
प्रतीतं च शतं वृद्ध्या ददात्सृणममुनुष्ठित ॥ - Mbh.वन.5.79
\item[63.] अथापरोद्द्वत रूपसम्बं ।
श्रीमाणल्बार्यरो वृहत्युमान् ।
प्राकारे प्रतिम्युच्च कुण्डले
दीयं च कम्पूपिः हातके शुभे ॥ - Mbh.विषाण.11.1
\item[64.] उपोपिविषा मंगे घाटकाम: स्वयंबरम् ।
तत: पौरजनः सबं सागरोद्धतनिश्वनाः ॥ \(\Rightarrow\)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
which is the gateway of architecture of the city, railing and mandapa. This is seen on the Sāñchi gateway and this architectural gateway-motif continued up to the Kuśāna period, as the Mathurā art of this period furnishes many examples of this design. The term Siśumārapuram stands for the architrave of Torana carved with an allegator's head, built during the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D., which suggests that this may be the probable date of the respective portion of the Ādi parva in the Mahābhārata.65

There are many stanzas of the Manusmṛti, which are found in the epic. So, it is believed that there may be a parallelism between the Mahābhārata and the Manusmṛti. This indicates close relationship between the two works. The compliers of both the works were the Bhārgavas who transformed the Bhārata into the Mahābhārata and gave final shape to the present Manusmṛti. It seems that the common stanzas were added to both the works by common composers - the Bhārgavas,

who were versed in Niti and Dharma. Generally, it is believed that Manusmṛti was composed during the 2nd century B.C.66

Importance of the Mahābhārata:

Mahābhārata gains importance as it includes every aspect of human life. No epic stands in comparison with it. The importance of this Great Epic is self-explanatory in the sense that, even one lakh rupees were inadequate to meet the cost of expenses for the critical edition of the Mahābhārata. Hence, to prepare this epic, the final assistance was sought from abroad. Because, this epic contains traditionally one lakh verses (ślokas) which was more important than that of one lakh rupees.

Mahābhārata, which is a purātana itihasa or the history of the ancient period, is as sacred as the Veda.67 It is also considered as a Panchama Veda.68 With the knowledge of this sacred itihasa, one can attain mokṣa or eternal peace.69

66. Ibid. Pg.No. 47-48
67. इत्यः हि वेदेः: तत्नित्यं पवित्रमयि चोतमम्।
श्रव्याणामुःसं चेदं पुरावमूःसत्तुतम्। - Mbh.आदि.62.13
68. वेदान्तापायामास महाभारतमभावम्। - Mbh.आदि.63.89
69. अस्मिन्नर्थस्व धर्मस्व निश्चितमोपदिश्यते।
इतिहास महापुष्ये सुभ्रितः वर्त्त्रि च वर्त्त्रि। - Mbh.आदि.62.17
According to Vyāsa, Mahābhārata is a sacred Dharmasastra, a good Arthaśāstra and the best mokṣaśāstra. It is a bundle of śrutis in which importance of brāhmaṇas and cows is emphasised. It is said that by hearing the story of kṣatriya woman Vidula, a woman gets a son who is wise, virtuous and destroyer of evils.

The teachings of Gitā, Vishnusahasranama and Vidura niti are worthy to be understood by every Indian to succeed in their life. Among the four puruṣarthas, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa - Dharma is given prime importance over the rest. Throughout the epic, the author Maharshi Vyāsa has tried to assert the consequences of Dharma and Adharma. It affirms the time-honoured axiom: "Dharmo rakṣati rakṣitah" to those who feel doubtful about the efficiency of dhrama.

70. भर्मशास्त्रमिदं गुणयमर्षशास्त्रांमिद् परम् ॥
मोक्षशास्त्रमिदं प्रोक्तं व्यासोनामिनिसुखिना ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.23

71. ब्राह्मणां गवः चैव भारतम् यद्र कीर्तयते ॥
सर्वभूतिसम्मुःक्रयं श्रोतवयो भर्मणुद्विशिष्ठि: ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.35

72. विचार्युं तपस्वरुं दानवरुं तपस्विनम् ॥
प्रक्षा भ्रिष्या ददीयमान् राजचारादें च सम्पतां ॥
अर्जितप्रत्येक बलोपेति महाभागे महारथम् ॥
भृत्तितमलमवर्षूं जेताभरप्राजितम् ॥
विचाहारसाहूं गोमां भर्मचारियां ॥
ईदं स्त्रिया रूमे वीरं सत्यप्रवर्मम् ॥ - Udyoga.136.20-22