Chapter - 3

The Mahabharata A Postmodern Reading

The Mahabharata is a huge monument of the Indian Literature. It contains many passages and situations that are inexplicable and enigmatic. The text has a wider and larger scope in Indian Philosophy than its epic or ascribed grand narrative framework.

The centre of the epic is the rivalry for the throne of Hastinapura. Pandu, the second son of Santanu becomes the king because his elder brother, Dhritarastra, was born blind and was considered unfit to rule. However, he proceeds to reign after Pandu death. He had already proven that he is an able administrator during Pandu absence at times. The line of succession becomes a cause of disagreement in the family. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the pandava brothers is the heir-apparent but Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra also wanted to be the king. Gandhari, Duryodhana mother had a gambler brother named Sakuni living at the court. He inflames the jealousy in Duryodhana for the five Pandavas. The Kauravas try many ways to eliminate the Pandavas. Dhritarastra and Gandhari fail to control this family feud. Finally, the people of Hastinapura are inexorably forced to go into a war.

The Gita contains a discussion between Krishna and Arjuna at
the battlefield. Arjuna asks Krishna the justification and need for a war of such magnitude. Krishna who has sworn not to fight himself but steer Arjuna's chariot in the battle explains to him about his duty to fight.

One may read the epic as an excellent tale because it has all the elements of a good story telling. Yet it also includes the psychological dilemmas inherent in human life. The readers are left free to interpret the meaning of many episodes in the epic in their own way. Like a diamond that sparkles in the sun light, many passages and episodes in the epic give varied nuances of meaning when it is read repeatedly.

Postmodern reading of The Mahabharata is an attempt to examine the epic text in the light of a set of ideas in Postmodernism. The Mahabharata is primarily treated as a religious text with the status of a scripture in Hindu tradition. It portrays behaviours of the righteous and wicked in different social, political and religious life, and it contains numerous didactic passages. In short, the text is an authoritative Religious Literature in the Hindu tradition. In course of time, the text has gained all the attributes of a grand narrative in the Indian culture. It became a grand narrative about its practices and beliefs. Many useful discourses in the epic took deep roots in Indian cultural and social life. Power, Stability and order in social and
political organizations in the country are maintained by of this epic. It started to serve as a meta-theory or meta-ideology to explain socio-political ethics. Sometimes it is a story that explains the belief systems.

This made The Mahabharata a grand narrative over time, but it is a uni-dimensional reading. There are many conflicting and contradicting ideas found in the epic. Therefore, there is scope for Postmodern reading. A closer study of the epic shows that it denies all objective knowledge. What we often call knowledge of truth is knowledge about the glimpses of truth. The real knowledge of truth is intuitive and sublime. The Mahabharata encapsulates this idea in a supreme poetic language in The Gita. A Postmodern reading of The Mahabharata reveals that all attempts to confine or define truth within a particular cultural, social, or political context have no intellectual basis. A deconstruction of The Mahabharata as a Postmodern text enables the reader to reach the significant and the sublime that exists beyond the text.

The Mahabharata denounces all forms of grand narrative frames and the text is a critique of grand narratives. The Mahabharata recognizes that such narratives mask the contradictions and instabilities in social organizations. The urushetrawar shows that the attempts to create order creates an
equal amount of disorder, but a grand narrative conceals it by explaining that disorder is chaotic and bad and that order is rational and good. The Mahabharata makes no such attempt to create social or political order. Iravati Karve writes in *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch*:

All human effort is fruitless, all human life ends in frustration was The Mahabharata written to drive home this lesson? Human toil, expectations, hates, friendships-all seem puny and without substance, like withered leaves eddying in the summer wind. \(^1\)

Here an attempt is made to study the epic by topic rather than by reviewing the text in succession, asking a question in the form of, what does the epic mean here? The investigator’s primary concern is to establish the fact that a Postmodern reading of the epic is possible and a critical understanding of the text reveals that it can be read beyond the grand narrative framework.

