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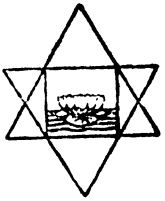

SRI AUROBINDO

VYASA AND VALMIKI

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NOTE

The Contents of this Volume are compiled from among the Draft Manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo. A chapter from the Author's *Foundations of Indian Culture* has been appended for its relevancy to the subject under discussion.

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Vyasa

I

NOTES ON THE MAHABHARATA

of Krishna Dwypaiana Vyasa prepared with a view to disengage the original epic of Krishna of the island from the enlargements, accretions and additions made by Vaishampaiana, Ugrasravas and innumerable other writers.

PROPOSITA:

An epic of the Mahabharata was written by Krishna of the island called Vyasa, in 24,000 *couplets or something more, less at any rate than* 27,000 *on the subject of the great civil war of the Bharatas and the establishment of the Dharmarajya or universal sovereignty in that house.*

This epic can be disengaged almost in its entirety from the present form of nearly 100,000 *slokas.*

VYASA: SOME CHARACTERISTICS

THE Mahabharata, although neither the greatest nor the richest masterpiece of the secular literature of India, is at the same time its most considerable and important body of poetry. Being so, it is the pivot on which the history of Sanskrit literature and incidentally the history of Aryan civilisation in India, must perforce turn. To the great discredit of European scholarship the problem of this all-important work is one that remains not only unsolved, but untouched. Yet until it is solved, until the confusion of its heterogeneous materials is reduced to some sort of order, the different layers of which it consists separated, classed and attributed to their relative dates, and its relations with the Ramayana on the one hand and the Puranic and classic literature on the other fully and patiently examined, the history of our civilisation must remain in the air, a field for pedantic wranglings and worthless conjectures. The world knows something of our origins because much labour has been bestowed on the Vedas, something of our decline because post-Buddhistic literature has been much read, annotated and discussed, but of our great medial and flourishing period it knows little, and that little is neither coherent nor reliable.

All that we know of the Mahabharata at present is that it is the work of several hands and of different

periods—this is literally the limit of the reliable knowledge European scholarship has so far been able to extract from it. For the rest we have to be content with arbitrary conjectures based upon an unwarrantable application of European analogies to Indian things or random assumptions snatched from a word here or a line there, but never proceeding from that weighty, careful and unbiassed study of the work, canto by canto, passage by passage, line by line, which can alone bring us to any valuable conclusions. A fancy was started in Germany that the Iliad of Homer is really a pastiche or clever rifacimento of old ballads put together in the time of Pisistratus. This truly barbarous imagination with its rude ignorance of the psychological bases of all great poetry has now fallen into some discredit; it has been replaced by a more plausible attempt to discover a nucleus in the poem, an Achilleid, out of which the larger Iliad has grown. Very possibly the whole discussion will finally end in the restoration of a single Homer with a single poem, subjected indeed to some inevitable interpolation and corruption, but mainly the work of one mind, a theory still held by more than one considerable scholar. In the meanwhile, however, haste has been made to apply the analogy to the Mahabharata; lynx-eyed theorists have discovered in the poem—apparently without taking the trouble to study it—an early and rude ballad epic worked up, doctored and defaced by those wicked Brahmins, who are made responsible for all the literary and other enormities

which have been discovered by the bushelful, and not by Europeans alone—in our literature and civilisation. A similar method of "arguing from Homer" is probably at the bottom of Professor Weber's assertion that the War Parvas contain the original epic. An observant eye at once perceives that the War Parvas are more hopelessly tangled than any that precede them except the first. It is here and here only that the keenest eye becomes confused and the most confident explorer begins to lose heart and self-reliance. Now whether the theory is true or not—and one sees nothing in its favour,—it has at present no value at all; for it is a pure theory without any justifying facts. It is not difficult to build these intellectual card-houses. Anyone may raise them by the dozen if he can find no better manner of wasting valuable time. But the Iliad is all battles and it therefore follows in the European mind that the original Mahabharata must have been all battles. Another method is that of ingenious, if forced, argument from stray slokas of the poem or equally stray and obscure remarks in Buddhist compilations. The curious theory of some scholars that the Pandavas were a later invention and that the original war was between the Kurus and Panchalas only and Professor Weber's singularly positive inference from a sloka[1] which does not

[1] अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्राणि अष्टौ श्लोकशतानि च।
अहं वेद्मि शुको वेत्ति संजयो वेत्ति वा न वा॥
(*The Mahābhārata*, Adiparva, I. 81. Chitrashala Edn. Poona.)

at first sight bear the meaning he puts on it, that the original epic contained only 8,800 verses, are ingenuities of this type. They are based on the Teutonic art of building a whole mammoth out of a single and often problematical bone and remind one strongly of Mr. Pickwick and the historic inscription which was so rudely, if in a Pickwickian sense, challenged by the refractory Mr. Blotton. All these theorisings are idle enough; they are made of too airy a stuff to last.

Yet to extricate the original epic from the mass of accretions is not, I believe, so difficult a task as it may at first appear. One is struck in perusing the Mahabharata by the presence of a mass of poetry which bears the style and impress of a single, strong and original, even unusual mind, differing in his manner of expression, tone of thought and stamp of personality not only from every other Sanskrit poet we know, but from every other great poet known to literature. When we look more closely into the distribution of this peculiar style of writing, we come to perceive certain very suggestive and helpful facts. We realise that this impress is only found in those parts of the poem which are necessary to the due conduct of the story; seldom to be detected in the more miraculous, Puranistic or trivial episodes, but usually broken up by passages and sometimes shot through with lines of a discernibly different inspiration. Equally noteworthy is it that nowhere does this part admit any trait, incident or speech which deviates from the strict propriety of dramatic characterisation and

psychological probability. Finally, in this body, Krishna's divinity is recognised but more often hinted at than aggressively stated. The tendency is to keep it in the background as a fact to which, while himself crediting it, the writer does not hope for a universal consent, still less is able to speak of it as a general tenet and matter of dogmatic belief; he prefers to show Krishna rather in his human character, acting always by wise, discerning and inspired methods, but still not transgressing the limit of human possibility. All this leads one to the conclusion that in the body of poetry I have described, we have the real Bharata, an epic which tells plainly and straightforwardly of the events which led to the great war and the empire of the Bharata princes. Certainly, if Professor Weber's venturesome assertion as to the length of the original Mahabharata be correct, this conclusion falls to the ground; for the mass of this poetry amounts to considerably over 20,000 slokas. Professor Weber's inference, however, is worth some discussion; for the length of the original epic is a very important element in the problem. If we accept it we must say farewell to all hopes of unravelling the tangle. His assertion is founded on a single and obscure verse in the huge prolegomena to the poem which takes up the greater part of the Adiparva, no very strong basis for so far-reaching an assumption. The sloka itself says no more than this that much of the Mahabharata was written in so difficult a style that Vyasa himself could remember only 8,800 of the slokas, Suka an equal

amount and Sanjaya perhaps as much, perhaps something less. There is certainly here no assertion such as Prof. Weber would have us find in it that the Mahabharata at any time amounted to no more than 8,800 slokas. Even if we assume what the text does not say that Vyasa, Suka and Sanjaya knew the same 8,800 slokas, we do not get to that conclusion. The point simply is that the style of the Mahabharata was too difficult for a single man to keep in memory more than a certain portion of it. This does not carry us very far. Following the genius of the Sanskrit language we are led to suppose the repetition was intended to relate *aṣṭa śloka sahasrāṇi* etc. with each name, otherwise the repetition has no *raison d'être* and it is otiose and inept. But if we understand it thus, the conclusion is irresistible that each knew a different 8,800. The writer would have no object in wishing us to repeat the number three times in our mind. If, however, we are to assume that this verse means more than meets the eye, that it is a cryptic way of stating the length of the original poem—and I do not deny that this is possible, perhaps even probable —we should note the repetition of *vetti—aham vedmi śuko vetti sanjayo vetti vā na vā.* The length of the epic as derived from this single sloka should then be 26,000 slokas or less, for the writer hesitates about the exact number to be attributed to Sanjaya. Another passage farther on in the prolegomena agrees remarkably with this conclusion and is in itself much more explicit. It is there stated plainly enough that Vyasa first wrote the

Mahabharata in 24,000 slokas and afterwards enlarged it to 100,000 for the world of man as well as a still more unconscionable number of verses for the Gandharva and other worlds.[1] In spite of the embroidery of fancy, of a type familiar enough to all who are acquainted with the Puranic method of recording facts, the meaning of this is unmistakable. The original Mahabharata consisted of 24,000 slokas; but in its final form it runs to 100,000. The figures are probably loose and slovenly, for at any rate the first form of the Mahabharata is considerably under 100,000 slokas. It is possible therefore that the original epic was something over 24,000 and under 26,400 slokas, in which case the two passages would agree well enough. But it would be unsafe to found any dogmatic assertion on isolated couplets; at the most we can say that we are justified in taking the estimate as a probable and workable hypothesis and if it is found to be corroborated by other facts, we may venture to suggest its correctness as a moral certainty.

This body of poetry then, let us suppose, is the original Mahabharata. Tradition attributes it to Krishna of the Island called Vyasa who certainly lived about this time and was an editor of the Vedas; and since there is nothing in this part of the poem which makes the tradition impossible and much which favours it, we may as a matter both of convenience and of possibility accept it at least provisionally. Whether these hypotheses can be upheld

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Adiparva, I. 102-107

is a question for long and scrupulous consideration and analysis. In this article I wish to formulate, assuming their validity, the larger features of poetical style, the manner of thought and creation and the personal note of Vyasa.

Vyasa is the most masculine of writers. When Coleridge spoke of the femineity of genius he had in mind certain features of temperament which, whether justly or not, are usually thought to count for more in the feminine mould than in the masculine, the love of ornament, emotionalism, mobile impressionability, the tyranny of imagination over the reason, excessive sensitiveness to form and outward beauty, tendency to be dominated imaginatively by violence and the show of strength; to be prodigal of oneself, not to husband the powers, to be for showing them off, to fail in self-restraint is also feminine. All these are natural properties of the quick artistic temperament prone to lose balance by throwing all itself outward and therefore seldom perfectly sane and strong in all its parts. So much did these elements form the basis of Coleridge's own temperament that he could not perhaps imagine a genius in which they are wanting. Yet Wordsworth, Goethe, Dante and Sophocles show however that the very highest genius can exist without them. But none of the great poets I have named is so singularly masculine, so deficient in femineity as Vyasa, none dominates so much by intellect and personality, yet satisfies so little the romantic imagination. Indeed no poet at all near the first rank has the same

granite mind in which impressions are received with difficulty but once received are ineffaceable, the same bare energy and strength without violence and the same absolute empire of inspired intellect over the more showy faculties. In his austere self-restraint and economy of power he is indifferent to ornament for its own sake, to the pleasures of poetry as distinguished from its ardours, to little graces and indulgences of style. The substance counts for everything and the form has to limit itself to its proper work of expressing with precision and power the substance. Even his most romantic pieces have a virgin coldness and loftiness in their beauty. To intellects fed on the elaborate pomp and imagery of Kalidasa's numbers and the somewhat gaudy, expensive and meretricious spirit of English poetry, Vyasa may seem bald and unattractive. To be fed on the verse of Spenser, Shelley, Keats, Byron and Tennyson is no good preparation for the severe classics. It is, indeed, I believe, the general impression of many "educated" young Indians that the Mahabharata is a mass of old wives' stories without a spark of poetry or imagination. But to those who have bathed even a little in the fountain-head of poetry, and can bear the keenness and purity of these mountain sources, the naked and unadorned poetry of Vyasa is as delightful as to bathe in a chill fountain in the heats of summer. They find that one has an unfailing source of tonic and refreshment to the soul; one comes into relation with a mind whose bare strong contact has the power of infusing strength, courage and endur-

ance. There are certain things which have this inborn power and are accordingly valued by those who have felt deeply its properties—the air of the mountains or the struggle of a capable mind with hardship and difficulty; the Vedanta philosophy, the ideal of the *niṣkāma dharma*, the poetry of Vyasa, three closely related entities, are intellectual forces that exercise a similar effect and attraction.

The style of this powerful writer is perhaps the one example in literature of strength in its purity, a strength undefaced by violence and excess, yet not weakened by flagging and negligence. It is less propped or helped out by any artifices and aids than any other poetic style. Vyasa takes little trouble with similes, metaphors, rhetotical turns, the usual paraphernalia of poetry, nor when he uses them, is he at pains to select such as will be new and curiously beautiful; they are there to define more clearly what he has in mind, and he makes just enough of them for that purpose, never striving to convert them into a separate grace or a decorative element. They have force and beauty in their context but cannot be turned into elegant excerpts; in themselves they are in fact little or nothing. When Bhima is spoken of as breathing hard like a weakling borne down by a load too heavy for him, there is nothing in the simile itself. It derives its force from its aptness to the heavy burden of unaccomplished revenge which the fierce spirit of the strong man was condemend to bear. We may say the same of his epithets, that great preoccupation of romantic artists; they are such as are most natural, crisp and firm,

but suited to the plain idea and only unusual when the business in hand requires an unusual thought, but never *recherché* or existing for their own beauty. Thus when he is describing the greatness of Krishna and hinting his claims to be considered as identical with the Godhead, he gives him the one epithet *aprameya*, immeasurable, which is strong and unusual enough to rise to the thought, but not to be a piece of literary decoration or a violence of expression. In brief, he religiously avoids overstress, his audacities of phrase are few, and they have a grace of restraint in their boldness. There is indeed a rushing vast Valmikian style which intervenes often in the Mahabharata, but it is evidently the work of a different hand, for it belongs to a less powerful intellect, duller poetic insight and coarser taste, which has yet caught something of the surge and cry of Valmiki's oceanic poetry. Vyasa in fact stands at the opposite pole from Valmiki. The poet of the Ramayana has a flexible and universal genius embracing the Titanic and the divine, the human and the gigantic at once or with an inspired ease of transition. But Vyasa is unmixed Olympian, he lives in a world of pure verse and diction, enjoying his own heaven of golden clearness. We have seen what are the main negative qualities of the style; pureness, strength, grandeur of intellect and personality are its positive virtues. It is the expression of a pregnant and forceful mind, in which the idea is sufficient to itself, conscious of its own intrinsic greatness; when this mind runs in the groove of narrative or emotion, the style

wears an air of high and pellucid ease in the midst of which its strenuous compactness and brevity moves and lives as a saving and strengthening spirit; but when it begins to think rapidly and profoundly, as often happens in the great speeches, it is apt to leave the hearer behind; sufficient to itself, thinking quickly, briefly and greatly, it does not care to pause on its own ideas or explain them at length, but speaks as it thinks, in a condensed often elliptical style, preferring to indicate rather than expatiate, often passing over the steps by which it should arrive at the idea and hastening to the idea itself; often it is subtle and multiplies many shades and ramifications of thought in a short compass. From this arises that frequent knottiness and excessive compression of logical sequence, that appearance of elliptical and sometimes obscure expression, which so struck the ancient critics in Vyasa and which they expressed in the legend that when dictating the Mahabharata to Ganesha—for it was Ganesha's stipulation that not for one moment should he be left without matter to write—the poet in order not to be outstripped by his divine scribe threw in frequently knotty and close-knit passages which forced the lightning swift hand to pause and labour slowly over the work.[1] To a strenuous mind these passages are, from the exercise they give to the intellect, an added charm, just as a mountain climber takes an especial delight in steep ascents which let him feel

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Adiparva, I. 78-83

his ability. Of one thing, however, we may be confident in reading Vyasa that the expression will always be just to the thought; he never palters with or labours to dress up the reality within him. For the rest we must evidently trace this peculiarity to the compact, steep and sometimes elliptical, but always strenuous diction of the Upanishads in which the mind of the poet was trained and his personality tempered. At the same time, like the Upanishads themselves or like the enigmatic Aeschylus, he can be perfectly clear, precise and full whenever he chooses; and he more often chooses than not. His expression of thought is usually strong and abrupt, his expression of fact and of emotion strong and precise. His verse has similar peculiarities. It is a golden and equable stream that sometimes whirls itself into eddies or dashes upon rocks, but it always runs in harmony with the thought. Vyasa has not Valmiki's movement as of the sea, the wide and unbroken surge with its infinite variety of waves, which enables him not only to find in the facile *anuṣṭup* metre a sufficient vehicle for his vast and ambitious work but to maintain it throughout without its palling or losing its capacity of adjustment to ever-varying moods and turns of narrative. But in his narrower limits and on the level of his lower flight Vyasa has great subtlety and fineness. Especially admirable is his use, in speeches, of broken effects such as would in less skilful hands have become veritable discords; and again in narrative of the simplest and barest metrical movements, as in the opening Sarga of the Sabhaparva, to

create certain calculated effects. But it would be idle to pretend for him any equality as a master of verse with Valmiki. When he has to rise from his levels to express powerful emotion, grandiose eloquence or swift and sweeping narrative, he cannot always effect it in the *anuṣṭup* metre; he falls back more often than not on the rolling magnificence of the *triṣṭup* (and its variations) which best sets and ennobles his strong-winged austerity.

Be its limits what one will, this is certain that there was never a style and verse of such bare, direct and resistless strength as this of Vyasa's or one that went so straight to the heart of all that is heroic in a man. Listen to the cry of insulted Draupadi to her husband:

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ किं शेषे भीमसेन यथा मृतः।
नामृतस्य हि पापीयान् भार्यामालभ्य जीवति ॥[1]

"Arise, arise, O Bhimsena, wherefore liest thou like one that is dead? For nought but dead is he whose wife a sinful hand has touched and lives."

Or the reproach of Krishna to Arjuna for his weak pity which opens the second Sarga of the Bhagavadgita. Or again hear Krishna's description of Bhima's rage and solitary brooding over revenge and his taunting accusations of cowardice:

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Virataparva, 17.15

"At other times, O Bhimasena, thou praisest war, thou art all for crushing Dhritarashtra's heartless sons who take delight in death; thou sleepest not at night, O conquering soldier, but wakest lying face downwards, and ever thou utterest dread speech of storm and wrath, breathing fire in the torment of thy own rage and thy mind is without rest like a smoking fire, yea, thou liest all apart breathing heavily like a weakling borne down distressed by his load, so that some who know not even think thee mad. For as an elephant tramples on uprooted trees and breaks them to fragments, so thou stormest along with labouring breath hurting earth with thy feet. Thou takest no delight in all these people but cursest them in thy heart, O Bhima, son of Pandu, nor in aught else hast thou any pleasure night or day; but thou sittest in secret like one weeping and sometimes of a sudden laughest aloud, yea, thou sittest for long with thy head between thy knees and thy eyes closed; and then again thou starest before thee frowning and clenching thy teeth, thy every action is one of wrath. 'Surely as the father Sun is seen in the East when luminously he ascendeth and surely as wide with rays he wheeleth down to his release in the West, so sure is this oath I utter and never shall be broken. With this club I will meet and slay this haughty Duryodhana', thus touching thy club thou swearest among thy brothers. And today thou thinkest of peace, O Warrior! Ah yes, I know the hearts of those that clamour for war alter very strangely when war showeth its face, since fear findeth out even thee,

O Bhima! Ah yes, son of Pritha, thou seest omens adverse both when thou sleepest and when thou wakest, therefore thou desirest peace. Ah yes, thou feelest no more the man in thyself, but an eunuch and thy heart sinketh with alarm, therefore art thou thus overcome. Thy heart quakes, thy mind fainteth, thou art seized with a trembling in thy thighs, therefore thou desirest peace. Verily, O son of Pritha, wavering and inconstant is the heart of a mortal man, like the pods of the silk-cotton driven by the swiftness of every wind. This shameful thought of thine, monstrous as a human voice in a dumb beast, makes the heart of Pandu's son to sink like (ship-wrecked) men that have no raft. Look on thine own deeds, O seed of Bharata, remember thy lofty birth! Arise, put off thy weakness; be firm, O heart of a hero; unworthy of thee is this langour; what he cannot win by the mightiness of him, that a Kshatriya will not touch."[1]

This passage I have quoted at some length because it is eminently characteristic of Vyasa's poetical method. Another poet would have felt himself justified by the nature of the speech in using some wild and whirling words seeking vividness by exaggeration, at the very least in raising his voice a little. Contrast with this the perfect temperance of this passage, the confident and unemotional reliance on the weight of what is said, not on the manner of saying it. The vividness of the portraiture

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Adiparva, 75. 4-23

arises from the quiet accuracy of vision and the care in the choice of simple but effective words, not from any seeking after the salient and graphic such as gives Kalidasa his wonderful power of description; and the bitterness of the taunts arises from the quiet and searching irony with which the shaft is tipped and not from any force used in driving them home. Yet every line goes straight as an arrow to its mark, every word is the utterance of a strong man speaking to a strong man and gives iron to the mind. Strength is one constant term of the Vyasic style; temperance, justness of taste is the other.