It can be found that there are apparent contradictions at different levels in the text but the fact is that the Indian thought recognizes a subtle approach to such complex issues that cannot be solved by a uni-dimensional ideology. Even Western scholars have recognized this and this is precisely what Van Buitenen means when he writes;
The epic is a series of precisely stated problems imprecisely and therefore inconclusively resolved, every inconclusive solution raising a new problem, until the very end, when the question remains whose is heaven and whose is hell?"²

The Gita teaches that the notions of self, crime and other forms of attachments are products of situations or discourses meaningful only in their relative frames of reference. A notable feature of the Postmodernism in The Mahabharata is the use of a wide range of metaphors that cannot be separated from the institutions that produced them and there is a network of language games.

**Moral Dilemmas and Socio-political Ethics in The Mahabharata**

Postmodernism postulates that it is difficult to establish a universal ground of justice, truth or reason. Impersonal forces act and intersect through a function or a process. The question of the relation between the mythopoetic and moral in the context of The Mahabharata has to be explored in detail to find that the unresolvable situations and dilemmas prove that there is not a single ground of justice, truth or dharma in the epic. In The Mahabharata, there is a portrayal of bondage and transfiguration of it. There is a recognition that suffering continues without any end. The heroes are tough-minded who fear neither life nor death. In the end, victory for the Pandavas in the battle is futile and hollow. The
Postmodern reading of The Mahabharata is an attempt to interpret the social and political issues in the epic through an aestheticised view of the world. In other words, Postmodern aesthetics is the hard core of The Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is a story of extreme complexity. The characters are unforgettable and there is a cosmic context in which gods and men alike grapple with destiny. The obligations of kinship and friendship jostle with each other. There are predicaments at every turn. At times, these predicaments seem to be aggravated by social structure.

Philosophical tangles tied up with 遠 armaand 租 harma are interwoven within the mythopoetic material. The Mahabharata leaves the irresolvable in it to suggest that contradictions and instabilities are inherent in any social organization or practice.

It is not possible to assign any precise date for the composition of The Mahabharata but it is assumed a post-Budhistic work in its philosophical, ethical and didactic approach. The Mahabharata itself suggests that it passed through three recitations by three different people; Vyasa, Vaisampayana and Sauti Ugraasrava before it reached the present form. The three phases of the epic were those of 遠 aya 禪 he Bharata and The Mahabharata. Therefore, it is clear that the epic passed through at least three editions to reach its
present shape. The original event of The Mahabharata has been handed down in the form of lays and ballads and the versified traditions of the way sung by a group of people called utasand 閃 agathas. These songs did not have any fixed form because they were orally handed down from generation to generation. It was Vyasa who collected and edited them to make The Mahabharata the best ever epic in the History of Literature.

Much of the philosophical and moral teachings arose for the sake of defending the traditional religion and creed. But there were many things in the rahmanicalpractices which could not be justified. The Mahabharata takes up such issues for discussion. Therefore, The Mahabharata represents the element of rahminicalrenaissance provoked and stimulated by moral, social, political, as well as religious crisis in the history of India.

In the epic there is a picture of conflicting views about morality, spiritual entities etc. Some say that harmais rewarded after this life while some others deny it. A few others say that harmais permanent and there are others who hold the view that it is not. In addition to this, there are agnostics, hedonists and materialists. In the antiparvathe soul is said to be unnecessary and all life functions are explained as physical and physiological functions of the body. The Gita is very critical of the materialists and skeptics
alike. The editors of The Mahabharata modified the ritualism of the Sandhyās and traditional views of morality by incorporating the metaphysical theories of the Amkhyā and Edantatva to evolve a rational ethics in the epic. The Mahabharata favours neither asceticism nor materialism. It stands for self-control and Īśkamakarma which suggests that the human life is to be lived, and not to be renounced. At the same time, one should not attach oneself to material pleasures of the world. The Mahabharata discusses two parallel trends; the path of renunciation and the path of action. The epic suggests a life of action based on the insightful knowledge of Īśkamakarma’