Strength and a fine austerity are then the two tests which give us safe guidance through the morass of the Mahabharata; where these two exist together, we may reasonably presume some touch of Vyasa; where they do not exist or do not conjoin, we feel at once the redactor or the interpolator. I have spoken of another poet whose more turbid and vehement style breaks continually into the pure gold of Vyasa's work. The whole temperament of this redacting poet, for he is something more than an interpolator, has its roots in Valmiki; but like most poets of a secondary and fallible genius he exaggerates, while adopting the more audacious and therefore the more perilous tendencies of his master. The love of the wonderful touched with the grotesque, the taste for the amorphous, a marked element in Valmiki's complex temperament, is with his follower something like a malady. He grows impatient with the apparent tameness of

Vyasa's inexorable self-restraint, and restlessly throws in here couplets, there whole paragraphs of a more flamboyant vigour. Occasionally this is done with real ability and success, but as a rule they are true purple patches, daubs of paint on the stainless dignity of marble. For his rage for the wonderful is not always accompanied by the prodigious sweep of imagination which in Valmiki successfully grasps and compels the most reluctant materials. The result is that puerilities and gross breaches of taste fall easily and hardily from his pen. Not one of these could we possibly imagine as consistent with the severe, self-possessed intellect of Vyasa. Fineness, justness, discrimination and propriety of taste are the very soul of the man.

Nowhere is his restrained and quiet art more visible than when he handles the miraculous. But since the Mahabharata is honeycombed with the work of inept wondermongers, we are driven for an undisturbed appreciation of it to works which are not parts of the original Mahabharata and are yet by the same hand, the Nala and the Savitri. These poems have all the peculiar qualities which we have decided to be very Vyasa: the style, the diction, the personality are identical and refer us back to him as clearly as the sunlight refers us back to the sun, and yet they have something which the Mahabharata has not. Here we have the very morning of Vyasa's genius, when he was young and ardent, perhaps still under the immediate influence of Valmiki (one of the most pathetic touches in the Nala is borrowed

straight out of the Ramayana), at any rate able, without ceasing to be finely restrained, to give some rein to his fancy. The Nala therefore has the delicate and unusual romantic grace of a young and severe classic who has permitted himself to go a-maying in the fields of romance. There is a remote charm of restraint in the midst of abandon, of vigilance in the play of fancy which is passing sweet and strange. The Savitri is a maturer and nobler work, perfect and restrained in detail, but it has still some glow of the same youth and grace over it. This then is the rare charm of these two poems that we find there the soul of the pale and marble Rishi, the philosopher, the great statesman, the strong and stern poet of war and empire, when it was yet in its radiant morning, far from the turmoil of courts and cities and the roar of the battlefield and had not yet scaled the mountain-tops of thought. Young, a Brahmacharin and a student, Vyasa dwelt with the green silences of earth, felt the fascination and loneliness of the forests of which his earlier poetry is full, and walked by many a clear and lucid river white with the thronging waterfowl, perhaps Payeshni, that ocean-seeking stream, or heard the thunder of multitudinous crickets in some lone tremendous forest, or with Valmiki's mighty stanzas in his mind, saw giant-haunted glooms, dells where faeries gathered, brakes where some Python from the underworld came out to bask or listened to the voices of Kinnaris on the mountain-tops. In such surroundings wonders might seem natural and deities as in Arcadia

might peep from under every tree. Nala's messengers to Damayanti are a troop of golden-winged swans that speak with a human voice; he is intercepted on his way by gods who make him their envoy to a mortal maiden; he receives from them gifts more than human, fire and water come to him at his bidding and flowers bloom in his hands; in his downfall the dice become birds who fly away with his remaining garment; when he wishes to cut in half the robe of Damayanti, a sword comes ready to his hand in the desolate cabin; he meets the Serpent-King in the ring of fire and is turned by him into the deformed charioteer, Bahuka; the tiger in the forest turns away from Damayanti without injuring her and the lustful hunter falls consumed by the power of offended chastity. The destruction of the caravan by wild elephants, the mighty driving of Nala, the counting of the leaves of the cleaving of the Vibhitaka tree; every incident almost is full of that sense of beauty and wonder which were awakened in Vyasa by his early surroundings. We ask whether this beautiful fairy-tale is the work of that stern and high poet with whom the actualities of life were everything and the flights of fancy counted for so little. Yet if we look carefully, we shall see in the Nala abundant proof of the severe touch of Vyasa, just as in his share of the Mahabharata fleeting touches of wonder and strangeness, gone as soon as glimpsed, evidence a love of the supernatural, severely bitted and reined in. Especially do we see the poet of the Mahabharata in the artistic vigilance which limits each super-

natural incident to a few light strokes, to the exact place and no other where it is wanted and the exact amount and no more than is necessary. (It is this sparing economy of touch almost unequalled in its beauty of just rejection, which makes the poem an epic instead of a fairy tale in verse.) There is, for instance, the incident of the swans; we all know to what prolixities of pathos and bathos vernacular poets like the Gujarati Premanand have enlarged this feature of the story. But Vyasa introduced it to give a certain touch of beauty and strangeness and that touch once imparted, the swans disappear from the scene; for his fine taste felt that to prolong the incident by one touch more would have been to lower the form and run the risk of raising a smile. Similarly in the Savitri what a tremendous figure a romantic poet would have made of Death, what a passionate struggle between the human being and the master of tears and partings! But Vyasa would have none of this; he had one object, to paint the power of a woman's silent love and he rejected everything which went beyond this or which would have been merely decorative. We cannot regret his choice. There have been plenty of poets who could have given us imaginative and passionate pictures of Love struggling with Death, but there has been only one who could give us a Savitri.

In another respect also the Nala helps us materially to appreciate Vyasa's genius. His dealings with Nature are a strong test of a poet's quality; but in the Mahabharata proper, of all epics the most pitilessly denuded

of unnecessary ornament, natural description is rare. We must therefore again turn for aid to the poems which preceded his hard and lofty maturity. Vyasa's natural description, as we find it there, corresponds to the nervous, masculine and hard-strung make of his intellect. His treatment is always puissant and direct without any single pervasive atmosphere except in sunlit landscapes, but always effectual, realizing the scene strongly or boldly by a few simple but sufficient words. There are some poets who are the children of Nature, whose imagination is made of her dews, whose blood thrills to her with the perfect impulse of spiritual kinship; Wordsworth is of these and Valmiki. Their voices in speaking of her unconsciously become rich and liquid and their words are touched with a subtle significance of thought or emotion. There are others who hold her with a strong sensuous grasp by virtue of a ripe, sometimes an over-ripe delight in beauty; such are Shakespeare, Keats, Kalidasa. Others again approach her with a fine or clear intellectual sense of charm as do some of the old classical poets. Hardly in the rank of poets are those who like Dryden or Pope use her, if at all, only to provide them with a smoother well-turned literary expression. Vyasa belongs to none of these, and yet often touches the first three at particular points without definitely coinciding with any. He takes the kingdom of Nature by violence. Approaching her from outside his masculine genius forces its way to her secret, insists and will take no denial. Accordingly he is impressed at first contact by the har-

mony in the midst of variety of her external features, absorbs these into strong retentive imagination, meditates on them and so reads his way to the closer impression, the inner sense behind that which is external, the personal temperament of a landscape. In his record of what he has seen, this impression more often than not comes first as that which abides and prevails; sometimes it is all he cares to record; but his tendency towards perfect faithfulness to the vision within leads him, when the scene is still fresh to his eye, to record the data through which the impression was reached. We have all experienced the way in which our observation of a scene, conscious or unconscious, forms itself out of various separate and often unco-ordinated impressions which, if we write a description at the time or soon after and are faithful to ourselves, find their way into the picture, even at the expense of symmetry; but if we allow a long time to elapse before we recall the scene, there returns to us only a single self-consistent impression which, without accurately rendering it, retains its essence and its atmosphere. Something of this sort occurs in our poet; for Vyasa is always faithful to himself. When he records the data of his impression, he does it with force and clearness, frequently with a luminous atmosphere around the object, especially with a delight in the naked beauty of the single clear word which at once communicates itself to the hearer. First come the strong and magical epithets or the brief and puissant touches by which the soul of the landscape is made visible and palpable,

then the enumeration sometimes only stately, at others bathed in a clear loveliness. The fine opening of the twelfth Sarga of the Nala is a signal example of this method. At the threshold we have the great and sombre line,

वनं प्रतिभयं शून्यं झिल्लिकागणनादितम्[1]

A void tremendous forest thundering
With crickets,

striking the keynote of gloom and loneliness, then the cold stately enumeration of the forest's animal and vegetable peoples, then again the strong and revealing epithet in his "echoing woodlands sound-pervaded"; then follows "river and lake and pool and many beasts and many birds" and once more the touch of wonder and weirdness:

सा बहून् भीमरूपांश्च पिशाचोरगराक्षसान् .... दृदशे[2]

She many alarming shapes
Of fiend and snake and giant...beheld,

making magical the bare following lines and especially the nearest,

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 64.1
[2] ibid, Vanaparva, 64.7

पल्वलानि तडागानि गिरिकूटानि सर्वशः[1]

And pools and tarns and summits everywhere,

with its poetical delight in the bare beauty of words. It is instructive to compare with this passage the wonderful silhouette of night in Valmiki's Book of the Child:

निष्पन्दास्तरवः सर्वे निलीना मृगपक्षिणः।
नैशेन तमसा व्याप्ता दिशश्च रघुनन्दन॥
शनैर्वियुज्यते सन्ध्या नभो नेत्रैरिवावृतम्।
नक्षत्रतारागहनं ज्योतिर्भिरिवभासते॥
उत्तिष्ठति च शीतांशुः शशी लोकतमोनुदः।
ह्लादयन् प्राणिनां लोके मनांसि प्रभया स्वया॥
नैशानि सर्वभूतानि विचरन्ति ततस्ततः।
यक्षराक्षससङ्घाश्च रौद्राश्च पिशिताशनाः॥[2]

"Motionless are all trees and shrouded the beasts and birds and the quarters filled, O joy of Raghu, with the glooms of night; slowly the sky parts with evening and grows full of eyes; dense with stars and constellations it glitters with points of light; and now yonder with cold beams rises up the moon and thrusts away the shadows from the world gladdening the hearts of living things on earth with its luminousness. All creatures of the night are walking to and fro and spirit-bands and troops of giants and the carrion-feeding jackals begin to roam."

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, 64.8
[2] *The Rāmāyaṇa*, Balakanda, 34. 15-18

Here every detail is carefully selected to produce a certain effect, the charm and weirdness of falling night in the forest; not a word is wasted; every epithet, every verb, every image is sought out and chosen so as to aid this effect, while the vowelisation is subtly managed and assonance and the composition of sounds skilfully yet unobtrusively woven so as to create a delicate, wary and listening movement, as of one walking in the forests by moonlight and afraid that the leaves may speak under his footing or his breath grow loud enough to be heard by himself or by beings whose presence he does not see but fears. Of such delicately imaginative art as this Vyasa was not capable, he could not sufficiently turn his strength into sweetness. Neither had he that rare, salient and effective architecture of style which makes Kalidasa's

तनुप्रकाशेन विचेयतारका प्रभातकल्पा शशिनेव शर्वरी।[1]

"Night on the verge of dawn with her faint gleaming moon and a few just decipherable stars."

Vyasa's art, as I have said, is singularly disinterested, *niṣkāma*; he does not write with a view to sublimity or with a view to beauty, but because he has certain ideas to impart, certain events to describe, certain characters to portray. He has an image of these in his mind and his business is to find an expression for it which will be scrupulously just to his conception. This is by no means

[1] *Raghuvaṁśa*, III. 2

so facile a task as the uninitiated might imagine; it is indeed considerably more difficult than to bathe the style in colour and grace and literary elegance, for it demands vigilant self-restraint, firm intellectual truthfulness and unsparing rejection, the three virtues most difficult to the gadding, inventive and self-indulgent spirit of man. The art of Vyasa is therefore a great, strenuous art; but it unfitted him, as a similar spirit unfitted the Greeks, to voice fully the outward beauty of Nature. For to delight infinitely in Nature one must be strongly possessed with the sense of colour and romantic beauty, and allow the fancy equal rights with the intellect.

For all his occasional strokes of fine Nature-description he was not therefore quite at home with her. Conscious of his weakness Vyasa as he emancipated himself from Valmiki's influence ceased to attempt a kind for which his genius was not the best fitted. He is far more in his element in the expression of the feelings, of the joy and sorrow that makes this life of men; his description of emotion far excels his description of things. When he says of Damayanti:

> ..... विललाप सुदुःखिता ।
> भर्तृशोकपरीताङ्गी शिलातलमथाश्रिता ॥[1]

> In grief she wailed,
> Erect upon a cliff, her body aching
> With sorrow for her husband,

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 64.12

the clear figure of the abandoned woman lamenting on the cliff seizes indeed the imagination, but it has a lesser inspiration than the single puissant and convincing epithet *bhartṛśokaparītāṅgī*, her whole body affected with grief for her husband. Damayanti's longer laments are also of the finest sweetness and strength; there is a rushing flow of stately and sorrowful verse, the wailing of a regal grief; then as some more exquisite pain, some more piercing gust of passion traverses the heart of the mourner, golden felicities of sorrow leap out on the imagination like lightning in their swift clear greatness.

हा वीर नल नामाहमिष्टा किल तवानघ।
अस्यामटव्यां घोरायां किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे ॥[1]

Still more strong, simple and perfect is the grief of Damayanti when she wakes to find herself alone in that desolate cabin. The restraint of phrase is perfect, the verse is clear, equable and unadorned, yet hardly has Valmiki himself written a truer utterance of emotion than this:

हा नाथ हा महाराज हा स्वामिन्किं जहासि माम्।
हा हतास्मि विनष्टास्मि भीतास्मि विजने वने ॥
नन्नु नाम महाराज धर्मज्ञः सत्यवागसि।
कथमुक्त्वा तथा सत्यं सुप्तामुत्सृज्य मां गतः ॥

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 64. 19

पर्याप्तः परिहासोऽयमेतावान्पुरुषर्षभ।
भीताहमतिदुर्दर्शा दर्शयात्मानमीश्वर॥
दृश्यसे दृश्यसे राजन्नेष दृष्टोसि नैषध।
आवार्य गुल्मैरात्मानं किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे॥
नृशंस बत राजेन्द्र यन्मामेवङ्गतामिह।
विलपन्तीं समागम्य नाश्वासयसि पार्थिव॥
न शोचाम्यहमात्मानं न चान्यदपि किञ्चन।
कथं नु भवितास्येक इति त्वां नृप रोदिमि॥
कथं नु राजंस्तृषितः क्षुधितः श्रमकर्षितः।
सायाह्ने वृक्षमूलेषु मामपश्यन्भविष्यसि॥[1]

"Ah my lord! Ah my king! Ah my husband! Why hast thou forsaken me? Alas, I am slain, I am undone, I am afraid in the lonely forest. Surely, O king, thou wert good and truthful, how then having sworn to me so, hast thou abandoned me in my sleep and fled? Long enough hast thou carried this jest of thine, O lion of men, I am frightened, O unconquerable; show thyself, my lord and prince. I see thee! I see thee! Thou art seen, O lord of the Nishadas, covering thyself there with the bushes; why dost thou not speak to me? Cruel king! that thou dost not come to me thus terrified here and wailing and comfort me! It is not for myself I grieve nor for aught else; it is for thee I weep thinking what will become of thee left all alone. How wilt thou fare under some tree at evening, hungry and thirsty and weary, not beholding me, O my king?"

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 63. 3-12

The whole of this passage with its first pang of terror and the exquisite anticlimax "I am slain, I am undone, I am afraid in the desert wood", passing quietly into sorrowful reproach, the despairing and pathetic attempt to delude herself by thinking the whole a practical jest, and the final outburst of that deep maternal love which is a part of every true woman's passion, is great in its truth and simplicity. Steep and unadorned is Vyasa's style, but at times it has far more power to move and to reach the heart than mere elaborate and ambitious poetry.

As Vyasa progressed in years, his personality developed towards intellectualism and his manner of expressing emotion became sensibly modified. In the Savitri he first reveals his power of imparting to the reader a sense of poignant but silent feeling, feeling in the air, unexpressed or rather expressed in action. Sometimes even in very silence; this power is a notable element in some of the great scenes of the Mahabharata: the silence of the Pandavas during the mishandling of Draupadi, the mighty silence of Krishna while the assembly of kings rages and roars around him and Shishupala again and again hurls forth on him his fury and contempt and the hearts of all men are troubled, the stern self-restraint of his brothers when Yudhishthira is smitten by Virata, are instances of the power I mean. In the Mahabharata proper we find few expressions of pure feeling, none at least which have the triumphant power of Damayanti's laments in the Nala. Vyasa had by this time taken his

bent; his heart and imagination had become filled with the pomp of thought and genius and the greatness of all things mighty and bold and regal; when therefore his characters feel powerful emotion, they are impelled to express it in the dialect of thought. We see the heart in their utterances but it is not the heart in its nakedness, it is not the heart of the common man; or rather it is the universal heart of man but robed in the intellectual purple. The note of Sanscrit poetry is always aristocratic; it has no answer to the democratic feeling or to the modern sentimental cult of the average man, but deals with exalted, large and aspiring natures whose pride it is that they do not act like common men (*prākṛto janaḥ*). They are the great spirits, the *mahājanaḥ*, in whose footsteps the world follows. Whatever sentimental objections may be urged against this high and arrogating spirit, it cannot be doubted that a literature pervaded with the soul of hero-worship and *noblesse oblige* and full of great examples is eminently fitted to elevate and strengthen a nation and prepare it for a great part in history. And with this high tendency of the literature there is no poet who is so deeply imbued as Vyasa. Even the least of his characters is an intellect and a personality, and of intellectual personality their every utterance reeks, as it were, and is full. I have already quoted the cry of Draupadi to Bhima; it is a supreme utterance of insulted feeling, and yet note how it expresses itself, in the language of intellect, in a thought:

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ किं शेषे भीमसेन यथा मृतः।
नामृतस्य हि पापीयान् भार्यामालभ्य जीवति॥ [1]

The whole personality of Draupadi breaks out in that cry, her chastity, her pride, her passionate and unforgiving temper, but it flashes out not in an expression of pure feeling, but in a fiery and pregnant apopthegm. It is this temperament, this dynamic force of intellectualism blended with heroic fire and a strong personality that gives its peculiar stamp to Vyasa's writing and distinguishes it from that of all other epic poets. The heroic and profoundly intellectual rational type of the Bharata races, the Kurus, Bhojas and Panchalas who created the Veda and the Vedanta, find in Vyasa their fitting poetical type and exponent, just as the mild and delicately moral temper of the more eastern Koshalas has realised itself in Valmiki and through the Ramayana so largely dominated Hindu character. Steeped in the heroic ideals of the Bharata, attuned to their profound and daring thought and temperament, Vyasa has made himself the poet of the high-minded Kshatriya caste, voices their resonant speech, breathes their aspiring and unconquerable spirit, mirrors their rich and varied life with a loving detail and moves through his subject with a swift yet measured movement like the march of an army towards battle.

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 15. 17

A comparison with Valmiki is instructive of the varying genius of these great masters. Both excel in epical rhetoric, if such a term as rhetoric can be applied to Vyasa's direct and severe style, but Vyasa's has the air of a more intellectual, reflective and experienced stage of poetical advance. The longer speeches in the Ramayana, those even which have most the appearance of set, argumentative oration, proceed straight from the heart, the thoughts, words, reasonings come welling up from the dominant emotion or conflicting feeling of the speaker; they palpitate and are alive with the vital force from which they have sprung. Though belonging to a more thoughtful, gentle and cultured civilisation than Homer's they have, like his, the large utterance which is not of primitive times, but of the primal emotions. Vyasa's have a powerful but austere force of intellectuality. In expressing character they firmly expose it rather than spring half-unconsciously from it; their bold and finely planned consistency with the original conception reveals rather the conscientious painstaking of an inspired but reflective artist than the more primary and impetuous creative impulse. In their management of emotion itself a similar difference becomes prominent. Valmiki, when giving utterance to a mood or passion simple or complex, surcharges every line, every phrase, turn of words or movement of verse with it; there are no lightning flashes but a great depth of emotion swelling steadily, inexhaustibly and increasingly in a wonder of sustained feeling, like a continually rising wave with low crests of foam.

Vyasa has a high level of style with a subdued emotion behind it occasionally breaking into poignant outbursts. It is by sudden beauties that he rises above himself and not only exalts, stirs and delights us at his ordinary level, but memorably seizes the heart and imagination. This is the natural result of the peculiarly disinterested art which never seeks out anything striking for its own sake, but admits it only when it arises uncalled from the occasion.

Vyasa is therefore less broadly human than Valmiki, he is at the same time a wider and more original thinker. His supreme intellect rises everywhere out of the mass of insipid or turbulent redaction and interpolation with bare and grandiose outlines. A wide searching mind, historian, statesman, orator, a deep and keen looker into ethics and conduct, a subtle and high-aiming politician, theologian and philosopher, it is not for nothing that Hindu imagination makes the name of Vyasa loom so large in the history of Aryan thought and attributes to him work so important and manifold. The wideness of the man's intellectual empire is evident throughout the work; we feel the presence of the great Rishi, the original thinker who has enlarged the boundaries of ethical and religious outlook.

Modern India since the Musulman advent has accepted the politics of Chanakya in preference to Vyasa's. Certainly there was little in politics concealed from that great and sinister spirit. Yet Vyasa perhaps knew its subtleties quite as well, but he had to ennoble and guide him a high

ethical aim and an august imperial idea. He did not, like European imperialism, unable to rise above the idea of power, accept the Jesuitic doctrine of any means to a good end, still less justify the goodness of the end by that profession of an utterly false disinterestedness which ends in the soothing belief that plunder, arson, outrage and massacre are committed for the good of the slaughtered nation. Vyasa's imperialism frankly accepts war and empire as the result of man's natural lust for power and dominion, but demands that empire should be won by noble and civilised methods, not in the spirit of the savage, and insists once it is won not on its powers, but on its duties. Valmiki too has included politics in his wide sweep; his picture of an ideal imperialism is sound and noble and the spirit of the Koshalan Ikshwakus that monarchy must be broad-based on the people's will and yet broader-based on justice, truth and good government, is admirably developed as an undertone of the poem. But it is an undertone only, not as in the Mahabharata its uppermost and weightiest drift. Valmiki's approach to politics is imaginative, poetic, made from outside. He is attracted to it by the unlimited curiosity of an universal mind and still more by the appreciation of a great creative artist; only therefore when it gives opportunities for a grandiose imagination or is mingled with the motives of conduct and acts on character. He is a poet who makes occasional use of public affairs as part of his wide human subject. The reverse may, with some appearance of truth, be said of Vyasa that he is interested in human action

and character mainly as they move and work in relation to a large political background.

From this difference in temper and mode of expression arises a difference in the mode also of portraying character. Vyasa's knowledge of character is not so intimate, emotional and sympathetic as Valmiki's; it has more of a heroic inspiration, less of a divine sympathy. He has reached it not like Valmiki immediately through the heart and imagination, but deliberately through intellect and experience, a deep criticism and reading of men; the spirit of shaping imagination has come afterwards like a sculptor using the materials labour has provided for him. It has not been a light leading him into the secret places of the heart. Nevertheless the characterisation, however reached, is admirable and firm. It is the fruit of a lifelong experience, the knowledge of a statesman who has had much to do with the ruling of men and has been himself a considerable part in some great revolution full of astonishing incidents and extraordinary characters. With that high experience his brain and his soul are full. It has cast his imagination into colossal proportions, provided him with majestic conceptions which can dispense with all but the simplest language for expression; for they are so great that the bare precise statement of what is said and done seems enough to make language epical. His character-drawing indeed is more epical, less psychological than Valmiki's. Truth of speech and action gives us the truth of nature and it is done with strong purposeful strokes that have the power to move

the heart and enlarge and ennoble the imagination which is what we mean by the epic in poetry. In Valmiki there are marvellous and revealing touches which show us the secret something in character usually beyond the expressive power either of speech and action; they are touches oftener found in the dramatic artist than the epic, and seldom fall within Vyasa's method. It is the difference between a strong and purposeful artistic synthesis and the beautiful, subtle and involute symmetry of an organic existence evolved and inevitable rather than shaped and purposed.

His deep preoccupation with the ethical issues of speech and action is very notable. His very subject is one of practical ethics, the establishment of a Dharmarajya, an empire of the just, by which is meant no millennium of the saints, but the practical ideal of government with righteousness, purity and unselfish toil for the common good as its saving principles. It is true that Valmiki is a more humanely moral spirit than Vyasa, in as much as ordinary morality is most effective when steeped in emotion, proceeding from the heart and acting through the heart. Vyasa's ethics like everything else in him takes a double stand on intellectual scrutiny and acceptance and on personal strength of character; his characters having once adopted by intellectual choice and in harmony with their temperaments a given line of conduct, throw the whole heroic force of their nature into its pursuit. He is therefore preeminently a poet of action. Krishna is his authority in all matters, religious and ethical, and it is

noticeable that Krishna lays far more stress on action and far less on quiescence than any other Hindu philosopher. Quiescence in God is with him as with others the ultimate goal of existence, but he insists that that quiescence must be reached through action and, so far as this life is concerned, must exist in action; quiescence of the soul from desires there must be but there should not be and cannot be quiescence of the Prakriti from action.

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति॥
नहि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः॥
नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः।
शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्धयेदकर्मणः॥[1]

"Not by refraining from actions can a man enjoy actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation does he reach his soul's perfection; but no man in the world can even for one moment remain without doing works; everyone is forced to do works, whether he wills or not, by the primal qualities born of Prakriti....Thou do action self-controlled (or else "thou do action ever"); for action is better than inaction; if thou actest not, even the maintenance of thy body cannot be effected."

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, Chap. III. 4, 5, 8

Hence it follows that merely to renounce action and flee from the world to a hermitage is but vanity, and that those who rely on such a desertion of duty for attaining God lean on a broken reed. Their professed renunciation of action is only a nominal renunciation, for they merely give up one set of actions to which they are called for another to which in a great number of cases they have no call or fitness. If they have that fitness, they may certainly attain God, but even then action is better than *sannyāsa*. Hence the great and pregnant paradox that in action is real actionlessness, while inaction is merely another form of action itself.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥[1]
संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ।
तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥[2]
ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति।
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात्प्रमुच्यते ॥[3]
कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।
स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥[4]

"He who quells his sense-organs of action but sits remembering in his heart the objects of sense, that man

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, III. 6
[2] ibid., V. 2
[3] ibid., V. 3
[4] ibid., IV. 18

of bewildered soul is termed a hypocrite." "Sannyasa (renunciation of works) and Yoga through action both lead to the highest good but of the two, Yoga through action is better than renunciation of action. Know him to be the perpetual Sannyasi who neither loathes nor longs, for he, O great-minded, being free from the dualities is easily released from the chain." "He who can see inaction in action and action in inaction, he is the wise among men, he does all actions with a soul in union with God."

From this lofty platform the great creed rises to its crowning ideas, for since we must act, but neither for any human or future results of action nor for the sake of the action itself, and yet action must have some goal to which it is devoted, there is no goal left but God. We must then devote our actions to God and through that rise to complete surrender of the personality to him, whether in the idea of him manifest through Yoga or the idea of him unmanifest through God-Knowledge. "They who worship Me as the imperishable, illimitable, unmanifest, controlling all the organs, one-minded to all things, they doing good to all creatures attain to Me. But far greater is their pain of endeavour whose hearts cleave to the Unmanifest, for hardly can the salvation in the unmanifest be attained by men that have a body. But they who reposing all actions in Me, to Me devoted contemplate and worship Me in single-minded Yoga, speedily do I become their saviour from the gulf of death

and the world, for their hearts, O Partha, have entered into Me. On Me repose thy mind, pour into Me thy reason, in Me wilt thou then have thy dwelling, doubt it not. Yet if thou canst not steadfastly repose thy mind in Me, desire, O Dhananjaya, to reach Me by Yoga through askesis. If that too thou canst not, devote thyself to actions for Me, since also by doing actions for My sake thou wilt attain to thy soul's perfection. If even for this thou art too feeble, then abiding in Yoga with Me with a soul subdued abandon utterly desire for the fruits of action. Far better than askesis is knowledge and better than knowledge is concentration and better than concentration is renunciation of the fruit of deeds, for on such renunciation followeth the soul's peace."[1] Such is the ladder which Vyasa has represented Krishna as building up to God with action for its firm and sole basis. If it is questioned whether the Bhagavadgita is the work of Vyasa (whether he be Krishna of the Island is another question to be settled on its own merits), I answer that there is nothing to disprove his authorship, while on the other hand, allowing for the exigencies of philosophical exposition, the style is undoubtedly his or so closely modelled on his as to defy differentiation. Moreover, the whole piece is but the philosophical justification and logical enlargement of the gospel of action preached by Krishna in the Mahabharata proper, the undoubted work of the poet. I have here no space for anything more than a

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, XII. 3-12

quotation. Sanjaya has come to the Pandavas from Dhritarashtra and dissuaded them from battle in a speech taught him by that wily and unwise monarch; it is skilfully aimed at the most subtle weakness of the human heart representing the abandonment of justice and their duty as a holy act of self-abnegation and its pursuit as no better than wholesale murder and parricide. It is better for the sons of Pandu to be dependents and beggars and exiles all their lives than to enjoy the earth by the slaughter of their brothers, kinsmen and spiritual guides. Contemplation is purer and nobler than action and worldly desires. Although answering firmly to the envoy, the children of Pandu are in their hearts shaken, for as Krishna afterwards tells Karna, when the destruction of a nation is at hand, wrong comes to men's eyes clothed in the garb of right. Sanjaya's argument is one Christ and Buddha would have endorsed; Christ and Buddha would have laboured to confirm the Pandavas in their scruples. On Krishna rests the final word and his answer is such as to shock seriously the conventional ideas of religious teachers to which Christianity and Buddhism have accustomed us. In a long and powerful speech he deals at great length with Sanjaya's arguments. We must remember therefore that he is debating a given point and speaking to men who have not like Arjuna the *adhikāra* to enter into the "highest of all mysteries". We shall then realise the close identity between his teaching here and that of the Gita.

अस्मिन् विधौ वर्तमाने यथावदुच्चावचा मतयो ब्राह्मणानाम् ॥५॥
कर्मणाऽऽहुः सिद्धिमेके परत्र हित्वा कर्म विद्यया सिद्धिमेके।
नाभुञ्जानो भक्ष्यभोज्यस्य तृप्येद्विद्वानपीह विहितं ब्राह्मणानाम् ॥६॥
या वै विद्याः साधयन्तीह कर्म तासां फलं विद्यते नेतरासाम्।
तत्रेह वै दृष्टफलं तु कर्म पीत्वोदकं शाम्यति तृष्णयाऽऽर्तः ॥७॥
सोऽयं विधिर्विहितः कर्मणैव संवर्तते सञ्जय तत्र कर्म।
तत्र योऽन्यत् कर्मणः साधु मन्येन्मोघं तस्यालपितं दुर्बलस्य ॥८॥
कर्मणाऽमी भान्ति देवाः परत्र कर्मणैव प्लवते मातरिश्वा।
अहोरात्रे विदधत् कर्मणैव अतन्द्रितो नित्यमुदेति सूर्यः ॥९॥
मासार्धमासानथ नक्षत्रयोगानतन्द्रितश्चन्द्रमाश्चाभ्युपैति।
अतन्द्रितो दहते जातवेदाः समिध्यमानः कर्म कुर्वन् प्रजाभ्यः ॥१०॥
अतन्दिता भारमिमं महान्तम् बिभर्ति देवी पृथिवी बलेन।
अतन्द्रिताः शीघ्रमपो वहन्ति सन्तर्पयन्त्यः सर्वभूतानि नद्यः ॥११॥
अतन्द्रितो वर्षति भूरितेजाः सन्नादयन्नन्तरिक्षं दिशश्च।
अतन्द्रितो ब्रह्मचर्यं चचार श्रेष्ठत्वमिच्छन् बलभिद्देवतानाम् ॥१२॥
हित्वा सुखं मनसश्च प्रियाणि तेन शक्रः कर्मणा श्रैष्ठ्यमाप।
सत्यं धर्मं पालयन्नप्रमत्तो ..... ॥१३॥[1]

[1] *The Mahābhārata*, Udyogaparva, 29.

"With regard to the matter at present under discussion the opinions of the Brahmanas differ.

One school say that it is by work that we obtain salvation and again another school say that it is by putting aside work, and through knowledge, that we attain to salvation. It has been so laid down by the superior beings that a man, even knowing all the properties of food, will not be satisfied without eating.

That knowledge alone bears fruit, which does work, not others. In this world the result of action admits of ocular proof; one oppressed by thirst is satisfied by drinking water.

Therefore it has been ordained by the creator that through work

The drift of Vyasa's ethical speculation has always a definite and recognisable tendency; there is a basis of customary morality and there is a higher ethic of the soul which abolishes in its crowning phase the terms of virtue and sin, because to the pure all things are pure through an august and selfless disinterestedness. This ethic takes its rise naturally from the crowning height of the Vedantic philosophy, where the soul becomes conscious of its identity with God who, whether acting or actionless, is untouched by either sin or virtue. But

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results, O Sanjaya, work. Therefore the opinion that anything other than work is good, is nothing but the uttering of a fool and of a weak man.

Elsewhere (i.e., in the other world) the gods are resplendent through work, the wind blows through work. Causing day and night, through work, the sleepless sun rises every day.

The sleepless moon, too, goes through half months and months and certain peculiar positions of the moon (through work) and the sleepless fire enkindled (by work) burns, doing good to the creatures of the Earth.

The goddess Earth, sleepless, carries this great load through her strength and the sleepless rivers carry their waters with speed, satisfying the desire of all beings.

The sleepless one of mighty strength (Indra) showers rain, resounding every corner and the cardinal points; and desiring kingship among the gods he practised the austerities of a Brahmacharya life, being sleepless.

Giving up pleasure and the satisfaction of his desires, the position of a chief was obtained by Shakra by means of work. He strictly observed truth, virtue."

The Mahābhārata (English Translation) Edited by Sri Manmatha Nath Dutt.

the crown of the Vedanta is only for the highest; the moral calamities that arise from the attempt of an unprepared soul to identify self with God is sufficiently indicated in the legend of Indra and Virochana. Similarly this higher ethic is for the prepared, the initiated only, because the raw and unprepared soul will seize on the non-distinction between sin and virtue without first compassing the godlike purity without which such non-distinction is neither morally admissible nor actually conceivable. From this arises the unwillingness of Hinduism, so ignorantly attributed by Europeans to priestcraft and the Brahmin, to shout out its message to the man in the street or declare its esoteric thought to the shoeblack and the kitchen-maid. The sword of knowledge is a double-edged weapon; in the hands of the hero it can save the world, but it must not be made a plaything for children. Krishna himself ordinarily insists on all men following the duties and rules of conduct to which they are born and to which the cast of their temperaments predestined them. Arjuna he advises, if incapable of rising to the higher moral altitudes, to fight in a just cause, because it is the duty of the caste, the class of souls to which he belongs. Throughout the Mahabharata he insists on this class-standpoint that every man must meet the duties to which his life calls him in a spirit of disinterestedness,—not, be it noticed, of self-abnegation, which may be as much a fanaticism and even a selfishness as the grossest egoism itself. It is because Arjuna has best fulfilled this ideal, has always

lived up to the practice of his class in a spirit of disinterestedness and self-mastery that Krishna loves him above all human beings and considers him and him alone fit to receive the higher initiation.

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥[1]

"This is the ancient Yoga which I tell thee today; because thou art My adorer and My heart's comrade; for this is the highest mystery of all."

And even the man who has risen to the heights of the initiation must cleave for the good of society to the pursuits and duties of his order, for, if he does not, the world which instinctively is swayed by the examples of its greatest will follow in his footsteps; the bonds of society will then crumble asunder and chaos come again; mankind will be baulked of its destiny. Sri Krishna illustrates this by his own example, the example of God in his manifest form.

"Looking also to the maintenance of order in the world thou shouldst act: for whatever the best practises, that other men practise; for the standard set by him is followed by the whole world. In all the Universe there is for Me no necessary action, for I have nothing I do not

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, IV, 3

possess or wish to possess, and I abide always doing. For if I so abide not at all doing action vigilantly, men would altogether follow in my path, O son of Pritha; these worlds would sink if I did not actions, and I should be the author of confusion (literally, illegitimacy, the worst and primal confusion, for it disorders the family which is the fundamental unit of society) and the destroyer of the peoples. What the ignorant do, O Bharata, with their minds enslaved to the work, that the wise man should do with a free mind to maintain the order of the world; the wise man should not upset the mind of the ignorant who are slaves of their deeds, but should apply himself to all works doing customary things with a mind in Yoga."[1]

It is accordingly not by airy didactic teaching so much as in the example of Krishna—and this is the true epic method—that Vyasa develops his higher ethic which is the morality of the liberated mind. But this is too wide a subject to be dealt with in the limits I have at my command. I have dwelt on Vyasa's ethical standpoint because it is of the utmost importance in the present day. Before the Bhagavadgita with its great epic commentary, the Mahabharata of Vyasa, had time deeply to influence the national mind, the heresy of Buddhism seized hold of it. Buddhism with its exaggerated emphasis on quiescence and the quiescent virtue of self-abnegation, its unwise creation of a separate class of

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, III. 20-26

quiescents and illuminati, its sharp distinction between monks and laymen implying the infinite inferiority of the latter, its all too facile admission of men to the higher life and its relegation of worldly action to the lowest importance possible stands at the opposite pole from the gospel of Sri Krishna and has had the very effect he deprecates; it has been the author of confusion and the destroyer of the peoples. As a result, under its influence half the nation moved in the direction of spiritual passivity and negation, the other by a natural reaction plunged deep into a splendid but enervating materialism. Our race lost three parts of its ancient heroic manhood, its grasp on the world, its magnificently ordered polity and its noble social fabric. It is by clinging to a few spars from the wreck that we have managed to perpetuate our existence and this we owe to the overthrow of Buddhism by Shankaracharya. But Hinduism has never been able to shake off the deep impress of the religion it vanquished; and therefore though it has managed to survive, it has not succeeded in recovering its old vitalising force. The practical disappearance of the Kshatriya caste (for those who now claim that origin seem to be, with a few exceptions, Vratya Kshatriyas, Kshatriyas who have fallen from the pure practice and complete temperament of their caste) has operated in the same direction. The Kshatriyas were the proper depositaries of the gospel of action; Sri Krishna himself declares:

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।
विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह् मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥
एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।[1]

"This imperishable Yoga I revealed to Vivaswan, Vivaswan declared it to Manu, Manu told it to Ikshwaku; thus did the royal sages learn this as a hereditary knowledge."

And when in the immense lapse of time it was lost, Sri Krishna again declared it to a Kshatriya. But when the Kshatriyas disappeared or became degraded, the Brahmins remained the sole interpreters of the Bhagavadgita, and, they, being the highest caste or temperament and their thoughts therefore naturally turned to knowledge and the final end of being, bearing moreover still the stamp of Buddhism in their minds, dwelt mainly on that in the Gita which deals with the element of quiescence. They have laid stress on the goal, but they have not echoed Sri Krishna's emphasis on the necessity of action as the one sure road to the goal. Time, however, in its revolution is turning back on itself and there are signs that if Hinduism is to last and we are not to plunge into the vortex of scientific atheism and the breakdown of moral ideals which is engulfing Europe, it must survive as the religion of Vyasa for which Vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga combined to lay the foundations, which Sri Krishna announced and which Vyasa formulated.

[1] *Bhagavadgita*, IV. 1, 2

But Vyasa has not only a high political and religious thought and deep-seeing ethical judgments, he deals not only with the massive aspects and world-wide issues of human conduct, but has a keen eye for the details of government and society, the ceremonies, forms and usages, the religious and social order on the due stability of which public welfare is grounded. The principles of good government and the motives and impulses that move men to public action, no less than the rise and fall of States and the clash of mighty personalities and great powers form, incidentally and epically treated, the staple of Vyasa's epic. The poem was therefore, first and foremost, like the Iliad and Aeneid and even more than the Iliad and Aeneid, national—a poem in which the religious, social and personal temperament and ideals of the Aryan nation have found a high expression and the institutions, actions and heroes in the most critical period of its history received the judgments and criticisms of one of its greatest and soundest minds. If this had not been so we should not have had the Mahabharata in its present form. Valmiki had also dealt with a great historical period in a yet more universal spirit and with finer richness of detail, but he approached it in a poetic and dramatic manner, he created rather than criticised; while Vyasa in his manner was the critic far more than the creator. Hence later poets found it easier and more congenial to introduce their criticisms of life and thought into the Mahabharata than into the Ramayana. Vyasa's poem has been increased to threefold its original size;

the additions to Valmiki, few in themselves if we set apart the Uttarakanda, have been immaterial and for the most part of an accidental nature.