In the Ausala Parvata, readers find that the Wapara yugas was over on the tenth day of the war, for the next thirty years Kali reigned the world. The Yadavas, the Vrishnis, Andhakas, Kukuras, and the others are invincible. Krishna realizes that the time has come to destroy his powerful clan. There were evil omens everywhere in the world. One day Viswamithra, Kanva and Narada arrive in the city to offer prayers at Pindarika. The Yadava princes decide to poke fun at the holy men. They dress Krishna son, Samba, in clothes of a fisher woman and take him to the holy men. They prostrate themselves before the sages. One man says to them,

This doe-eyed beauty has something to ask you, Brahmans!
She is too shy to ask herself and bids me to speak for her. She is Babhru’s wife. She is pregnant, and is anxious to have a son. Sages of vision, please tell her will she have a boy or girl? One of the rishis, realizing the farce, curses them, and he will give birth to an iron club, and that club will destroy the arrogant Yadava clan. Later Krishna himself is killed by the hunting arrow of Jara fixed with the metal from the Samba’s stomach.  

Krishna says in the Gita:

“Yada yada hi dharmasya
Glanir bhavathi bharata
Abhuthanam adharmasya
Tada tmanam srijamy aham
Parithranaya sadhunam
Vinasaya cha dhushkritham
Dharma samsthapanarthaya
Sambhavami yuge-yuge

(Whenever there is decline of Dharma and ascendance of Adharma, O scion of Bharata race! I manifest (incarnate) Myself in a body for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, and for the establishment of Dharma, I am born from age to age).

Does it confuse the readers to find Krishna, who is born to
establish righteousness, himself is killed in a mean and wicked manner? Krishna remains an elusive personality in the epic. He works, he thinks intensely, he advises others. He is never found regretting for his actions. He dances in joy, he kills in anger his own kinsmen as the readers are told in Mausalaparva, but he is not found mourning even after the terrible end of his clan. He meets with his end nonchalantly after making arrangements for the safety of old people, women and children of his clan. This is the path of the ishkamakarma The elusive nature of Krishna may be the reason for deifying him. It is difficult to anchor any universal ground of justice, truth or reason in many such situations in the epic. The Mahabharata seems to defy any firm rules to define a limit or purpose to it. There is no attempt to create a universal authoritative standard in The Mahabharata. Does The Mahabharata assert that there is no universal authoritative standard to judge all situations in life?

For example in the urushetrawar, Yudhisthira flies from the battlefield when Karna humiliates him. This makes Yudhisthira lose his temper with Arjuna and he insults Arjuna and even the andiva bow He has vowed that he will not spare anyone who spoke ill of andiva This puts him in a difficult situation, as he has to kill his elder brother for this mean act. Krishna, however, is able to save him from
the conflicting obligation. He tells the following story to prove his argument.

There was a hermit, Kausika by name. He had a vow of telling only the truth in life. One day he saw some bandits chasing travelers to rob and kill them. Kausika saw the travelers fleeing that way. The bandits approached the hermit and asked about the travelers. Kausika told the truth and the innocent travelers were killed. Krishna concludes the story telling that this hermit did not reach heaven because of his act of cruelty. The point is that he should have saved the life of travelers even by rejecting his vow of telling truth.⁵

The Mahabharata describes itself as a Ṛṣi harmasstra an arthasastra, a अम अम asstra and a ओक ससstra Now the question is, is it Ṛṣi harmato tell the truth? Will telling a lie in order to save a life be श्र dharma Similarly, is it श्र dharma to tell a lie in the battlefield to kill an enemy? Yudhisthira, for example, tells a lie to kill Dhronacharya. He knows that he is deceiving Dhrona and he justifies himself by saying that it means the death of an elephant called Asvatthama. Does it not suggest that justice cannot have an objective and universal existence for all times?

Duryodhana recounts the misdeeds of pandavas and Krishna in व adayudhaparva He says:
Wretch, son of a slave, was not your father, Vasudeva, Kamsa slave? You speak like a shameless wretch you asked Bhishma to aim his blow at my thigh. Do you think that I did not see you talking casually to Arjuna pointing at your thigh to indicate to Bhishma that he should strike me on the thighs, disregarding the laws of single combat? Until then, it was an equal battle. You have neither pity nor shame. Did you not cause the death of Bhishma through cunning? You advised Sikhandin to be placed in front when attacking Bhishma, knowing that the grandsire would scorn to fight a woman and would let himself be mortally wounded without resistance. You brought about the end of Dronacharya by making Dharmaputhra utter a falsehood. You were the father of that deadly lie that issued from Yudhisthira mouth and made Dhrona throw his bow away. Did you not look on without protest and rejoice when that wretch, Dhrstadyumna attacked and killed the charyawho had stopped fighting, throwing away his weapons and settling down in a yoga posture for meditation on the supreme? Was it not you who wickedly contrived to make karna hurl the fatal spear of Ghatotkacha instead of reserving it for Arjuna as he had all
along resolved to do? O great sinner, surely you asked Satyaki to kill Bhurisravas when his right arm had been deceptively cut off, stopped fighting, and spread his arrows for a seat for meditation. You killed Karna by inducing Arjuna to attack him in a cowardly manner when he was lifting his chariot wheel that had sunk and stuck in mud of the battlefield. O worthless man, sole cause of our destruction, the whole world has condemned your act when you made it look like sunset to make Jayadratha, the sindhu king, to believe that the day was over and he was safe, then you caused his death when he was off guard.”

It is no wonder that Yudhisthira is taken aback on seeing Duryodhana in heaven and he questions the justification of his ascent to his heavenly abode. Now there arises a question, Is there a standard dharma in the epic? When one starts defining it, it leads to many more logical paradoxes. It is an instance of infinite regression in the epic.

The secret of धर्म is hidden in the epic. The Mahabharata says;

‘dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam
Mahajano yena gathah sa panthah’

It means that the principles of धर्म are secretive and the
path noblemen take may be followed. Here 難 ahajonocould mean the majority of people or the good and wise men. The well-known statement of Markandeya to Yudhishthira also points to the nature of 租 harma and the subtle nature of it.

He says, 哲 ese balasyeti chared adharma”

The meaning of this could be interpreted in the following ways;
1. One should not resort to 疏 dharma thinking that one is strong.
2. Non-violence by the weak is not real dharma.
3. If one refrains from violence, though one is strong, his act can be considered as 租 harma

Bhismac statement regarding dharma in the gambling is another notable point. He says; whatever the strong man considers as dharma is taken to be dharma Here strength is not merely physical strength but intellectual strength. Another important problem about 租 harmais discussed when Yudhishthira stakes Draupadi in the game after he had staked himself and lost. Vidura and Draupadi argued that Yudhishthira had no right to stake her as he had lost his independence. Bhismas states in this context that the path of 租 harmais inscrutable, 租 harmasya gahana gatih He states further, 釘 alavanstu yatha dharmam loke pasyati purusah sa dharma dharmavelayam bhavatya bhiihitah pariah”

It means that the world approves the actions of the powerful as
It is found that Yudhisthira himself regrets about his passive stance on that occasion.

It suffices to say that despite the long attempts of philosophers and ideologists, the epic nucleus has never been discovered, and it is suggested that there are multiple oresto the epic. Search for the original epic nucleus is like the search for the virgin meaning of the text that never existed in a unified way even at the origin.