Gifted with such poetical powers, limited by such intellectual and emotional characteristics, endowed with such grandeur of soul and severe purity of taste, what was the special work which Vyasa did for his country and in what, beyond the ordinary elements of poetical treatise, lies his claim to world-wide acceptance? It has been suggested already that the Mahabharata is the great national poem of India. It is true the Ramayana also represents an Aryan civilisation idealised: Rama and Sita are more intimately characteristic types of the Hindu temperament as it finally shaped itself than are Arjuna and Draupadi; Sri Krishna, though his character is founded in the national type, yet rises far above it. But although Valmiki, writing the poem of mankind, drew his chief figures in the Hindu model and Vyasa, writing a great national epic, lifted his divine hero above the basis of national character into an universal humanity, yet the original purpose of either poem remains intact. In the Ramayana under the disguise of an Aryan golden age, the wide world with all its elemental impulses and affections finds itself mirrored. The Mahabharata reflects rather a great Aryan civilisation with the types, ideas, aims and passions of a heroic and pregnant period in the history of a high-hearted and deep-thoughted nation. It has, moreover, as I have attempted to indicate, a formative ethical and religious spirit which is absolutely correc-

tive to the faults that have most marred in the past and mar to the present day the Hindu character and type of thought. And it provides us with this corrective not in the form of an alien civilisation difficult to assimilate and associated with other elements as dangerous to us as this is salutary, but in a great creative work of our own literature written by the mightiest of our sages (*muninām-apyaham vyāsaḥ*, Krishna has said), one therefore who speaks our own language, thinks our own thoughts and has the same national cast of mind, nature and conscience. His ideals will therefore be a corrective not only to our own faults but to the dangers of that attractive but unwholesome Asura civilisation which has invaded us, especially its morbid animalism and its neurotic tendency to abandon itself to its own desires.

But this does not say all. Vyasa too, beyond the essential universality of all great poets, has his peculiar appeal to humanity in general making his poem of world-wide as well as national importance. By comparing him once again with Valmiki we shall realize more precisely in what this appeal consists. The Titanic impulse was strong in Valmiki. The very dimensions of his poetical canvas, the audacity and occasional recklessness of his conceptions, the gust with which he fills in the gigantic outlines of his Ravana are the essence of Titanism; his genius was so universal and Protean that no single element of it can be said to predominate, yet this tendency towards the enormous enters perhaps as largely into it as any other. But to the temperament of Vyasa the Titanic was alien.

It is true he carves his figures so largely (for he was a sculptor in creation rather than a painter like Valmiki) that looked at separately they seem to have colossal stature, but he is always at pains so to harmonise them that they shall appear measurable to us and strongly human. They are largely and boldly human, oppressive and sublime, but never Titanic. He loves the earth and the heavens but he visits not Patala nor the stupendous regions of Vrishaparvan. His Rakshasas, supposing them to be his at all, are epic giants or matter-of-fact ogres, but they do not exhale the breath of midnight and terror like Valmiki's demons nor the spirit of world-shaking anarchy like Valmiki's giants. This poet could never have conceived Ravana. He had neither unconscious sympathy nor a sufficient force of abhorrence to inspire him. The passions of Duryodhana though presented with great force of antipathetic insight are human and limited. The Titanic was so foreign to Vyasa's habit of mind that he could not grasp it sufficiently either to love or hate. His humanism shuts to him the outermost gates of that sublime and menacing region; he has not the secret of the storm nor has his soul ridden upon the whirlwind. For his particular work this was a real advantage. Valmiki has drawn for us both the divine and anarchic in extraordinary proportions; an Akbar or a Napoleon might find his spiritual kindred in Rama or Ravana, but with more ordinary beings such figures impress the sense of the sublime principally and do not dwell with them as daily acquaintances. It was left for Vyasa to create epically

the human divine and the human anarchic so as to bring idealisms of the conflicting moral types into line with the daily emotions and imaginations of men. The sharp distinction between Deva and Asura is one of the three distinct and peculiar contributions to ethical thought which India has to offer. The legend of Indra and Virochana is one of its fundamental legends. Both of them came to Brihaspati to know from him of God; he told them to go home and look in the mirror. Virochana saw himself there and concluding that he was God, asked no farther; he gave full rein to the sense of individuality in himself which he mistook for the deity. But Indra was not satisfied; feeling that there must be some mistake he returned to Brihaspati and received from him the true God-Knowledge which taught him that he was God only because all things were God, since nothing existed but the One. If he was the one God, so was his enemy, the very feelings of separateness and enmity were not permanent reality but transient phenomena. The Asura therefore is he who is profoundly conscious of his own separate individuality and yet would impose it on the world as the sole individuality; he is thus blown along on the hurricane of his desires and ambitions until he stumbles and is broken, in the great phrase of Aeschylus, against the throne of Eternal Law. The Deva, on the contrary, stands firm in the luminous heaven of self-knowledge, his actions flow not inward towards himself but outwards toward the world. The distinction that Indra draws is not between altruism and egoism but between disinterestedness and

desire. The altruist is profoundly conscious of himself and he is really ministering to himself even in his altruism; hence the hot and sickly odour of sentimentalism and the taint of the Pharisee which clings about European altruism. With the perfect Hindu the feeling of self has been merged in the sense of the universe; he does his duty equally whether it happens to promote the interests of others or his own; if his action seems oftener altruistic than egoistic it is because our duty oftener coincides with the interests of others—than with our own. Rama's duty as a son calls him to sacrifice himself, to leave the empire of the world and become a beggar and a hermit; he does it cheerfully and unflinchingly; but when Sita is taken from him, it is his duty as a husband to rescue her from her ravisher and as a Kshatriya to put Ravana to death if he persists in his wrong-doing. This duty also he pursues with the same unflinching energy as the first. He does not shrink from the path of the right because it coincides with the path of self-interest. The Pandavas also go without a word into exile and poverty, because honour demands it of them; but their ordeal over, they will not, though ready to drive compromise to its utmost verge, consent to succumb utterly to Duryodhana, for it is their duty as Kshatriyas to protect the world from the reign of injustice, even though it is at their own expense that injustice seeks to reign. The Christian and Buddhistic doctrine of turning the other cheek to the smiter is as dangerous as it is impracticable. The continual European see-saw between Christ on the one side and

the flesh and the devil on the other, with the longer trend towards the latter comes straight from a radically false moral distinction and the lip profession of an ideal which mankind has never been either able or willing to carry into practice. The disinterested and desireless pursuit of duty is a gospel worthy of the strongest manhood; that of the cheek turned to the smiter is a gospel for cowards and weaklings. Babes and sucklings may practise it, because they must, but with others it is a hypocrisy.

The gospel of the *niṣkāma dharma* and the great poetical creations which exemplify and set it off by contrast, this is the second aspect of Vyasa's genius which will yet make him interesting and important to the whole world.

II

THE PROBLEM OF THE MAHABHARATA

(1)

The Political Story

IT was hinted in a recent article of the *Indian Review*, an unusually able and searching paper on the date of the Mahabharata war, that a society is about to be formed for discovering the genuine and original portions of our great epic. This is glad tidings to all admirers of Sanscrit literature and to all lovers of their country. For the solution of the Mahabharata problem is essential to many things, to any history worth having of Aryan civilisation and literature, to a proper appreciation of Vyasa's poetical genius and, far more important than either, to a definite understanding of the great ethical gospel which Sri Krishna came down on earth to teach as a guide to mankind in the dark Kali Yuga then approaching. But I fear that if the inquiry is to be pursued on the lines the writer of this article seemed to hint, if the Society is to rake out 8000 lines from the War Parvas and dub the result the Mahabharata of Vyasa, then the last state of the problem will be worse than its first. It is only by a patient scrutiny and weighing of the whole poem, disinterestedly, candidly and without preconceived

notions, a consideration canto by canto, paragraph by paragraph, couplet by couplet, that we can arrive at anything solid or permanent. But this implies a vast and heart-breaking labour. Certainly, labour however vast ought not to have any terrors for a scholar, still less for a Hindu scholar; yet, before one engages in it, one requires to be assured that the game is worth the candle. For that assurance there are three necessary requisites, the possession of certain sound and always applicable tests to detect later from earlier work, a reasonable chance that such tests if applied will restore the real epic roughly if not exactly in its original form and an assurance that the epic when recovered will repay from literary, historical or other points of view the labour that has been bestowed on it. I believe that these three requisites are present in this case and shall attempt to adduce a few reasons for my belief. I shall try to show that besides other internal evidence on which I do not propose just now to enter, there are certain traits of poetical style, personality and thought which belong to the original work and are possessed by no other writer. I shall also try to show that these traits may be used as a safe guide through the huge morass of verse. In passing I shall have occasion to make clear certain claims the epic thus disengaged will possess to the highest literary, historical and practical value.

It is certainly not creditable to European scholarship that after so many decades of Sanscrit research, the problem of the Mahabharata which should really be

the pivot for all the rest has remained practically untouched. For it is no exaggeration to say that European scholarship has shed no light whatever on the Mahabharata beyond the bare fact that it is the work of more than one hand. All else it has advanced, and fortunately it has advanced little, has been rash, arbitrary or prejudiced; theories, theories and always theories without any honestly industrious consideration of the problem. The earliest method adopted was to argue from European analogies, a method pregnant of error and delusion. If we consider the hypothesis of a rude ballad-epic doctored by "those Brahmins"—anyone who is curious on the matter may study with both profit and amusement Fraser's *History of Indian Literature*—we shall perceive how this method has been worked. A fancy was started in Germany...as a moral certainty.

But it is not from European scholars that we must expect a solution of the Mahabharata problem. They have no qualifications for the task except a power of indefatigable research and collocation; and in dealing with the Mahabharata even this power seems to have deserted them. It is from Hindu scholarship renovated and instructed by contact with European that the attempt must come. Indian scholars have shown a power of detachment and disinterestedness and a willingness to give up cherished notions under pressure of evidence which are not common in Europe. They are not, as a rule, prone to the Teutonic sin of forming a theory in accordance with their prejudices and then finding facts or

manufacturing inferences to support it. When, therefore, they form a theory on their own account, it has usually some clear justification and sometimes an overwhelming array of facts and solid arguments behind it. The German scholarship possesses infinite capacity of acuteness, labour, marred by an impossible and fantastic imagination, the French of inference marred by insufficient command of facts, while in soundness of judgment Indian sane scholarship has both. It should stand first, for it must naturally move with a far greater familiarity and grasp in the sphere of Sanscrit studies than any foreign mind however able and industrious. But above all it must clearly have one advantage, an intimate feeling of the language, a sensitiveness to shades of style and expression and an instinctive feeling of what is or is not possible, which the European cannot hope to possess unless he sacrifices his sense of racial superiority and lives in some great centre like Benares as a Pundit among Pundits. I admit that even among Indians this advantage must vary with the amount of education and natural fineness of taste; but where other things are equal, they must possess it in an immeasurably greater degree than an European of similar information and critical power. For to the European Sanscrit words are no more than dead counters which he can play with and throw as he likes into places the most unnatural or combinations the most monstrous; to the Hindu they are living things the very soul of whose temperament he understands and whose possibilities he can judge to a hair. That with these advantages Indian

scholars have not been able to form themselves into a great and independent school of learning is due to two causes, the miserable scantiness of the mastery in Sanscrit provided by our universities, crippling to all but born scholars, and their lack of a sturdy independence which makes us over-ready to defer to European authority. These, however, are difficulties easily surmountable.

In solving the Mahabharata problem this intimate feeling for language is of primary importance; for style and poetical personality must be not indeed the only but the ultimate test of the genuineness of any given passage in the poem. If we rely upon any other internal evidence, we shall find ourselves irresistibly tempted to form a theory and square facts to it. The late Rai Bahadur Bankim Chandra Chatterji, a genius of whom modern India has not produced the parallel, was a man of ripe scholarship, literary powers of the very first order and a strong critical sagacity. In his Life of Krishna (*Kṛṣṇacaritra*) he deals incidentally with the Mahabharata problem, he perceived clearly enough that there were different recognizable styles in the poem and he divided it into three layers, the original epic by a very great poet, a redaction of the original epic by a poet not quite so great and a mass of additions by very inferior hands. But being concerned with the Mahabharata only so far as it covered the Life of Krishna, he did not follow up this line of scrutiny and relied rather on internal evidence of a quite different kind. He saw that in certain parts of the poem Krishna's godhead is either not pre-

supposed at all or only slightly affirmed, while in others it is the main objective of the writer; certain parts again give us a plain, unvarnished and straightforward biography and history, others are a mass of wonders and legends, often irrelevant extravagances; in some parts also the conception of the chief characters is radically departed from and defaced. He therefore took these differences as his standard and accepted only those parts as genuine which gave a plain and consistent account of Krishna the man and of others in their relation to him. Though his conclusions are to a great extent justifiable, his *a priori* method led him to exaggerate them, to enforce them too rigidly without the proper flexibility and scrupulous hesitation and to resort occasionally to special pleading. His book is illuminating and full of insight, and the chief contentions will, I believe, stand permanently; but some parts of his argument are exaggerated and misleading and others, which are in the main correct, are yet insufficiently supported by reasoning. It is the failure to refer everything to the ultimate test of style that is responsible for these imperfections. Undoubtedly inconsistencies of detail and treatment are of immense importance. If we find gross inconsistencies of character, if a man is represented in one place as stainlessly just, unselfish and truthful and in another as a base and selfish liar or a brave man suddenly becomes guilty of incomprehensible cowardice, we are justified in supposing two hands at work; otherwise we must either adduce very strong poetic and psychological justification for the

lapse or else suppose that the poet was incompetent to create or portray consistent and living characters. But if we find that one set of passages belongs to the distinct and unmistakable style of a poet who has shown himself capable of portraying great epic types, we shall be logically debarred from the saving clause. And if the other set of passages shows not only a separate style, but quite another spirit and the stamp of another personality, our assurance will be made doubly sure. Further, if there are serious inconsistencies of fact, if for instance Krishna says in one place that he can only do his best as a man and can use no divine power in human affairs, and in another foolishly uses his divine power where it is quite uncalled for, or if a considerable hero is killed three or four times over, yet always pops up again with really commendable vitality without warning or explanation until some considerate person gives him his *coup-de-grâce*, or if totally incompatible statements are made about the same person or the same event, we may find in either or all of these inconsistencies sufficient ground to assume diversity of authorship. Still even here we must ultimately refer to the style as corroborative evidence; and when the inconsistencies are grave enough to raise suspicion, but not so totally incompatible as to be conclusive, difference of style will at once turn the suspicion into certainty, while similarity may induce us to suspend judgment. And where there is no inconsistency of fact or conception and yet the difference in expression and treatment is marked, the question of style and personality becomes all-important.

Now in the Mahabharata we are struck at first by the presence of two glaringly distinct and incompatible styles. There is a mass of writing in which the verse and language is unusually bare, simple and great, full of firm and knotted thinking and a high and heroic personality, the imagination strong and pure, never florid or richly coloured, the ideas austere, original and noble. There is another body of work sometimes massed together but far oftener interspersed in the other, which has exactly opposite qualities, it is Ramayanistic, rushing in movement, full and even overabundant in diction, flowing but not strict in thought, the imagination bold and vast, but often garish and highly-coloured, the ideas ingenious and poetical, sometimes of astonishing subtlety, but at others common and trailing, the personality much more relaxed, much less heroic, noble and severe. When we look closer we find that the Ramayanistic part may possibly be separated into two parts, one of which has less inspiration and is more deeply imbued with the letter of the Ramayana, but less with its spirit. The first portion again has a certain element often in close contact with it which differs from it in a weaker inspiration, in being a body without the informing spirit of high poetry. It attempts to follow its manner and spirit but fails and reads therefore like imitation of a great poet. We have to ask ourselves whether this is the work of an imitator or of the original poet in his uninspired moments. Are there besides the mass of inferior or obviously interpolated work which can be easily swept aside, three distinct

recognisable styles or four or only two? In the ultimate decision of this question inconsistencies of detail and treatment will be of great consequence. But in the meantime I find nothing to prevent me from considering the work of the first poet, undoubtedly the greatest of the four, if four there are, as the original epic.

It may indeed be objected that style is no safe test, for it is one which depends upon the personal preferences and ability of the critic. In an English literary periodical it was recently observed that a certain Oxford professor who had studied Stevenson like a classic attempted to apportion to Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne their respective work in the *Wrecker*, but his apportionment turned out to be hopelessly erroneous. To this the obvious answer is that the *Wrecker* is a prose work and not poetry. There was no prose style ever written that a skilful hand could not reproduce as accurately as a practised forger reproduces a signature. But poetry, at any rate original poetry of the first class, is a different matter. The personality and style of a true poet are unmistakable to a competent mind, for though imitation, echo, adaptation or parody is certainly possible, it would be as easy to reproduce the personal note in the style as for the painter to put into his portrait the living soul of its original. The successful discrimination between original and copy depends then upon the competence of the critic, his fineness of literary feeling, his sensitiveness to style. On such points the dictum of a foreign critic is seldom of any value. One would not ask a mere labourer to pro-

nounce on the soundness of a great engineering work, but still less would one ask a mathematician unacquainted with mechanics. To minds well-equipped for the task there ought to be no insuperable difficulty in disengaging the style of a marked poetic personality from a mass of totally different work. The verdict of great art-critics on the genuineness of a professed Old Master may not be infallible, but if formed on a patient study of the technique and spirit of the work, it has at least considerable chances of being correct. But the technique and spirit of poetry are far less easy to catch by an imitator than those of great painting, the charm of words being more elusive and unanalysable than that of line and colour.

In unravelling the Mahabharata especially, the peculiar inimitable nature of the style of Vyasa immensely lightens the difficulties of criticism. Had his been poetry of which the predominant grace was mannerism, it would have been imitable with some closeness; or even had it been a rich and salient style like Shakespeare's, Kalidasa's or Valmiki's, certain externals of it might have been reproduced by a skilled hand and the task of discernment rendered highly delicate and perilous. Yet even in such styles to the finest minds the presence or absence of an unanalysable personality within the manner of expression would be always perceptible. The second layer of the Mahabharata is distinctly Ramayanistic in style, yet it would be a gross criticism that could confuse it with Valmiki's own work; the difference, as is always the case in imitations of great poetry, is as palpable as the

similarity. Some familiar examples may be taken from English literature. Crude as is the composition and treatment of the three parts of *King Henry VI*, its style unformed and everywhere full of echoes, yet when we get such lines as

> Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just
> And he but naked though locked up in steel
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted,

we cannot but feel that we are listening to the same poetic voice as in *Richard III*,

> Shadows tonight
> Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
> Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
> Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond,

or in *Julius Caesar*,

> The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interrèd with their bones,

or in the much later and richer vein of *Antony and Cleopatra*,

> I am dying, Egypt, dying; only
> I here importune death awhile, until
> Of many thousand kisses the poor last
> I lay upon thy lips.

I have purposely selected passages of perfect simplicity and straightforwardness, because they appear to be the most imitable part of Shakespeare's work and are really the least imitable. Always one hears the same voice, the same personal note of style sounding through these very various passages, and one feels that there is in all the intimate and unmistakable personality of Shakespeare. We turn next and take two passages from Marlowe, a poet whose influence counted for much in the making of Shakespeare, one from *Faustus*

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burned the topless towers of Ilium?

and another from *Edward II*

> I am that cedar, shake me not too much,
> And you the eagles, soar ye ne'er so high,
> I have the jesses that will pull you down
> And Aeque tandem shall that canker cry
> Unto the proudest peer in Brittany.

The choice of words, the texture of style has a certain similarity, the run of the sentences differs little if at all; but what fine literary sense does not feel that here is another poetical atmosphere and the ring of a different voice? And yet to put a precise name on the difference would not be easy. The personal difference becomes still more marked if we take a passage from Milton in

which the nameable merits are precisely the same, a simplicity in strength of diction, thought and the run of the verse,

What though the field be lost...

And when we pass farther down in the stream of literature and read

Thy thunder, conscious of the new command...

we feel that the poet has nourished his genius on the greatness of Milton till his own soft and luxurious style rises into epic vigour; yet we feel too that the lines are only Miltonic, they are not Milton.

Now there are certain great poetical styles which are of a kind apart, they are so extraordinarily bare and restrained that the untutored mind often wonders what difficulty there can be in writing poetry like that; yet when the attempt is made, it is found that so far as manner goes it is easier to write somewhat like Shakespeare or Homer or Valmiki than to write like these. Just because the style is so bare, has no seizable mannerism, no striking and imitable peculiarities, the failure of the imitation appears complete and unsoftened; for in such poets there is but one thing to be caught, the unanalysable note, the personal greatness like everything that comes straight from God which it is impossible to locate or limit, and precisely the one that most eludes the grasp.

This poetry it is always possible to distinguish with some approach to certainty from imitative or spurious work. Very fortunately the style of Vyasa is exactly such a manner of poetry. Granted therefore *adhikāra* in the critic, that is to say, a natural gift of fine literary sensitiveness and the careful cultivation of that gift until it has become as sure a lactometer as the palate of the swan which rejects the water mingled with milk and takes the milk alone, we have in the peculiar characteristics of this poetry a test of unquestionable soundness and efficacy.