Conflicts in the Epic

The epic has conflicts at various levels. The conflicts discussed above highlight some of them. Apart from the above, there are conflicts between many ethical views. Primarily they fall into three categories such as conflict between Ritual and Moral Ethics, conflict between Ritual and Ascetic Ethics, and conflict between Moral and Ascetic Ethics.

Conflict between Ritual and Moral Ethics

Conflict between Ritual and Moral Ethics is central to the epic. Yudhishtira is a warrior and it is his duty to fight in a war, to be proud of his martial strength, to be a man of action, to be competitive and seek power. However, his insistence in giving priority to moral ethics, to va-dharma invokes criticism from his own family members. Numerous occasions in the epic indicate the
In 全 abha parvan Bhima wishes to take revenge on Kauravas for their insults, but Yudhisthira tolerates all provocation and accepts the terms of exile imposed upon them. While living in exile in the forest, Bhima and Draupadi urge Yudhisthira to take up arms against the humiliations and insults against them but he rejects their arguments and values, the moral qualities of tolerance and truthfulness over 遡 sathriya dharma. Similarly, the Gandharvas defeat Duryodhana and Karna. Bhima wants to take advantage of their enemies in the true spirit of a Kshathriya, but Yudhisthira shows compassion for them and he asks them to set them free.

In 謝 irataparva, Kichaka harasses Draupadi and she condemns Yudhisthira for his lack of Ksathriya valour when he asks them to be tolerant in that situation and then she says, 添 ou are right, O wise men, to call me an actress here. But it is only because my first husband is a gambler that my other husbands have to be cowards today.” Here again Bhima disagrees with his brother and wants to act as a true Ksathriya. This paradox is all the more evident in 評 dhyogaparvawhen Krishna, Satyaki and all other warriors urge the Pandavas to wage a war and win back their kingdom, Yudhishtira is unwilling to take arms, regarding war as immoral and causing only distress. He further denounces war as the fight of dogs over a piece
On many occasions in the epic, Yudhisthira refuses to accept the concept of duty as a warrior. In 全 antiparva for example, he is mortified by the death and sufferings caused by war, even when his brothers and wife argue that it is their swa-dharma. He says to Narada:

My lord, I am not destined to know happiness. What you say is true: by Krishna 瘡 grace and my brothers’ valour we have victory. But ah, Muni, victory at what price? How many we loved like life perished in this war. What does it matter who wins or loses such a war? The only truth is that we fought, and millions died. This is the end of the world, as we know it. The war was not fought based on 租 harma not by our enemies, and not by us.  

All these incidents illustrate the conflict between morality and 权 sathriyadharma The paradox becomes blatant in 羨 swamedhaparva Here Yudhishthira after performing the Aswamedha yajna, learns from Dharma deva that the selfless act of the Brahmin family in giving away their food to a starving beggar is far more virtuous than his ostentatious Yajna. Finally, Yudhishtira is confounded to see his rival Duryodhana being bestowed with heavenly abode in after-life for living the true life of a warrior. He voices his objections over this
apparent injustice. The epic here seems to explore the subtleties of the *ḥarma* The principles of *ḥarma* are subtle. The more it is discussed, the more complex it becomes. The epic denounces any attempt to resolve such issues with any simplistic dogmas.

All the above instances from different portions of the text expose the tensions between the ethics of Morality and Ritual action. The *Mahabharata* does not seem to give any definitive decision. It can mean that both aspects of the issues are equally valid. The text does not give any definitive judgments to overcome such conflicts.