But there is another objection of yet more weight and requiring as full an answer. This method of argument from style seems after all as *a priori* and Teutonic as any other; for there is no logical reason why the mass of writing in this peculiar style should be judged to be the original epic and not any of the three others or even part of that inferior work which was brushed aside so contemptuously, the original Mahabharata need not have been a great poem at all; it was more probably an early, rude and uncouth performance. Certain considerations however may lead us to consider our choice less arbitrary than it seems. That the War Parvas contain much of the original epic may be conceded to Professor Weber; the war is the consummation of the story and without a war there could be no Mahabharata. But the war of the Mahabharata was not a petty contest between obscure barons or a brief episode in a much larger struggle or a romantic and chivalrous emprise for the rescue of a

ravished or errant beauty. It was a great political catastrophe employing the clash of a hundred nations and far-reaching political consequences; the Hindus have always considered it as the turning-point in the history of their civilisation and the beginning of a new age, and it was long used as a historical standpoint and a date to reckon from in chronology. Such an event must have had the most considerable political causes and been caused by the collision of the most powerful personalities and the most important interests. If we find no record of or allusion to these in the poem, we shall be compelled to suppose that the poet, living long after the event, regarded the war as a legend or romance which would form excellent matter for an epic and treated it accordingly. But if we find a simple and unvarnished, though not necessarily connected and consecutive account of the political conditions which preceded the war and of the men who made it and their motives, we may safely say that this also is an essential part of the epic. The Iliad deals only with an episode of the legendary siege of Troy, it covers an action of about eight days in a conflict lasting ten years; and its subject is not the Trojan War but the Wrath of Achilles. Homer was under no obligation therefore to deal with the political causes that led to hostilities, even supposing he knew them. The Mahabharata stands on an entirely different footing. The war there is related from beginning to end consecutively and without break, yet it is nowhere regarded as of importance sufficient to itself but depends for its interest on causes

which led up to it and the characters and clashing interests it involved. The preceding events are therefore of essential importance to the epic. Without the war, no Mahabharata, is true of this epic; but without the causes of the war no war, is equally true. And it must be remembered that the Hindu narrative poets had no artistic predilections like that of the Greeks for beginning a story in the middle. On the contrary they always preferred to begin at the beginning.

We therefore naturally expect to find the preceding political conditions and the immediate causes of the war related in the earlier part of the epic and this is precisely what we do find. Ancient India as we know was a sort of continent, made up of many great and civilised nations who were united very much like the nations of modern Europe by an essential similarity of religion and culture rising above and beyond their marked racial peculiarities; like the nations of Europe also they were continually going to war with each other, and yet had relations of occasional struggle, of action and reaction, with the other peoples of Asia whom they regarded as barbarous races outside the pale of the Aryan civilisation. Like the continent of Europe, the ancient continent of India was subject to two opposing forces, one centripetal which was continually causing attempts at universal empire, another centrifugal which was continually impelling the empires once formed to break up again into their constituent parts; but both these forces were much stronger in their action than they have usually

been in Europe. The Aryan nations may be divided into three distinct groups, the Eastern of whom the Koshalas, Magadhas, Chedis, Videhas and Haihayas were the chief, the central among whom the Kurus, Panchalas and Bhojas were the most considerable; and the Western and Southern of whom there were many, small and rude yet warlike and famous peoples; among those there have been none that ever became of the first importance. Five distinct times had these great congeries of nations been welded into Empire, twice by the Ikshwakus under Mandhata, son of Yuvanaswa and King Marutta, afterwards by the Haihaya Arjuna Kartavirya, again by the Ikshwaku Bhagiratha and finally by the Kuru Bharata. That the first Kuru empire was the latest is evident not only from the Kurus being the strongest nation of their time, but from the significant fact that the Koshalas by this time had faded into utter and irretrievable insignificance. The rule of the Haihayas had resulted in one of the great catastrophes of early Hindu civilisation belonging to the Eastern section of the continent which was always apt to break away from the strict letter of Aryanism. They had brought themselves by their pride and violence into collision with the Brahmin with the result of a civil war in which their empire was broken for ever by Parashurama, son of Jamadagni, and the chivalry of India massacred and for the time broken. The fall of the Haihayas left the Ikshwakus and the Bharata or the Ilian dynasty of the Kurus the two chief powers of the continent. Then seems to have followed the

golden age of the Ikshwakus under the beneficent empire of Bhagiratha and his descendants as far down at least as Rama. Afterwards the Koshalas, having reached their highest point, must have fallen into that state of senile decay which, once it overtakes a nation, is fatal and irremediable. They were followed by the empire of the Bharatas. By the time of Shantanu, Vichitravirya and Pandu this empire had long been dissolved by the centrifugal force of Aryan politics into its constituent parts, yet the Kurus were among the first of the nations and the Bharata Kings of the Kurus were still looked up to as the head of civilisation. But by the time of Dhritarashtra the centripetal force had again asserted itself and the idea of another great empire loomed before the imaginations of all men. A number of nations had risen to the greatest military prestige and political force, the Panchalas under Drupada and his sons, the Kurus under Bhishmuc and his brother Acrity who is described as equalling Parashurama in military skill and courage, the Chedis under the hero and great captain Shishupala, the Magadhas built into a strong nation by Brihadratha, even distant Bengal under the Poundrian Vasudeva and distant Sindhu under Vriddha Kshatra and his son Jayadratha began to mean something in the reckoning of forces. The Yadava nations counted as a great military force in the balance of politics owing to their abundant heroism and genius, but seemed to have lacked sufficient cohesion and unity to nurse independent hopes. Strong, however, as these nations were, none seemed able to

dispute the prize of the coming empire with the Kurus, until under Jarasandha the Barhadratha Magadha for a moment disturbed the political balance. The history of the first great Magadhan hope of empire and its extinction—not to be revived again until the final downfall of the Kurus— is told very briefly in the Sabhaparva of the Mahabharata. The removal of Jarasandha restored the original state of politics and it was no longer doubtful that to the Kurus alone could fall the future empire. But contest arose between the elder and the younger branches of the Bharata house. The question being then narrowed to a personal issue, it was inevitable that it should become largely a history of personal strife and discord; other and larger issues were involved in the dispute between the Kaurava cousins, but whatever interests, incompatibilities of temperament and difference of opinion may divide brothers, they do not engage in fratricidal conflict until they are driven to it by a long record of collision and jealousy, ever deepening personal hatred and the worst personal injuries. We see therefore that not only the early discords, the slaying of Jarasandha and the Rajasuya sacrifice are necessary to the epic but the great gambling and the mishandling of Draupadi. It cannot, however, have been personal questions alone that affected the choice of the different nations between Duryodhana and Yudhishthira; personal relations like the matrimonial connections of Dhritarashtra's family with the Sindhus and Gandharas and of the Pandavas with the Matsyas, Panchalas and Yadavas doubtless counted for much,

but there must have been something more; personal enmities counted for something as in the feud cherished by the Trigartas against Arjuna. The Madras disregarded matrimonial ties when they sided with Duryodhana; the Magadhas and Chedis put aside the memory of personal wrong when they espoused the cause of Yudhishthira. I believe the explanation we must gather from the hints of the Mahabharata is this, that the nations were divided into three classes, those who desired autonomy, those who desired to break the power of the Kurus and assert their own supremacy and those who imbued with old imperialistic notions desired an united India. The first followed Duryodhana because the empire of Duryodhana could not be more than the empire of a day while that of Yudhishthira had every possibility of permanence; even Queen Gandhari, Duryodhana's own mother, was able to hit this weak point in her son's ambition. The Rajasuya Sacrifice had also undoubtedly identified Yudhishthira in men's minds with the imperialistic impulse of the times. We are given some important hints in the Udyogaparva. When Vidura remonstrates with Krishna for coming to Hastinapur, he tells him it was highly imprudent for him to venture there knowing as he did that the city was full of kings all burning with enmity against him for having deprived them once of their greatness, driving, by the fear of him, to take refuge with Duryodhana and eager to war against the Pandavas. This can have no intelligible reference except to the Rajasuya sacrifice. Although it was the armies of Yudhishthira that had traversed India

then on their mission of conquest, Krishna was generally recognised as the great moving and master mind whose hands of execution the Pandavas were and without whom they would have been nothing. His personality dominated men's imaginations for adoration or for hatred; for that many abhorred him as an astute and unscrupulous revolutionist in morals, politics and religion, we very clearly perceive. We have not only the fiery invectives of Shishupala but the reproach of Bhurishravas the Valhika, a man of high reputation and universally respected. Krishna himself is perfectly conscious of this; he tells Vidura that he must make efforts towards peace both to deliver his soul and to justify himself in the eyes of men. The belief that Krishna's policy and statesmanship was the really effective force behind Yudhishthira's greatness, pervades the epic. But who were these nations that resented so strongly the attempt of Yudhishthira and Krishna to impose an empire on them? It is a significant fact that the Southern and Western peoples went almost solid for Duryodhana in this quarrel—Madra, the Deccan, Avanti, Sindhu Sauvira, Gandhara in one long line from Southern Mysore to Northern Kandahar; the Aryan colonies in the yet half-civilised regions of the Lower valley of the Ganges espoused the same cause. The Eastern nations, heirs of the Ikshwaku imperial idea, went equally solid for Yudhishthira. The Central peoples, repositories of the great Kuru Panchala tradition as well as the Yadavas, who were really a Central nation though they had trekked to the West, were divided. Now this

distribution is exactly what we should have expected. The nations which are most averse to enter into an imperial system and cherish most their separate existence are those which are outside the centre of civilisation, hardy, warlike, only partially refined; and their aversion is still more emphatic when they have never or only for a short time been part of an empire. This is the real secret of the invincible resistance which England has opposed to all Continental schemes of empire from Philip II to Napoleon; it is the secret of her fear of Russia; it is the reason of the singular fact that only now after many centuries of great national existence has she become imbued with the imperial idea on her own account. The savage attachment to their independence of small nations like the Dutch, the Swiss, the Boers is traceable to the same cause; the fierce resistance opposed by the greater part of Spain to Napoleon was that of a nation, which once imperial and central, has fallen out of the main flood of civilisation and is therefore become provincial and attached to its own isolation. That the nations of the East and South and the Aryan colonies in Bengal should oppose the imperialist policy of Krishna and throw in their lot with Duryodhana is therefore no more than we should expect. On the other hand, nations at the very heart of civilisation, who have formed at one time or another dominant parts of an empire fall easily into imperial schemes, but personal rivalry, the desire of each to be the centre of empire, divides them and brings them into conflict, not any difference of political tem-

perament. For nations have very tenacious memories and are always attempting to renew the great ages of their past. In the Eastern peoples the imperialistic idea was very strong and having failed to assert a new empire of their own under Jarasandha, they seem to have turned with one consent to Yudhishthira as the man who could alone realise their ideal. One of Shishupala's remarks in the Rajsuya sacrifice is very significant:

वयं न तु भयादस्य कौन्तेयस्य महात्मनः।
प्रयच्छामः करान् सर्वे न लोभान्न च सान्त्वनात्॥
अस्य धर्मे प्रवृत्तस्य पार्थिवत्वं चिकीर्षतः।
करानस्मै प्रयच्छामः सोयमस्मान्न मन्यते॥

We remember that it was an Eastern poet who had sung, perhaps not many centuries before, in mighty stanzas the idealisation of Imperial Government and Aryan unity and enshrined in his imperishable verse the glories of the third Koshalan Empire. The establishment of Aryan unity was in the eyes of the Eastern nations a *holy work* and the desire of establishing universal lordship with that view a sufficient ground for putting aside personal feelings and predilections in order to farther it. Shishupala, one of the most self-willed and violent princes of his time, had been one of the most considerable and ardent supporters of Jarasandha in his attempt to establish a Magadhan empire. The divisions of the Central nations follows an equally intelligible line. Throughout the Mahabharata we perceive that the great weakness of the Kurus lay in the division of their counsels. There was a

peace party among them led by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Vidura, the wise and experienced statesmen who desired justice and reconciliation with Yudhishthira and a war-party of the hot-blooded younger men led by Karna, Duhsasana and Duryodhana himself who were confident of their power of meeting the world in arms; King Dhritarashtra found himself hard put to it to flatter the opinions of the elders while secretly following his own predilections and the ambitions of the younger men. These are facts patent on the face of the epic. But it has not been sufficiently considered what a remarkable fact it is that men of such lofty character as Bhishma and Drona should have acted against their sense of right and justice and fought in what they had repeatedly condemned as an unjust cause. If Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Ashwatthama and Vikarna had plainly intimated to Duryodhana that they would support Yudhishthira with their arms or even that they would stand aloof from the war, it is clear there would have been no war at all. And I cannot but think that had it been a question purely between Kuru and Kuru, this is the course they would have adopted. But Bhishma and Drona must have perceived that behind the Pandavas were the Panchalas and Matsyas. They must have suspected that these nations were supporting Yudhishthira not out of purely disinterested motives but with certain definite political objects. Neither Drupada nor Virata would have been accepted by India as emperors in their own right, any more than say Sindhia or Holkar would have been in the last century. But by

putting forward the just claims of a prince of the imperial Bharata line, the descendant of Bharata Ajamida, connected with themselves by marriage, they could avoid this difficulty and at the same time break the power of the Kurus and replace them as the dominant partners in the new Empire. The presence of personal interests is evident in their hot eagerness for war and their unwillingness to take any sincere steps towards a just and peaceful solution of the difficulty. Their action stands in striking contrast with the moderate statesmanlike yet firm policy of Krishna. It can hardly be supposed that Bhishma and the Kuru statesmen of his party were autonomists; they must have been as eager for a Kuru empire as Duryodhana himself.

At any rate they eagerly welcomed the statesmanlike reasoning of Krishna when he proposed to King Dhritarashtra to unite the forces of Pandava and Kaurava and build up a Kuru empire which should irresistibly dominate the world. "On yourself and myself", says Krishna, "rests today the choice of peace or war and the destiny of the world; do your part in pacifying your sons, I will see to the Pandavas"—

सहायभूता भरतास्तवैव स्युर्जनेश्वर ॥
धर्मार्थयोस्तिष्ठ राजन् पाण्डवैरभिरक्षितः ।
न हि शक्यास्तथाभूता यत्नादपि नराधिप ॥
न हि त्वां पाण्डवैर्जेतुं रक्ष्यमाणं महाभिः ।
इन्द्रोऽपि देवैः सहितः प्रसहेत कुतो नृपाः ॥
यत्र भीष्मश्च द्रोणश्च कृपः कर्णो विविंशतिः ।
अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सोमदत्तोऽथ बाह्लिकः ॥

सैन्धवश्च कलिंगश्च काम्भोजश्च सुदक्षिणः।
युधिष्ठिरो भीमसेनः सव्यसाची यमौ तथा॥
सात्यकिश्च महातेजा युयुत्सुश्च महारथः।
को नु तान् विपरीतात्मा युद्धचेत भरतर्षभ॥
तस्य ते पृथिवीपालास्त्वत्समाः पृथिवीपते।
श्रेयांसश्चैव राजानः सन्धास्यन्ते परन्तप॥
स त्वं पुत्रैश्च पौत्रैश्च पितृभिर्भ्रातृभिस्तथा।
सुहृद्भिः सर्वतो गुप्तः सुखं शक्ष्यसि जीवितुम्॥
एतानेव पुरोधाय सत्कृत्य च यथा पुरा।
अखिलां भोक्ष्यसे सर्वां पृथिवीं पृथिवीपते॥
एतैर्हि सहितः सर्वैः पाण्डवैः स्वैश्च भारत।
अन्यान्विजेष्यसे शत्रूनेष स्वार्थस्तवाखिलः॥
तैरेवुपार्जितां भूमिं भोक्ष्यसे च परन्तप।
यदि सम्पत्स्यसे पुत्रैः सहामात्यैर्नराधिप॥[1]

But the empire of Yudhishthira enforced by the arms of Matsya and Panchala or even by the armed threats meant to Bhishma and Kripa something very different from a Kuru empire; it must have seemed to them to imply rather the overthrow and humiliation of the Kurus and a Panchala domination under a Bharata prince. This it concerned their patriotism and their sense of Kshatriya pride and duty to resist so long as there was blood in their veins. The inability to associate justice with their cause was a grief to them, but it could not alter their plain duty. Such as I take it is the clear political story of Mahabharata.

[1] *Mahābhārata*, Udyogaparva 95. 16 to 27

THE PROBLEM OF THE MAHABHARATA

(2)

THE problem of the Mahabharata, its origin, date and composition, is one that seems likely to elude scholarship to times indefinite if not for ever. It is true that several European scholars have solved all these to their own satisfaction, but their industrious and praiseworthy efforts....

In the following pages I have approached the eternal problem of the Mahabharata from the point of view mainly of style and literary personality, partly of substance; but in dealing with the substance I have deferred questions of philosophy, allusion and verbal evidence to which a certain school attach great importance and ignored altogether the question of minute metrical details on which they base far-reaching conclusions. It is necessary therefore out of respect for these scholars to devote some space to an explanation of my standpoint. I contend that owing to the peculiar manner in which the Mahabharata has been composed, these minutiae of detail and word have very little value. The labour of this minute school has proved beyond dispute one thing and one thing only, that the Mahabharata was not only immensely enlarged, crusted with interpolations

and accretions and in parts rewritten and modified, but even its oldest parts were verbally modified in the course of preservation. The extent to which this happened has, I think, been grossly exaggerated, but that it did happen, one cannot but be convinced. Now if this is so, it is obvious that arguments from verbal niceties must be very dangerous. It has been sought to prove from a single word, *suranga*, an underground tunnel, which European scholars believe to be identical with the Greek *suringks* that the account in the Adiparva of the Pandavas' escape from the burning house of Purochana through an underground tunnel must be later than another account in the Vanaparva which represents Bhima as carrying his brothers and mother out of the flames; for the former they say must have been composed after the Indians had learned the Greek language and culture and the latter, it is assumed, before that interesting period. Now whether *suranga* was derived from the Greek *suringks* or not, I cannot take upon me to say, but will assume on the authority of better linguists than myself that it was so—though I think it is as well to be sceptical of all such Greek derivations until the connection is proved beyond doubt, for such words even when not accounted for by Sanscrit itself may very easily be borrowed from the original languages. Bengali, for instance, preserves the form "sudanga" where the cerebral letter is Dravidian. But if so, if this word came into fashion along with Greek culture, and became *the* word for a tunnel, what could be more natural than that the reciter should substitute

for an old and disused word the one which was familiar to his audience? Again much has been made of the frequent occurrence of Yavana, Vahlika, Pehlava, Saka, Huna; as to Yavana its connection with Iaon does not seem to me beyond doubt. It was certainly at one time applied to the Bactrian Greeks, but so it has been and is to the present day applied to the Persians, Afghans and other races to the northwest of India. Nor is the philological connection between Iaon and Yavana very clear to my mind. Another form Yauna seems to represent Iaon fairly well; but are we sure that Yauna and Yavana were originally identical? A mere resemblance however close is the most misleading thing in philology. Upon such resemblances Pocock made out a very strong case for his theory that the Greeks were a Hindu colony. The identity of the Sakas and Sakyas was for a long time a pet theory of European Sanscritists and on this identity was based the theory that Buddha was a Scythian reformer of Hinduism. This identity is now generally given up, yet it is quite as close as that of Yavana and Yauna and as closely in accordance with the laws of the Sanscrit language. If Yauna is the original form, why was it changed to Yavana? It is no more necessary than that *mauna* be changed to *mavana*. If Yavana be earlier and Yauna a prakrit corruption, how are we to account for the short a and the v? there was no digamma in Greek in the time of Alexander. But since the Greeks are always called Yavanas in Buddhist writings, we will waive the demand for strict philological intelligibility and suppose

that Yavana answers to Iaon. The question yet remains when did the Hindus become acquainted with the existence of the Greeks. Now here the first consideration is: why did they call the Greeks Ionians and not Hellenes or Macedonians? That the Persians should know the Greeks by that name is natural enough, for it was with the Ionians that they first came into contact; but it was not Ionians who invaded India under Alexander, it was not an Ionian prince who gave his daughter to Chandragupta, it was not an Ionian coqueror who crossed the Indus and besieged...Did the Macedonians on their victorious march give themselves out as Ionians? I for my part do not believe it. It is certain therefore that if the Hindus took the word Yavana from Iaon, it must have been through the Persians and not direct from the Greek language. But the connection of the Persians with India was as old as Darius Hystaspes who had certainly reason to know the Greeks. It is therefore impossible to say that the Indians had not heard about the Greeks as long ago as 500 B.C. Even if they had not, the mention of Yavanas and Yavana kings does not carry us very far; for it is evident that in the earlier parts of the Mahabharata they are known only as a strong barbarian power of the North West, there is no sign of their culture being known to the Hindus. It is therefore quite possible that the word Yavana now grown familiar may have been substituted by the later reciters for an older name no longer familiar. It is now known beyond reasonable doubt that the Mahabharata war was fought out in or

about 1190 B.C.;[1] Dhritarashtra, son of Vichitravirya, Krishna, son of Devaki and Janamejaya are mentioned in Vedic works of a very early date. There is therefore no reason to doubt that an actual historical event is recorded with whatever admixture of fiction in the Mahabharata. It is also evident that the Mahabharata, not any "Bharata" or "Bharati Katha" but the Mahabharata existed before the age of Panini, and though the radical school bring down Panini the next few centuries...

[1] This date was accepted by Sri Aurobindo at the time of writing. On p. 66 of his Bengali *Gitar Bhumika* (written in 1909) he says: "It should be remembered that the war of Kurukshetra took place 5000 years ago." It may be that later he accepted still another date. Ed.

Translations

I

UDYOGA PARVA

Canto I

LET the reciter bow down to Naraian, likewise to Nara the Highest Male, also to our Lady the Muse (Goddess Saraswati), and thereafter utter the word of Hail!

Vaishampayan continueth

But the hero Kurus and who clove to them thereafter having performed joyously the marriage of Abhimanyu rested that night and then at dawn went glad to the Assembly-hall of Virata.

Now wealthy was that hall of the lord of Matsya with mosaic of gems excellent and perfect jewels, with seats set out, garlanded, perfumed; thither went those great among the kings of men.

Then took their seats in front the two high kings, Drupada and Virata, old they and honoured of earth's lords, and Rama and Janardana with their father.

Now by the Panchala king was the hero Shini with the son of Rohinie but very near likewise to the Matsya king Janardana and Yudhishthira;

And all the sons of Drupada, Bhima, Arjuna and the sons of Madravatie and Pradyumna and Samba, heroes in the strife, and Abhimanyu with the children of Virata;

And all those heroes equal to their fathers in heroism and beauty and strength sat down, the princely boys, sons of Draupadie, on noble seats curious with gold.

Thus as those great warriors sat with shining ornaments and shining robes rich shone that senate of kings like wide heaven with its stainless stars.

* *

"To all of you it is known how Yudhishthira here was conquered by Saubala in the hall of the dicing; by fraud was he conquered and his kingdom torn from him and contract made of exile in the forest; and though infallible in the mellay, though able by force impetuous to conquer the whole earth, yet the sons of Pandu stood by their honour religiously; harsh and austere their vow but for the six years and the seven they kept it, noblest of men, the sons of Pandu; and this the thirteenth year and most difficult they have passed before all your eyes unrecognised; in exile they passed it, the mighty-minded ones, suffering many and intolerable hardships, in the service of strangers, in menial employments cherishing their desire of the kingdom that belongeth to their lineage. Since this is so, do ye think out somewhat that shall be for the good both of the King, the son of Righteousness, and of Duryodhana, just and glorious and worthy of the great Kurus; for Yudhishthira the just would not desire even the kingship of the gods unjustly, yet would he cling to the lordship of some small village which he might

hold with expediency and justice. For it is known to you kings that how by dishonest proceeding his father's kingdom was torn from him by the sons of Dhritarashtra and himself cast into great and unbearable danger; for not in battle did they conquer him by their own prowess, these sons of Dhritarashtra; even so the king with his friends desire the welfare of his wrongers. But what the sons of Pandu with their own hands amassed by conquest crushing the lords of earth, that these mighty ones demand, even Kuntie's sons and Madravatie's. But even when they were children, they were sought by various means to be slain of their banded foemen, savage and unrighteous, for greed of their kingdom; yea all this is known to you utterly. Considering therefore their growing greed and the righteousness of Yudhishthira, considering also their close kinship, form you a judgment each man to himself and together. And since these have always clung to truth and loyally observed the contract, if they know they are wronged, they may well slay all the sons of Dhritarashtra. And hearing of any wrong done by these in this business their friends would gather round, the Pandavas, yea and repel war with war and slay them. If natheless ye deem these too weak in numbers for victory, yet would they all band together and with their friends at last to strive to destroy them. Moreover none knoweth the mind of Duryodhana rightly, what he meaneth to do, and what can you decide that shall be the best to set about when you know not the mind of your foeman? Therefore let one go hence, some virtuous, pure-minded

and careful man such as shall be an able envoy for their appeasement and the gift of half the kingdom to Yudhishthira." This hearing, the just, expedient, sweet and impartial speech of Janardana, the elder brother of him took up the word, "O prince, honouring the younger's speech even greatly....

II

THE BOOK OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL[1]

(1)

THE BUILDING OF THE HALL

And before Krishna's face to great Arjoon
Maya with clasped hands bending, mild and boon
His voice as gratitude's: "Me the strong ire
Had slain of Krishna or the hungry fire
Consumed: by thee I live, O Kuntie's son:
What shall I do for thy sake?" And Arjoon,
"Paid is thy debt. Go thou and prosper: love
Repays the lover: this our friendship prove."
"Noble thy word and like thyself," returned
The Titan, "yet in me a fire has burned
Some deed to do for love's sake. He am I,
The Titan architect and poet high,
The maker: something give me to create."
Arjoon replied, "If from the grasp of Fate
Rescued by me thou pray'st, then is the deed
Sufficient, Titan: I will take no meed.
Yet will I not deny thee: for my friend
Do somewhat and thy debt to me shall end."
Then by the Titan questioned Vasudev

[1] *Sabhāparva*

Pondered awhile what boon were best to have.
At length he answered: "Let a hall be raised
Peerless, thou great artificer high-praised,—
If thou wilt needs do somewhat high designed,-
For Yudhishthere such hall as may thy mind
Imagine. Wonderful the pile shall be,
No mortal man shall copy although he
Labour to grasp it, nor on transient earth
Another equal wonder shall have birth.
Vast let it be. Let human and divine
And the Titanic meet in one design."
Joyful the builder took the word and high
The Pandav's hall he made imperially.
(But first the heroes to the King repair,
Just Yudhishthere, and all their story there
Tell out. The Titan also they present,
Their living proof of great accomplishment.
Nobly he welcomed was by that just King.)
There in high ease, befriended, sojourning
The life of elder gods dethroned of old
The Titan to the Pandav princes told.
Short space for rest took the creative mind
And inly planned and mightily designed
A hall imperial for those mighty ones.
With Krishna then consulting and the sons
Of Pritha on a day of sacred light
All fate-appeasing ceremonies right
He ordered and with rice in sugared milk
Sated the priests, silver and herds and silk.

In energy of genius next he chose
Ten thousand cubits, mapped a mighty close,
Region delightful where divinely sweet
The joy of all the seasons seemed to meet.
Four were the sides, ten thousand cubits all.
This was the measure of the Pandav's hall.
  But in the Khandav plain abode in ease
Janardan mid the reverent ministries
Of the great five: their loves his home renew.
But for his father's sight a yearning grew
And drew him thence. He of the monarch just
And Pritha craved departure. In the dust
His head he lowered at her worshipped feet,
He for the whole world's homage only meet.
Him she embraced and kissed his head. Next he
His sister dear encountered lovingly.
Wet were his eyes as with low words and few,
Pregnant and happy, admirably true
He greeted that divine fair girl and heard
Of her sweet eloquence many a tender word
That to her kin should travel; reverent
She bowed her lovely head. And Krishna went
To Draupadie and Dhaum and took of these
Various farewell,—soft words her heart to ease,
But to the priest yielded the man divine
Obeisance just and customary sign.
(Thereafter with Arjoon the hero wise
His brothers met and in celestial guise,
Like Indra with the great immortals round,

All rites that to safe journeying redound
Performing, bath and pure ablution made
And worship due with salutation paid,
Garlanded, praying, in rich gems arrayed,
All incenses that breathe beneath the sun
To Gods and Brahmans offered. These things done
Departure now was next. Stately he came
Outward and all of venerable name
Who bore the sacred office, had delight
Of fruit and grain yet in the husk and white
Approvèd curds, much wealth; and last the ground
He trod and traced the gyre of blessing round.)
So with a fortunate day and fortunate star
And moment in his chariot built for war,
Golden, swift-rushing, with the Bird for sign
And banner, ṣword and discus, bow divine
And mace round hung, and horses twin of stride,
Sugrive and Shaibya, went the lotus-eyed.
Next in his love the monarch Yudhishthere
Mounted, and Daruk, the great charioteer,
He put aside. Himself he grasped the rein,
Himself he drove the chariot o'er the plain.
And great Arjoona mounted, seized the white
Wind-bringer with the golden staff and bright
And called with his strong arm the circling wind;
And Bheema and the princes twin behind
Followed, and citizen and holy priest:
With the horizon the procession ceased.
All these with the far-conquering Krishna wend,

As a high sage whom his disciples tend,
So for a league they journeyed; then no more
He suffered but Yudhishthere's will o'erbore
And forced return; then grappled to his breast
Arjoon belovèd. Greeting well the rest
Religiously the monarch's feet embraced
Govinda, but the Pandav raised and kissed
The head of Krishna beautiful-eyed. "Go then,"
He murmured, yet even so the word was vain
Until reunion promised. Hardly at length
He stayed them with entreaty's utmost strength
From following him on foot; so glad has gone
Like Indra thundering to the immortals' town.
But they stood following with the eyes their light
Until he vanished from the paths of sight.
Ev'n then their hearts, though distance now conceals,
Run yet behind his far invisible wheels.
But the swift chariot takes their joy and pride,
Too swift, alas! from eyes unsatisfied
With that dear vision, and reluctant, slow,
In thoughts that still with Krishna's horsehooves go,
Ceasing at last to their own town again
Silent they wend, the lion lords of men.
So entered the immortal Yudhishthere
Girt round with friends his glorious city; here
He left them and in bowers for pleasure made
With Draupadie the godlike hero played.
But Krishna, glad of soul, in whirling car
Came speeding to his noble town afar

With Daruk and the hero Satyakie.
Swift as the great God's wingèd favourite he
Entered, and all the Yadav lords renowned
Came honouring him, with one the chief and crowned.
And Krishna stayed his father old to greet
And Ahuk and his glorious mother's feet
And Balaram, his brother. His own sons
He next embraced and all their little ones.
Last of his elders leave he took and went
To Rukminie's fair house in glad content,
In Dwarca he; but the great Titan Mai
Still pondered and imagined cunningly
A jewelled brightness in his thought begun,
An audience-hall supreme for Hades' son.
(So with the conqueror unparallelled,
Arjoon, the Titan now this discourse held:
"To the great hill I go and soon return,
Whose northern peaks from Coilas upward burn.
There when the Titans sacrifice of yore
Intended by the water Bindusor,
Rich waste of fine material was left,
Wondrous, of stone a variegated weft
That for the mighty audience hall was stored
Of Vrishaparvan, the truth-speaking lord.
Thither I wend and make, if yet endure
All that divine material bright and pure,
The Pandav's hall, a glory to behold,
Admirable, set with jewelry and gold
Taking the heart to pleasure. These besides

A cruel mace in Bindusor abides,)
Massive endurance, studded aureate,
Ponderous, a death of foes, commensurate
With many thousand more in murderous will.
There after slaughter huge of foes it still
Lies by a king relinquished. This believe
For Bheem created as for thee Gandeve.
There too the mighty conch Varunian lies:
Thunders God-given swell its ocean voice.
Expect these from my hand infallibly."
Thus saying went the Titan hastily
To the north-eastern edge of heaven where high
Soars Mainac hill into the northward sky
From Coilas. Golden soar its ridges large
And noble gems it stores and bright the marge
Of Bindusor. The high conceiving Lord,
King of all creatures and by worlds adored,
Here grandiose offerings gave and sacrifice
By hundreds, and with excellent device,
For beauty not to old tradition, made
Pillars of sacrifice with gems inlaid
And monumental temples massed with gold.
Long here enduring Bhagiruth the bold
Through tedious seasons dwelt, yearning to see
Ganges, his self-named river Bhagirathie.
Nor these alone, but he, the Argus-eyed
Lord of imperial Sachi, to his side
Victory by sacrifice compelled. Creating
World systems, energy irradiating

He sits here whom the awful ghosts attend,
Shiva, who no beginning has nor end.
Nar and Naraian there and Brahma there
And Hades and the Immovable repair,—
Revolving when a thousand ages wend,
To absolve with sacrifice the cycle's end.
Here now ambitious of religion gave
Long years his mighty offerings Vasudev,
Devoutly, and bright temples raised their head,
Memorial columns golden-garlanded,
Unnumbered, multitudinous, immense.
Thither went Maia and recovered thence
Conchshell and mace and for the audience hall
The old Titanic stone marmoreal.
All mighty wealth the servile giants guard,
The Titan genius gathered and prepared
This famous hall unparallelled, divine,
Where all the jewels of the earth combine.
To Bheem he gave that mighty mace, the shell
God-given called, whose cry unutterable
When from the great conch's ocean mouth 'tis hurled
Far borne, trembling of creatures fills the world,
To great Arjoona. But immense the hall
Ten thousand cubits spread its bulk and all
Its sides ten thousand, upon mighty boles
Columnar elevate: nor either rolls
The sun through heaven, moon nor vast fire so bright.
Slaying the sunshine with superior light
It blazed as if aflame, most luminous, white,

Celestial, large, raised like a cloud to soar
Against the heavens whose lustre it o'erbore.
Nor weariness nor sorrow enter might
That wide and noble palace of delight.
Of fair material was it made, the walls
And arches jewelled were of those rich halls.
Such wonder of creative genius won
The World's Designer to companion.
For neither Brahma's roof nor Vishnu's high
Might equal this for glorious symmetry.
Nor yet Sudharma, Indra's council hall,
With Maia's cunning strove. At Maia's call
Eight thousand Helots of the Giants' blood
Upbore the pile and dreadful sentries stood,
Travellers on wind, huge-bodied, horrible,
Shell-eared, far-strikers, with bloodshot eyes and fell.
And in the middle a lotus-lake he made
Unparallelled, white lotuses displayed,
And birds innumerable and all the stems
Of that fair blossom were of beauteous gems
And all the leaves were sapphires: through them rolled
Gold tortoises and wondrous fish of gold.
Marble mosaic was the stair: the wave
Translucent ran its edges fine to lave,
Wrinkled with soft cool winds that over it sped.
A rain of pearl drops on the floor was shed,
And seats from slabs of precious stone combined
The marble banks of that fair water lined.
And all around it ever-flowering trees

Of various race hung dark and huge with ease
Of cool delightful shade, sweet-smelling woods
And quiet waters where the white swan broods
And ducks and waders of the ripples. Sweet
The wind came from them, fragrance in its feet
The lotus gave and lily of the land,
And with its booty the great brothers fanned.
Full fourteen months he laboured: the fifteenth
Saw ready jewelled arch and luminous plinth.
Then only came the Titan and declared
To the just King his mighty hall prepared.
Ceremony of entrance Yudhishthere
Then held. Thousands of Brahmins luscious cheer
Of rice with sugared milk enjoyed wherein
Honey was mingled; flesh besides they win
Of boar and stag and all roots eatable
And fruits and sesamum-rice that tastes full well
And grain of offering and pedary
Yea, meats of many natures variously
Eaten and chewed, of drinks a vast array;
And robes brought newly from the loom that day
Were given, all possible garlands scented sweetly
To Brahmins, from all regions gathering, meetly
Presented, and to each a thousand cows.
O then was air all thunder with their vows:
The din of blessing touched the very skies.
With these the notes of instruments arise
Varied, celestial, and sweet fumes untold.
Before the son of Hades mighty-souled

Wrestlers and mimes made show and those who play
With fencing staves and jongleurs. For that day
He who installed the deities, worshipping,
Was the greatest of the Kurus and a king.
He by his brothers hemmed, high worship done,
With saint and hero for companion,
In that his palace admirably bright,
Like Indra in his heaven took delight.

(*From Cantos* I-V)

III

THE BOOK OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL

(2)

THE DEBATED SACRIFICE

But when Yudhishtere had heard
The sages' speech, his heart was moved with sighs.
He coveted Imperial Sacrifice.
All bliss went from him. Only to his thought
The majesty of royal saints was brought
By sacrifice exalted, Paradise
Acquired augustly, and before his eyes
He most was luminous who in heaven shone,
Heaven by sacrificial merit won.
He too that offering would absolve; so now
Receiving reverence with a courteous brow,
The assembly broke, to meditate retiring
On that great sacrifice of his desiring.
Frequent the thought and ever all its length
His mind leaned that way. Yet though huge his strength,
His heroism though admired, the King
Forgot no Right, but pondered how this thing
Might touch the peoples, whether well or ill.
For just was Yudhishthere and courted still
His people and with vast impartial mind
Served all, nor ever from this word declined,
"To each his own; nor shall the king disturb

With wrath or violence Right, but these shall curb."
So was all speech of men one grand acclaim;
The nation as a father trusted him:
No hater had he in his whole realm's bound,
By the sweet name of Enemiless renowned.
And through his gracious government upheld
By Bheema's force and foreign battle quelled
By the two-handed might of great Arjoon;
Sahadev's cultured equity and boon
Nakula's courteous mood to all men shown,
The thriving provinces were void of fear;
Strife was forgotten and each liberal year
The rains were measured to desire; nor man
The natural limit of his course outran:
Usury, tillage, rearing, merchandise
Throve with good government and sacrifice
Prospered; rack-renting was not nor unjust
Extortion; from the land pestilence was thrust,
And mad calamity of fire unkown
Became while this just monarch had his own.
Robbers and cheats and royal favourites
Were now not heard of to infringe men's rights
Nor the king's harm nor mutual injury
Intrigue. To yield into his treasury
Their taxes traders came and princes high
On the sixfold pretexts of policy,
Or at Yudhishthere's court good grace to win.
Even greedy, passionate, luxurious men
His just rule to the common welfare turned.