**Conflict between Ritual and Ascetic Ethics**

The ritual practices are in conflict with the ascetic principles in many places in the epic. The ritualistic practices are carried out for prosperity and peace in this world and heavenly rewards in the life after death. The ascetic principles, on the other hand, consider rituals as the symptoms of ignorance of the true nature of self. The ascetic tradition holds that the ritual practices are worldly and they pertain to this world only, where as according to ascetic ethics this world is to be transcended. The question of violence is central to such ideological differences. The teachers of *ḥamkhya* and *oga* argued that many religious practices are based on the misunderstanding of the true meaning of the *edas*
The teachers of 全 amkhyacriticize many passages in 閃 okshadharma that deal with the performance of 慄 agna. In 全 antiparva there is a discussion between Jajali, a Yogi, and Tuladhara, a shopkeeper. Tuladhara argues that non-violence is central to 租 harma. Therefore, meat eating and animal husbandry must be given up. Jajali replies that animal husbandry provides food and animals for sacrifice. Jajali calls Tuladhara a 創 astika and says, 添 ata yajnah prabhavati nastikyam api jalpasi. In chapters 260 to 262 also there is a debate between Kapila and Syumarismi who had taken the form of a cow for sacrifice. Kapila condemns sacrifice of animals and the debate that follows focuses on whether ascetic life style is superior to ritual life style. In chapter 264, Narada tells the story of a 礦 rahmanacalled Satya who lives an austere life and performs 慄 agnas. Once a sage named Parnada takes the form of a deer and offers himself to be sacrificed at Satya 愍 慄 agna. He believes that he would be rewarded in heaven for the sacrifice. He gets ready for the sacrifice. At this point god of 租 harma appears and tells him that sacrifice without sacrifice of animals is superior to animal sacrifice.

In chapter 28 of 羨 wamedhikaparva Krishna recounts the conversation between a priest, Adhavaryu, and a yogi, Yati. Here Yati condemns the sacrifice of a goat in a 慄 agna as an act of violence.
The priest replies that the goat will not cease to exist and that it will be rewarded for being offered as a sacrificial animal. The ascetic rejects this argument pointing out the fact that the goat kith and kin does not want it to be sacrificed and that it is not done for the benefit of the goat. He asserts that non-violence is the highest form of harma and expostulates the philosophy of Samkhya.  

The rejection of violence in the epic stands in sharp contrast to the recourse to battle and agnaby two classes of people for power and wealth.

**Conflict between Moral and Ascetic Ethics**

The Moral Ethics is concerned with the welfare of the people in the world and Ascetic Ethics is concerned with renunciation of the worldly pleasures. There are many instances of conflict between these two ethics in the epic. In the debate after the battle, Yudhisthira denounces warfare and expresses his abject remorse of homicide in the battle but his brothers and Draupadi argue that there is no reason for regret because it was their duty as shatriya. The epic does not make any of the two arguments superior to the other. Warfare is righteous for a Kshatrya. Yudhishira repugnance for war is criticized on that ground. In Moksa-dharma, the sage urges his disciple to abandon even compassion, which is an essential feature of moral ethics, because it is an attachment to this
Arjuna's dilemma in the battlefield represents a moral stance. Krishna criticizes his stance based on the perspective of other ethical schools. Krishna argues that renouncing violence is contrary to Ksatrya-Dharma. Krishna's arguments are based on Samkhya Philosophy. According to Samkhya Philosophy, the self is beyond this world, and it must be indifferent to the bodily concerns. It must never lament for the suffering.\textsuperscript{16}

These types of ethical conflicts are significant for a Postmodern appreciation of the epic. In short, The Mahabharata does not establish a totality or stable social order. It is rather a critique of such belief systems. In other words, The Mahabharata is a critique of social and political grand narratives.