He in the glory of all virtues burned,
An all-pervading man, by all adored,
An emperor and universal lord
Bearing upon his shoulders the whole State,
And from the neat-herd to the twice-born great
All in his wide domains that lived and moved,
Him more than father, more than mother loved.
He now his brother and his ministers
Summoning severally their mind infers
And often with repeated subtle speech
Solicitous questions and requestions each.
All with one cry unanimous advise
To institute Imperial Sacrifice.
"O King," they said, "the man by God designed
Who has acquired the Oceanic mind
Of kingship, not with this bounds his pretence,
But hungers for imperial excellence.
In thee it dwells, high Kaurav; we thy friends
See clear that Fate this sacrifice intends.
To complete heroes it is subject. Men
Who centre chivalry within them gain
Its sanction when with ancient chants the fires
Are heaped by sages, lords of their desires
Through self-control intense. The serpentine
And all rites other in this one rite twine.
And he who at its end is safely crowned
Is as World Conqueror, is as King renowned.
Puissance is thine, great-armed, and we are thine.
O King, soon then shall Empire crown thy line:

O King, debate no longer; aim thy will
At Sacrifice Imperial." So they still
Advised their king together and apart,
And deep their accents sunk into his heart.
Bold was their speech, rang pleasant to his ear,
Seemed excellent and just, yet Yudhishthere
Still pondered though he knew his puissance well.
Again he bade his hardy brothers tell
Their mind and priests high-souled and ministers:
With Dhowma and Dwypaian too confers,
Wise and deliberate he. "Speak justly, friends,
What happy way my hard desire attends.
Hard is the sacrifice imperial meant
For an imperial mind's accomplishment."
All answered with a seasonable voice:
"Just King, thine is that mind and thou the choice
Of Fate for this high ceremony renowned."
Sweet did the voice of friends and flamens sound:
Yet still he curbed himself and still he thought.
His yearning for the people's welfare wrought
A noble hesitation. Wise the man
Who often will his power and vantage scan,
Who measures means with the expenditure,
Season with place, then acts; his deeds endure.
"Not with my mere resolve the enterprise
Begins and ends of this great sacrifice."
While thus in a strong grasp his thought he held,
His mind to Krishna who all beings excelled
Of mortal breed, for surest surety ran,

Krishna, the strong unmeasurable man
Whom Self-born upon earth conjectured he
Because his deeds measured with deity.
"To Krishna's mind all things are penetrable,
His genius knows not the impossible."
Pondered the son of Hades, "nor is there
A weight his mighty mind cannot upbear."
On Krishna as on sage and guide his mind
(Who is indeed the guide of all mankind)
He fixed and sent his messenger afar
To Yadav land in a swift-rolling car.
Then sped the rushing wheels with small delay
And reached the gated city Dwaraca,
The gated city where Janardan dwelt.
Krishna to Yudhishthere's desire felt
Answering desire and went with Indrasen
Passing through many lands to Indra-Plain,
Fierily passing with impetuous hooves
To Indraprastha and the men he loves.
With filial soul his brothers Yudhishthere
And Bheem received the man without compeer:
But Krishna to his father's sister went
And greeted her with joyous love; then bent
His heart to pleasure with his heart's own friend,
While reverently the courteous twins attend.
But after rest in those bright halls renowned
Yudhisthere sought the immortal man and found
At leisure sitting and revealed his need.
"King's Sacrifice I covet, but indeed

Thou knowest not practicable by will alone
Like other rites is this imperial one,
But he in whom all kingly things combine,
He whom all men, all lands to honour join,
A King above all kings, he finds alone
Empire. And now though all my friends are one
To bid me forward, I even yet attend
From thy voice only certainty, O friend.
Some from affection lovingly suppress
Their friend's worst fault and some from selfishness,
Speaking what most will please. Others conceal
Their own good with the name of commonweal.
Such counsel in his need a monarch hath.
But thou art pure of selfish purpose; wrath
And passion know thee not; and thou wilt tell
What shall be solely and supremely well."
Krishna made answer: "All thy virtues, all
Thy gifts make thee the man imperial.
Thou dost deserve this sacrifice. Yet well
Though thou mayst know it, one thing will I tell.
When Rama, Jamadagni's son, had slain
The chivalry of earth, those who were fain
To flee, left later issue to inherit
The name of Kshatriya and the regal spirit.
Of these the rule by compact of the clan
Approved thou knowest, and each high-born man
Whate'er and all the kingly multitude
Name themselves subjects of great Ila's brood
And the Ikshwaku house. Now by increase

The Ikshwaku Kings and Ilian count no less
Than are a hundred clans. Of all most huge
Yayati of the Bhojas, a deluge
Upon the earth in multitude and gift.
To these all chivalry their eyes uplift,
These and their mighty fortunes serve. But now
King Jarasandha lifts his diademed brow
And Ila and Ikshwaku pale their fires,
O'erwhelmed. He over kings and nations towers;
This way and that way with impetuous hands
Assailing overbears; the middle lands
Inhabits and by division rules the world,
Since he in whose sole hand the earth is furled,
Who is first monarch and supreme may claim,
He and he only, the imperial name.
And him the mighty hero, Shishupal
Owns singly nor disdains his lord to call,
But leads his warfare, and, of captains best,
The puissant man and subtle strategist,
Chuccar, the Karoosh king, and those two famed
Grew to his side, Hansa and Dimbic named,
Brave men and high of heart, and Corrusus,
Duntvaccar, Maghavahan, Corobhus,
Great kings; and the wide-ruler of the West
The Yavan lord upon whose gleaming crest
Burns the strange jewel wonderful, whose might
Is like the boundless Ocean's infinite,
Whose rule Narac obeys and Muruland.
King Bhagadutt owns Jarasandh's command,

Thy father's ancient friend, and more *with hand*[1]
Serves him than word. He only of the West
And southern end of earth who is possessed,
The hero Kuntivardhan Purujit
Feels for thee as a tender father might.
Chained by affection to thee is his heart
And by affection in thy weal has part.
To Jarasandh he whom I did not slay
Is gathered, he who must forsooth display
My signs, gives himself out god humanized
And man ideal, and for such is prized
Now in the world, a madman soiled of soul,
The tyrant of the Chedies, whose control
Poundra and Keerat own, a mighty lord,
King of Bengal and by the name adored
Of Poundrian Vasudev. The Bhoja strong
To whom wide lands, one fourth of all, belong,
Called friend of Indra—he made tameable
Pandya and Cruth and Kayshic by his skill
And science, and his brother Aacrity
Is very Parashuram in prowess—he,
Even Bheeshmuc, even this high, far-conquering king
To Jarasandh is vowed. We worshipping,
We who implore his favour, we his kin
Are utterly rejected, all our pain
Of benefaction met with sharp contempt,
Benefit with harm returned or evil attempt.

[1] or, *in gest*

He has forgot his birth, his pride, his name;
Blinded by Jarasandha's burning fame
To him is gone. To him high fortune yields;
Great nations leave their old ancestral fields.
The Bhojas of the North to western plain
Their eighteen clans transplanted, Shoorasen,
Shalwa, Patacchar, Kuntie, Bhadracar,
Susthal, Kulind, Sucutta. All that are
Of the Shalwaian kings brother or friend,
Are with their leaders gone, nor yet an end:
The Southern Panchals and in Kuntie-land
The Eastern Coshalas. Their native north
Abandoning the Matsyas have gone forth
And from their fear take southern sanctuary:
With them the clan Sannyastapad. Lastly
The warrior great Panchalas terrified
Have left their kingdoms and to every side
Are scattering before Jarasandh's name.
On us the universal tempest came,
When Kansa furiously crushed of old
The Yadavs: for to Kansa bad and bold
The son of Brihadrath his daughters gave
Born younger feminine to male Sahadave,
Ustie and Prapthie. In this tie made strong
His royal kin he overpowered; nor long,
Being supreme, ruled prudently, but grew
A tyrant and a fool. Whereupon drew
The Bhoja lords together, those whom tired
His cruelties, and these with me conspired

Seeking a national deliverer.
Therefore I rose and Ahuk's daughter, her
The sweet and slender, gave to Acrur,—then
Made free from tyranny my countrymen.
With me was Ram, the plougher of the foe;
Our swords laid Kansa and Sanaaman low.
Scarce was this inbred peril crossed and we
Safe, Jarasandh arose. Then laid their plans
By vast majority the eighteen clans,
That though we fought for ever, though we slew
With mighty blows infallible, o'erthrew
Foe upon foe, three centuries might take wing
Nor yet be slain the armies of the King.
For him and his two men like gods made strong,
Unslayable where the weapons thickest throng,
Hansa and Dimbhuc styled. Those two uniting,
Heroes, and Jarasandh heroic fighting
Might battle with assembled worlds and win;
Such was my thought, nor mine alone has been,
But all the kings this counsel entertain,
O wisest Yudhishthere. Now there was slain
By Ram in eight days' battle duelling
One Hansa truly named, a mighty king.
'Hansa is slain,' said one to Dimbhuc. Him
Hearing the Jumna's waters overwhelm
Devoted. Without Hansa here alone
He had not heart to linger, so is gone
His way to death. Of Dimbhuc's death when knew
Hansa, sacker of cities, he too drew

To the same waves that closed above his friend.
There were they joined in one o'erwhelming end.
This hearing Jarasandha discontent
With empty heart to his own city went.
The King being gone we in all joy again
In Mathura dwelt and our ancestral plain.
But she, the royal princess lotus-eyed,
Went to her father mourning; she, the pride
Of Jarasandh and Kansa's wife, and cried,
Spurring the mighty Maagadh, weeping: 'Kill
My husband's murderer, O my father,' and still,
'Kill him! ' But we minding the old thought planned
With heavy hearts out from our native land,
Son, friend and kinsman, all in fear *must flee*.[1]
Our endless riches' loose prolixity[2]
Unportable by division we compressed
And with it fared sadly into the West.
The lovely city, fair Kushasthaly,
With mountains beautiful, our colony
We made, the Ryevat mountains; and up-piled
Ramparts which even the gods in battle wild
Could hardly scale, ramparts which women weak
Might hold—of Vrishny's swords what need to speak?
Five are the leagues our dwelling place extends,
Three are the mountain-shoulders and each ends
An equal space: hundred-gated the town.
Each gate with heroism and renown

[1] Or, *flee fast*
[2] Or, *Our loose prolixity of riches vast*

Is bolted and has eighteen keys close-bound,
Eighteen strong bows in whom the trumpet's sound
Wakes headlong lust of war. Thousands as many
Our race. Ahuk has hundred sons nor any
Less than a god: And Charudeshna, he
With his dear brother, hero Satyaki,
Chacrodave, I, the son of Rohinie,
And Samba and Pradyumna, seven are we,
Seven strong men; nor other seven more weak,
Cunca and Shuncou, Kuntie and Someque,
Anadhrishty, Samitinjay, Critavurm;
Undhuk's two sons besides and the old King: firm
As adamant they, heroes energical.
These are the Vrishny men who lead there, all
Remembering the sweet middle lands we lost.
There we behold that flood of danger crossed
The Maagadh, Jarasandh, the mountain jaws
Impassable behold. There free from cause
Of fear, eastern or northern, Madhou's sons
Dwell glad of safety. Lo, we the mighty ones,
Because King Kansa married, to the West,
By Jarasandha utterly distressed,
Are fled, and there on Ryevat, hill of kine,
Find sanctuary from danger Magadhine.
Therefore though thou art with imperialness
Endiademed already, though the race
Of highborn princes thou must weld in one
And be their King and Emperor alone,
Yet not while Jarasandha liveth dream

That thou canst wear thy destined diadem.
Great Jarasandha living; for he brings
The princes of the earth and all her kings
And Girivraj with mighty prisoners fills,—
As in a cavern of the lordly hills,
A lion's homestead, slaughtered elephants lie,
So they a hecatomb of royalty
Wait their dire ending; for Magadha's King
A sacrifice of princes purposing,
With fierce asceticism of will adored
Mahadev mighty-minded, Uma's lord.
Conquering he moves towards his purpose, (brings
Army on army, kings on battling kings,
Victorious brings and binds and makes of men
His mountain-city a huge cattle-pen.
Us too his puissance drove in strange dismay
To the fair-gated city, Dwaraca.)
Therefore if of Imperial Sacrifice
Thou art ambitious, first, O Prince, devise
To rescue all those murdered kings and slay
King Jarasandha, since thus only may
The instituted Sacrifice attain
Its great proportion and immenser plan.
King, I have said; yet as thy deeper mind
Adviseth thee. Only when all's designed,
All reasons weighed, then give me word." "O thou
Art only wise," Yudhishthere cried: "Lo now
A word no other heart might soar so high
To utter; yet thy brave sagacity

Plainly hath phrased it; nor like thee on earth
Another loosener of doubts takes birth.[1]
(Behold, the earth is full of kings; they still
Each in his house do absolutely their will;
Yet who attains to empire? Nay, the word
Itself is danger.) He who has preferred
His enemy's greatness by sad study known,
How shall he late forget and praise his own?
Only who in his foemen's shock not thrown
Wins by ordeal praise, deserves the crown.
(This vast and plenteous earth, this mine of gems,
Is from a distance judged, how vast its realms,
Not from the dells. Nor otherwise, O pride
Of Vrishny's seed, man's greatness is espied.
In calm and sweet content is highest bliss,
Mine be the good that springs from chastened peace.)
Or I with this attempt hope not the crown
Of high supremacy to wear. Renown
Girds these and high-born mind; and so they deem
Lo I and I am warrior and supreme.
But we by Jarasandha's force alarmed
And all his bold tyrannies iron-armed
Shun the emprise. O hero, O high-starred,
In whose great prowess we have done and dared,
In whose heroic arm our safeties dwell,
Yet lo thou fearest him, deemst invincible
And where thou fearest, my conceit of strength

[1] Or, *Another sword of counsel shall take birth.*

Becomes a weakling's dream until at length
I hardly dare to hope by strongest men
This mighty Jarasandha can be slain,
Arjoon or Bheem or Rama or combined.
Thou, Keshav, in all things to me art mind."
Out Bheema spoke, the strong man eloquent:
"The unstrenuous king, unhardy, unvigilant
Sinks like an ant-hill; nor the weak-kneed less
Who on a stranger leans his helplessness.
But the unsleeping and resourceful man
With wide and adequate attempt oft can
His mightier enemy vanquish; him though feeble
His wished-for good attends invariable.
Krishna has policy and I have strength
And with our mother's son Dhananjay, length
Assured of victory dwells; we shall assail
Victoriously the Magadhan and quell
As triple fire a victim." Krishna then:
"Often we see that rash unthinking men
Imprudent undertake nor consequence
Envisage; yet will not his foe dispense
Therefore the one-ideaed and headstrong man.
Now since the virtuous age first began
Five emperors have reigned to history known,
Maroutta, Bharat, Yuvanaswa's son,
Great Bhagirath and Kartavirya old.
By wealth Maroutta conquered, Bharat bold
By armèd strength; Mandhata's victories
Enthroned him and his subtle soul and wise.

By strenuous greatness Kartavirya bent
The world, but Bhagirath beneficent
Gathered the willing nations to his sway.
But thou purposing like greatness, to one way
Not limited, restor'st the imperial five.
Their various masteries reunited live:
Virtue, high policy, wealth without dearth
And conquest and the rapid grasp at Earth—
Yet these avail not to make solely great.
Strong Jarasandha bars thee from thy fate,
(Whom not the hundred nations can deter
But with great might he grown an emperor;
The jewel-sceptred kings to serve him start.
Yet he in his unripe and violent heart)
Unsatisfied, assumes the tyrant's part.
He, the first man of men, lays his rude hand
On the anointed monarchs of the land
And pillages. Not one we see exempt.
How then shall feebler king his fall attempt?
Well-nigh a hundred in his sway are whelmed.
With these like cattle cleansed, like cattle hemmed
In Shiva's house, the dreadful Lord of beasts,
Purified as for sacrificial feasts,
Surely life's joy is turned to bitterness,
Not dying like heroes in the battle's press.
Honour is his who in swift battle falls
And best mid swords high death to princes calls.
In battle let us 'gainst the Maagadh thrust,
By battle ignominy repel. To just

Eighty and six the royal victims mount,
Fourteen remain to fill the dire account,
Who being won his horrid violence
No farther pause will brook. (Glory immense
He wins, glory most glorious who frustrates
Interposing the tyrant and amates.
Kings shall acclaim him lord inevitably.")
But Yudhishthere made answer passionately:
"Shall I, ambitious of imperial place,
Krishna, expose, in my mad selfishness,
Urged on by naked daring, men to death
Whom most I love? O Krishna, what is breath
To one that's mad and of his eyes bereft?
What joy has he that life to him is left?
These are my eyes, Thou Krishna art my mind,
Lo I have come as one who stumbles blind
Upon the trackless Ocean's spuming shore,
Then wakes, so I all confident before
Upon this dreadful man whom even death
Dare not in battle cross. What use is breath
Of hopeless effort? Mischief only can
Result to the too blindly daring man.
Better not undertaken, is my mind
On riper thought, than fruitlessly designed.
Nay, let us leave this purpose, wiser so
Than with eyes open to our death to go.
For all my heart within is broken and slain
Viewing the vast impracticable pain
Of Sacrifice Imperial." Then replied

To Yudhishthere great Partha in the pride
Of wonders self-attained, banner and car,
And palace Titan-built (and in the war
Quiver made inexhaustible) and great
Unequalled bow. "O King," he said, "since Fate
Has given me bow and shafts, a sword like flame,
Great lands and strength, courage, allies and fame,
Yea, such has given as men might covet long
And never win; O King, what more? For strong
Is Birth and conquers, cries the theorist
Conversant in deep books; but to my taste
Courage is strongest strength. How helps it then
The uncourageous that heroic men
His fathers were? From uncourageous sires
Who springs a hero, he to glory towers.
That man the name of Kshatriya merits best
Whose soul is ever to the battle drest.
Courage, all gifts denied, ploughs through amain
A sea of foes: courage without, in vain
All other gifts conspire; rather all gifts
Courage into a double stature lifts.
But conquest is in three great strengths complete—
Action, capacity, fate: where these three meet,
There conquest comes; nor strengths alone suffice;
Men by neglect forfeit their Paradise.
And this the cause the strong much-hated man
Before his enemies sinks. Hard 'tis to scan
Whether of these flaws strength most fatally,
A spirit poor or an o'erweening eye.

Both are destruction. Kings who highly aim
And court success, must either quite disclaim.
And if by Jarasandha's overthrow,
Rescuing Kings, to Sacrifice we go,
What fairer, what more glorious? Mighty prince,
Deeds unattempted virtue maimed evince.
In us when virtue dwells, why deemst thou, brother,
A nothingness the children of thy mother?
Easy it is the ochre gown to take
Afterwards, if for holy calmness' sake
We must the hermit virtues imitate.
But here is Empire! here a royal fate!
Let others quietism's sweets embrace;
We the loud battle seek, the foeman's face."
"In Kuntie's son and born of Bharat's race
What spirit should dwell, Arjoon's great words express,"
Said Krishna, "And of death we have no light
(Whether it comes by day or comes by night;
Nor this of mortal man was ever known
That one by going not to fight has grown
Immortal. Let him then who's man indeed
Clash forth against his foes, yet rule decreed
Of policy forget not: so his mind
Shall live at poise. For when in battle combined
Conduct meets long felicity, then high
Success must come nor two met equally
Equal can issue thence: from clash and strife
Of equals inequality takes life.
But rash impolicy with helplessness

Having joined issue in their mutual stress
Breed ruin huge; equality inglorious
Then doubt engenders, nor are both victorious.
Therefore in skilful conduct putting trust
If with our foe we grapple, fell him we must
As a wild torrent wrestling with a tree
Uproots and hurls it downward to the sea.
'Trying the weak points in thine enemy's mail,
Subtly thine own disguise, then prompt assail';
So runs the politic maxim of the wise
And to my mind rings just. If we devise
Secret, yet with no spot of treacherous blame,
To penetrate our foeman's house and limb
Grappling with limb, oh, won infallibly then
Our object is. Often one man of men
Pervades the nations like a soul, whose brow
Glory eternal-seeming wears; so now
This lion lord of men; but yet I deem
Shall that eternal vanish like a dream
In battle slaying him if at the last
By many swords we perish, so 'tis best.
We shall by death the happy skies attain,
Saving from tyranny our countrymen."

(*Canto 13 to canto 17, verse 10*)

IV

THE BOOK OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL

(3)

THE SLAYING OF JARASANDHA

Krishna pursued: "Now is the call of Fate,
Fallen is Dimbhuc, fallen Hansa great,
Kansa is slain and all his host; the hour
At last draws nigh when Jarasandha's power
Must bow to death; yet not in violent war
Is conquerable nor all the gods that are
Nor the embattled Titans overwhelm:
In deadly duel we must vanquish him.
Conduct is mine, strength Bheem's and in the field
Arjoon who is very victory stands to shield.
We will consume the Maagadh, King, believe,
As three strong fires a sacrifice achieve
If we three in a lonely place attain
To see him, no doubt is, the King of men
Duel with one of three will undertake,
In pride and strength and greed of glory's sake
Grandiose of heart, duel with Bheema claim
But Bheem great-armed, Bheem vigorous for him
Suffices, even as death that closes all
Sufficient is for the immense world's fall.
King, if my heart thou knowest and if trust

Thou hast in me at all, then as a just
And dear deposit in my hands implied
Bheem and Arjoona give." And the King cried,
"Achyuta, O Achyuta, never so,
O hero, speak, O slayer of the foe.
Thou art the Pandav's lord, their refuge thou.
Govinda, all thou speakest I avow
Truth merely; (whom thou guidest are not men
Fortune abandons. Nay, already slain
King Jarasandha is, rescued already
Those kings of earth, and won and greatly ready
Imperial Sacrifice, now that I stand,
O first of men, in thy controlling hand.
Quickly this work to accomplish, be it planned
But prudently; for without you no zest,
No courage I have to live, as one distressed,[1]
One overcome with sickness, who lives on
When life no meaning has but pain alone.)
Without the child of Pandu Krishna is none,
Nor possible without Krishna Pritha's son.
By Krishna led unvanquishable are these.
Splendid in strength, strongest of strong men is
Vricodar: joined and made a third with you,
Famous and noble, nought is he may not do.
(Well led the armèd multitudes effect
Great deeds, but led must be by men elect.
Blind and inert mere strength is, all its force

[1] For I shall live as lasts a man distressed,

Impetuous but a block. As by that course
Where dips the soil, there water's led and whence
A gap most opens rivermen lead thence
Water, even such is guiding policy.)
Therefore, Govinda, in thy hand are we,
Whom the world names its hero famousest
For conduct and in that great science best.
Krishna whose strength is wisdom, counsel, who
Is girded with resource, Krishna must you
Put in your van with action's every need:
So only action's purpose may succeed:
Arjoon by Krishna led, Bheem by Arjoon:
Then conduct, victory, strength—these three triune
Shall grow and conquer, making valour good."
He said, and those three huge in hardihood,
The Vrishny hero and the Pandavs twain,
Went forth to Magadha of happy men.
To Girivraj, the city of the hills,
A nation of the four-fold orders fills,
A prosperous race and glad, they travelled are,
Flushed with high festival and void of care
(A virgin city inviolable in war.)
So came they to the city gates where soared
The height by Brihadratha's sons adored
And all the people, one of peaks that stand,
Delightful hills, Chytyac, in Magadh land;—
Thither they storming came. There Rishabha,
The eater of forbidden flesh, to slay
Came Brihadrath the king (and slew and bound