**Method of Story Telling as Anti-foundationalism in The Mahabharata**

The Mahabharata has a complex structure with a series of stories and narratives nested one within another. It opens with the first frame of the story in which there are two frames. The readers first come across the tale of a bard or story teller. He recounts what he heard of the story of The Mahabharata to the listeners in the forest. The heard the story from Vaisampayana. He, in turn, heard the story from his master Vyasa who is supposed to be
the author of the epic. Therefore, Vaisampayana story is the second frame of the story telling. He recites most of the story at the snake sacrifice of king Janamejaya. There are several stories narrated by sages, or i shis within the main story. The storytellers include Markandeya and Vrihadhaswa. These legends, folktales and popular stories illustrate a moral of theme. For example, great saints visit Yudhisthira in his exile. They narrate stories of ancient times and former kings. One of the beautiful stories narrated on such occasion, include the story of Nala and Damayanti. The other stories include the legend of Agastya who drained the ocean and the story of Parasurama who tried to exterminate the Ksatriyas from the earth. The story of Bhagiratha who brings the Ganges from the skies to the earth is another story. The story of Vishnu also finds a place in the epic framework. Story telling in The Mahabharata creates a situation of writing itself into the epic framework. It evokes a space outside the text or the epic is an open-ended text.

**Author as a Character in The Mahabharata**

The Mahabharata is supposed to have been composed by sage Vyasa. He played a part in the story and he is an eyewitness to many events in the story. King Janamejaya snake sacrifice was in progress. The King intended to sacrifice all snakes to avenge his father, King Parikshit who was killed by a snake. Sage Vyasa visited
this place and persuaded him to give up the idea of revenge. Then Janamejaya expressed his wish to hear the story of his ancestors. Vyasa deputed his disciple Vaisampayana to tell the story. Vyasa is supposed to be a hiranjivai immortal. The word Yasais a title, which means arranger. From the epic it is understood that his name was Krishna (the black) Dvaipayana( born in an island). Once Parashara arrived on the banks of Yamuna. He met a beautiful lady named Matsyaganhi. He was enamoured of her beauty. He made love to her. In return for this, he blessed her that she would be known as Satyavati and a son born of their love would become a magician. A son was born of this union. Soon after his birth, he became a full-grown man. He said to his mother that he would appear before her when she wanted by just thinking about him. He became the famous Veda Vyasa who composed The Mahabharata. Later he appears in many situations in the story. Here the storyteller himself is constituted through the narrative.

**The Structure of The Mahabharata as an Infinite Ideological Regression**

The epic presents different ideologies and there is an attempt to redefine traditional beliefs. The epic does not present any coherent system of thought but rather discusses all schools of thought and shows its limitations. There is the ascetic path of salvation called ivrtti which seeks absolute release. The second is
the path of 租 harmawhich deals with values of Vedic beliefs and many other rituals. The third is the path of 腺 haktithat deals with devotion to gods. These different beliefs and practices cause tensions and contradictions on many occasions in the epic. It is interesting to note that the epic does not try to establish any clear-cut answer. It is the strength of the epic that it accepts such apparent contradictions. The Mahabharata always involves a critique of philosophical 僧 irrortheories of truth in its anti-foundationalism. One can see the epic engaged in the same process through its re-examination of the epistemological grounds of realism and its linguistic forms. This is a way of perceiving the connections between Postmodern Theory and Literature and of approaching the complex issue of value. The experience of multiplicity is simply a consciousness of the diverse forms of the whole expressed in a metaphor of the epic.

NOTES

1 Iravati Karve, Yuganta: The End of an Epoch (Disha Books, Hyderabad, 1974)165.
3 Ramesh Menon, 滅 ausalaparva The Mahabharata-A Modern


5 Ramesh Menon, त्रैंस्पर्ष पर्व The Mahabharata-A Modern Rendering (New Delhi: Rupa.co 2004) 573-575.

6 Ramesh Menon, धैर्याद्युधपर्व 99-102.


8 Kuttikrishnamarar 194-198.

9 Kuttikrishnamarar 194-198.

10 Ramesh Menon, त्रैंस्थाप्त पर्व 133-137.

11 Ramesh Menon, श्यायोगपर्व 348-351.

12 Ramesh Menon, निम्नवस्मेद्धपर्व 598-602.

13 Ramesh Menon, निम्नवस्मेद्धपर्व 751-753.

14 Ramesh Menon, निम्नवस्मेद्धपर्व 598-602.


16 Nicholas Sutton 317-320.