Three war-drums with its hide whose threatening sound
Far borne through a whole month went echoing).
These in his city placed the Maagadh king.
(Covered with dust of glorious blossoms there
The drums hurled oft their thunders through the air.)
But now came storming to the Chytyacwall
The heroes and the war-drums broke and all
Upon the rampart fell as if to smite
The very head of Jarasandha's might:
Chytyuc, the ancient peak enorm, deep-based,
Ever with flowers and fragrance worshipped, vast
And famous, with Titanic force of arm
Assailed and overthrew with loud alarm;
So leaped exulting through no usual gate.
To war with Jarasandh they came, and yet
Weapons of war had none, with their arms merely
Sworded and shielded with the vow austerely
Assumed wherein men enter worldly life,
Snatucs. A town they saw with riches rife,
Food-mart and flower-mart and populous street,
In all desirable wealth grandly complete.
So went they mid the shops and highroad wide
And from the garland-makers in the pride
Of hostile strength fresh garlands violently
They mastered. Then in bright variety
Of garments many-hued the mighty three
With wreaths and burnished ear-rings bright aflame
To Jarasandha's lordly dwelling came.
As lions of the Himalaya eye

A cattle-pen, so they the palace high.
But on the Maagadh men amazement fell
Seeing those shapes of heroes formidable,
Like elephants in strength, broad-breasted, wide
And great of shoulder and like boles their arms
Of shaal trees mighty, fit for warlike harms;
Now sandal-smeared and rubbed with aloe-scent,
They through the courts in courage arrogant
Pass sternly, through three crowded courts attain
The royal presence freed from anxious pain.
And the great King arose, for them he judged
Worthy of high guest-offerings, nowise grudged
The water for the feet, the honied curds
And gifts of kine, but with deservèd words
Greeted them crying "Welcome, holy men."
And no word answered him the Pandavs twain.
Then Krishna in their midst, the man of mind,
Said only, "King of kings, these two must bind
Silence till midnight hour, envisaging
Their vow. Then will they speak to thee, O King."
So in the chamber sacrificial placed
They sojourned and the King with awe possessed
Returned to his high mansion. But when night
Was deep, went the strong arbiter of fight
To those three twice-born; for his vow preferred
Compelled him, through earth famous, when he heard
Of Snatac Brahmins in his city bright
To meet them even in the deep midnight.
And they indeed with strange astonishment

Dismayed him and their garments hue-besprent
Unwonted. As he came the three arose,
The lion men, the victors of their foes.
"Welfare, O King," they cried, and each on each
They looked and scanned the King awaiting speech.
Then to those lords concealed in priestly dress
The King said with his haughty graciousness,
"Sit, holy men." They sat, heroic forms
Blazing with mightier beauty than informs
The fires of sacrifice, when a great king
Sacrifices. And sternly censuring
Disguise and travesty of shape sincere
The conqueror steadfast, "Why come you here,
Not as the Snatac, in this transient world
Who takes the household vow, the Brahmin. Curled
Garlands he wears not, smears not sandal paste.
What names are yours who come in flowers dressed,
Upon your mighty arms the bowstring scored
(And wearing heroism like a sword,)
Yet Brahminhood pretend? Speak truth whence springs
Your race. (Truth is the ornament of kings.)
Splitting the Chytyuc peak fiercely you came,
Yet wear a vain disguise to hide a flame
Yourselves reveal. Where no gate was, no path
Allowed, you entered, nor a monarch's wrath
Calamitous feared; and are ye Brahmins? Bright
In speech the Brahmin; speech his only might
And prowess. You whose deeds your caste deny,
What needing come you to my palace high?

And wherefore took you not the offering
To guests observed but scorned Magadha's King?"
Then Krishna in a deep and quiet voice
Replied, adept in words of exquisite choice.
"Brahmins thou deemest us whom duties call
Worldward, but Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vyshya, all
Equal entitled are to Snatachood.
Vows personal, vows general, both are good.
But those the Kshatriya's majesty prepare,
To Kshatriyas those belong. Flowers if we wear,
Who decks his aspiration stern with flowers,
The majesty he wins outbraves the hours.
(Rightly thou sayest, King, the Kshatriya's might
Speaks from his arm, in words has no delight,
Wild words and many uses not; for God
Set in the arm, its natural abode,
The Kshatriya prowess) (which if thou aspire
To see, surely we will not baulk desire;
Today thou shalt behold it.) Nor debate
Of path allowable and door and gate.
No gate is in the house of enemies.
By the plain door a friend's house entered is,
But by no door with ruin impetuous
A foeman's. These are virtue's gates and thus
Enters the self-possessed, right-seeing man.
Nor offering hospitable take we can
In foemen's house with deeds upon our hands.
This is our vow and this eternal stands".
And Jarasandh replied, "Enmity, strife

I can recall not gazing through my life,
Brahmins, with you begun, nor aught that men
Pervert to hatred. Wherefore call you then
A sinless man your enemy? The good
One practice keep, one rule well understood;
And he, the Kshatriya who with causeless blame
Lightly has taxed the innocent, he with maim
Virtue curtails inheriting remorse:
But he in virtue conversant, in force
A warrior among warriors, if he act
Other than good, has with his own hand hacked
(His own felicity here and there his soul
Following the sinner's way shall reach the sinner's goal.
Throughout the triple universe confessed
The Kshatriya virtue, Kshatriya life is best
For nobleness, for goodness. Other rule
They praise not who have learned in virtue's school.
That virtue and that life are mine. Steadfast
Today I stand in them with spirit braced,
Sinless before my people. And ye prate
Madness." Krishna made sterner answer: "Great
Is he who sent us, of a mighty strain
Upbearer, and upon his shoulders lain
The burden of a deed for kindred blood.
From him we come upon thee like a flood.
Sinless dost thou, O Jarasandha, claim
And thou the world's great princes dost o'erwhelm
Gathered for cruel slaughter? When before
Did kings on good kings tyranny explore?

But thou, a king, hast conquered and subdued,
And Rudra's altar thou wouldst have imbrued
With blood of kings for victims. On our head
Their piteous blood shall lie which thy hands shed.
For we are Virtue's and in her have force
Virtue to bulwark. (Giving tyranny course,
We share the sin.) Not yet the world has seen
That crowning horror, butchery of men.
O man, how couldst thou to a god devise,
To Shankara, a human sacrifice?
(It is thy blood, thy kind thou levellest
Comparing human natures with the beast.)
Is there a man in all the world whose mind
Like thine is violent, like thine is blind?
But this remember, not with the deed man does
There is an end; he reaps from what he sows
And as he planted such the fruit he sees:
(Footprints his action left, Fate treads in these.)
Therefore 'gainst thee, destroyer of our caste,
We, champions of the miserable oppressed,
For rescue of our kindred men are here
To slay thee. But thou sayest "What should I fear?
There is no man in all the Kshatriya race
And I am he alone." Great witlessness
Is thine, O King, and error most unjust.
What Kshatriya has a soul and lives but must
Recall with pride his birth from valiant men?
Who would not by the way of battle then
Enter the doors of Paradise eterne,

Felicitous gates. When paradise to earn
Heroes to war as to a sacrifice
Initiate go, resistless then they rise
Conquering Nature. (Veda fathers heaven;
To glory excellent its gates are given;
Austerity masters it. In battle who falls
He most infallibly wins the happy halls.
For what is Indra's heaven, what Paradise?
Heaven in noble deeds and virtue lies.)
By these the myriad-sacrificing god
Conquered the Titans and the world bestrode.
And what more excellent way to heaven than strife
With thee? Nor thou by lustiness of life
Deceived and thy huge armies Magadhine
Maddening with strength thy foemen quite disdain.
In many hearts a fire of courage dwells
That equals thine, nay, maybe, far excels.
While these are hidden in the hands of fate,
So long thou art supreme, but so long great.
Yes, I will speak it, we, even we, can bear
The brunt of all thy greatness. King, forbear
Pride with thy equals and vain insolence.
(O King, why wilt thou with thy son go hence,
With all thy captains and great men below
To Yama's melancholy mansions go?
Were there not kings as great as thou? Who strove
With Brihadrath, Cartoveria, Dambhodbhove,
High Uttara? All they are sunk unmourned,
Great kings and mighty captains; for they scorned

Mightier than they.) No Brahmins, learn, are we,
Antagonists of thy supremacy.
Shourian I am and Hrishikesha styled;
These are the Pandav heroes. Brother's child
I of their mother am—Krishna, thy foe.
Take our defiance, King. In battle show
Thy steadfast courage, prince of Magadha,
Or while thou mayst, escape. Either this day
Release the captive princes all or die."
Then answered Jarasandha puissantly:
"Not without conquest I collect amain
Princes; who is there penned my walls within
And not in equal battle overthrown?
This is the law and life to Kshattriyas known,
To battle and subdue and work their will
Upon the conquered, Krishna. Owable
Upon God's altar I have gathered these;
And shall I for ignoble fear release,
While yet the Kshattriya blood beats in my veins,
And yet one Kshattriya thought unquenched remains?
Army with battled army, single gage
With single or alone I will engage
With two or three together or one by one."
So spake the King and ordered that his son
Be straight anointed for the kingdom's needs.
(Himself must fight with men of dreadful deeds.)
And inthat hour King Jarasandha sighed
Remembering great captains who had died,
Cowshic and Chitrasane, (but other names

Men gave in converse with world-wide acclaims,
Hamsa and Dimbhuc calling). Of them that night
Recalled and shadow of the coming fight.
Then spake the Yadove pure and eloquent,
Seeing the monarch upon battle bent:
"With which of three will thy heart battle dare,
O King, or which of us shall now prepare
For battle?" Then that famous royal man,
The Maagadh Jarasandh, with Bhimasen
Chose battle. Wreaths, pigment of augury
Bovine and all auspicious grammary,
Medicaments beside that lighten pain
Or call the fugitive senses back again,
The high priest brought for Jarasandh and read
The word of blessing o'er the monarch's head.

(*From cantos 20, 21, 22 and 24*)

UDYOGAPARVA

CANTO I

Notes on the Mahabharata dealing with the authenticity of each separate canto i. e. whether it belongs or not to the original epic of 24,000 slokas on the great catastrophe of the Bharatas.

1. *Kurupravīrāḥ...sapakṣāḥ.* This may mean in Vyasa's elliptic manner the Great Kurus (i.e. the Pandavas) and those of their side. Otherwise "The Kuru heroes of his own side" i.e. Abhimanyu's, which is awkward.

3. *Vṛddhau.* This supplies the reason of their preeminence.

कृत्वा विवाहं तु कुरुप्रवीरास्तदाऽभिमन्योर्मुदिताः सपक्षाः ।
विश्रम्य रात्रावुषसि प्रतीताः सभां विराटस्य ततोऽभिजग्मुः ॥१॥
सभा तु सा मत्स्यपतेः समृद्धा मणिप्रवेकोत्तमरत्नचित्रा ।
न्यस्तासना माल्यवती सुगन्धा तामभ्ययुस्ते नरराजवर्याः ॥२॥
अथासनान्याविशतां पुरस्तादुभौ विराटद्रुपदौ नरेन्द्रौ ।
वृद्धौ च मान्यौ पृथिवीपतीनां पित्रा समं रामजनार्दनौ च ॥३॥
पाञ्चालराजस्य समीपतस्तु शिनिप्रवीरः सहरौहिणेयः ।
मत्स्यस्य राज्ञस्तु सुसन्निकृष्टौ जनार्दनश्चैव युधिष्ठिरश्च ॥४॥

5. *Pradyumna-sāmbau ca yudhi pravīrau.* This establishes Pradyumna and Samba as historical sons of Krishna.

6. *Virāṭaputraiṣca.* Virata has therefore several sons, three at least.

7. The simile is strictly in the style of Vyasa who cares little for newness or ingenuity, so long as the image called up effects the purpose. The assonance *rarāja sā rājavatī* is an epic assonance altogether uncommon in Vyasa and due evidently to the influence of Valmiki.

8. Strong, brief and illumining strokes of description which add to the naturalness of the scene while also adding a touch that reveals the inwardness of the situation.

9. *Sumahodayam*—having mighty consequences. *Sanghaṭṭitāḥ*—surely means assembled and nothing else.

सुताश्च सर्वे द्रुपदस्य राज्ञो भीमार्जुनौ माद्रवतीसुतौ च।
प्रद्युम्नसाम्बौ च युधि प्रवीरौ विराटपुत्रैश्च सहाभिमन्युः ॥५॥

सर्वे च शूराः पितृभिः समाना वीर्येण रूपेण बलेन चैव।
उपाविशन्द्रौपदेयाः कुमाराः सुवर्णचित्रेषु वरासनेषु ॥६॥

तथोपविष्टेषु महारथेषु विराजमानाभरणाम्बरेषु।
रराज सा राजवती समृद्धा ग्रहैरिव द्यौर्विमलैरुपेता ॥७॥

ततः कथास्ते समवाययुक्ताः कृत्वा विचित्राः पुरुषप्रवीराः।
तस्थुर्मुहूर्तं परिचिन्तयन्तः कृष्णं नृपास्ते समुदीक्षमाणाः ॥८॥

कथान्तमासाद्य च माधवेन संघट्टिताः पाण्डवकार्यहेतोः।
ते राजसिंहाः सहिता ह्यशृण्वन्वाक्यं महार्थं सुमहोदयं च ॥९॥

10. *Ayam*—here beside me. See verse 4. Yudhishthira is sitting just by Krishna separated by Virata.

11. *Tarasā. Taras* expresses any swift, violent and impetuous act, anything that has the momentum of strength and impulse or fire and energy.

Satyarathaiḥ. This is a word of doubtful import; it may mean "of unerring chariots" i.e. skilful fighters, or else "honourable fighters", *rathaḥ* being used as in *māhārathaḥ, ādirathaḥ* fighter in a chariot. Cf. *Satyaparākramaḥ.* In the first case the epithet would be otiose and ornamental and an epic assonance. I cannot think however that Vyasa was capable of putting a purely decorative epic epithet in so emphatic a place. It must surely mean either "*honourable fighters*" or "making truth their chariot"; *ratha* being used as in *manoratha* etc. The latter however is almost too much a flight of fancy for Vyasa.

13. It will be seen from Krishna's attitude here as elsewhere that he was very far from being the engineer and

सर्वं भवद्भिर्विदितं यथाऽयं युधिष्ठिरः सौबलेनाक्षवत्याम् ।
जितो निकृत्याऽपहृतं च राज्यं वनप्रवासे समयः कृतश्च ॥१०॥
शक्तैर्विजेतुं तरसा महीं च सत्ये स्थितैः सत्यरथैर्यथावत् ।
पाण्डोः सुतैस्तद्व्रतमुग्ररूपं वर्षाणि षट् सप्त च चीर्णमग्र्यैः ॥११॥
त्रयोदशश्चैव सुदुस्तरोऽयमज्ञायमानैर्भवतां समीपे ।
क्लेशानसह्यान्विविधान्सहद्भिर्महात्मभिश्चापि वने निविष्टम् ॥१२॥
एतैः परप्रेष्यनियोगयुक्तैरिच्छद्भिराप्तं स्वकुलेन राज्यम् ।
एवं गते धर्मसुतस्य राज्ञो दुर्योधनस्यापि च यद्धितं स्यात् ॥१३॥

subtle contriver of war into which later ideas have deformed him. That he came down to force on war and destroy the Kshatriya caste, whether to open India to the world or for other cause, is an idea that was not present to the mind of Vyasa. Later generations writing, when the pure Kshatriya caste had almost disappeared, attributed this motive for God's descent upon earth, just as a modern English Theosophist, perceiving British rule established in India, has added the corollary that he destroyed the Kshatriyas (five thousand years ago, according to her own belief) in order to make the line clear for the English. What Vyasa, on the other hand, makes us feel is that Krishna, though fixed to support justice at every cost, was earnestly desirous to support it by peaceful means if possible. His speech is an evident attempt to restrain the eagerness of the Matsyas and Panchalas who were bent on war as the only means of overthrowing the Kuru domination.

14. Krishna's testimony to Yudhishthira's character is here of great importance. That Yudhishthira has deserved this character to the letter so far anyone who has followed the story will admit. If he acts in diametrical opposition to this character in any future passage we shall have some ground to pause before we admit the genuineness of the passage.

तच्चिन्तयध्वं कुरुपाण्डवानां धर्म्यं च युक्तं च यशस्करं च।
अधर्मयुक्तं न च कामयेत राज्यं सुराणामपि धर्मराजः ॥१४॥

15. *Bubhūṣet*—desiderative of *bhū* in the sense of "get, obtain", "would aspire after"

16. *Mithyopacāreṇa*—by fradulent procedure.

That is, if Duryodhana had taken the kingdom from the Pandavas in fair war by his own energy and genius (*svatejasā*), he would not have transgressed the ordinary Dharma of the Kshatriya. In that case the Pandavas might have accepted the verdict of Fate and refrained from plunging the country in farther bloodshed.

17. *Prapīḍya*—by force, pressure; as a result of conquest in open battle.

18. *Tu.* The force is "But you know what the Dhartarashtras are, their fierceness, falseness and land hunger, —how even in the childhood of the Pandavas these, their banded foemen, sought to slay them by various means."

Bālāstvime. In allusion to the early persecution of the Pandavas by Duryodhana. If we accept this Parva in its

धर्मार्थयुक्तं तु महीपतित्वं ग्रामेऽपि कस्मिंश्चिदयं बुभूषेत् ।
पित्र्यं हि राज्यं विदितं नृपाणां यथाऽपकृष्टं धृतराष्ट्रपुत्रैः ॥१५॥

मिथ्योपचारेण यथा ह्यनेन कृच्छ्रं महत्प्राप्तमसह्यरूपम् ।
न चापि पार्थो विजितो रणे तैः स्वतेजसा धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्रैः ॥१६॥

तथाऽपि राजा सहितः सुहृद्भिरभीप्सतेऽनामयमेव तेषाम् ।
यत्तु स्वयं पाण्डुसुतैर्विजित्य समाहृतं भूमिपतीन्प्रपीड्य ॥१७॥

तत्प्रार्थयन्ते पुरुषप्रवीराः कुन्तीसुता माद्रवतीसुतौ च ।
बालास्त्विमे तैर्विविधैरुपायैः संप्रार्थिता हन्तुमभित्रसङ्घैः ॥१८॥

completeness, we must accept the genuineness in the main of the early narrative of the Adi Parva in so far as it is covered by the sloka. Notice especially *vividahirupāyaiḥ*.

19. This seems to point to the Digvijaya Parva; but the reference is general and may apply to the Rajasuya generally.

22. *Tathāpi*—for all their good will. It is part of the inverted commas implied in *iti*.

23. *Eva*—at least.

Yathāvat—definitely; though they may form a shrewd guess.

24. *Rajyārdhadānāya*. Krishna does not, at present at any rate, suggest a compromise; let them first make their full claim to which they are entitled (notice genitive).

राज्यं जिहीर्षद्भिरसद्भिरग्रैः सर्वं च तद्वो विदितं यथावत् ।
तेषां च लोभं प्रसमीक्ष्य वृद्धं धर्मज्ञतां चापि युधिष्ठिरस्य ॥१९॥
संबन्धितां चापि समीक्ष्य तेषां मतिं कुरुध्वं सहिताः पृथक्च ।
इमे च सत्येऽभिरताः सदैव तं पालयित्वा समयं यथावत् ॥२०॥
अतोऽन्यथा तैरुपचर्यमाणा हन्युः समेतान्धृतराष्ट्रपुत्रान् ।
तैर्विप्रकारं च निशम्य कार्यं सुहृज्जनास्तान्परिवारयेयुः ॥२१॥
युद्धेन बाधेयुरिमांस्तथैवं तैर्बाध्यमाना युधि तांश्च हन्युः ।
तथाऽपि नेमेऽल्पतयाऽसमर्थास्तेषां जयायेति भवेन्मतिर्वः ॥२२॥
समेत्य सर्वे सहिताः सुहृद्भिस्तेषां विनाशाय यतेयुरेव ।
दुर्योधनस्यापि मतं यथावन्न ज्ञायते किं नु करिष्यतीति ॥२३॥
अज्ञायमाने च मते परस्य मन्त्रस्य पारं कथमभ्युपेमः ।
तस्मादितो गच्छतु धर्मशीलः शुचिः कुलीनः पुरुषोऽप्रमत्तः ॥२४॥

This canto is in the very finest and most characteristic style of Vyasa; precise, simple and hardy in phrasing, with a strong, curt, decisive movement and a pregnant mode of expression, in which a kernel of thought is expressed and its corollaries suggested so as to form a thought-atmosphere around it. There is no superfluous or lost word or sentence, but each goes straight to its mark and says something which wanted to be said. The speech of Krishna is admirably characteristic of the man as we have seen him in the Sabhaparva; firm and precise in outlook and sure of its own drift, it is yet full of an admirable and disinterested statesmanlike broadmindedness.

दूतः समर्थः प्रशमाय तेषां राज्यार्धदानाय युधिष्ठिरस्य ।
निशम्य वाक्यं तु जनार्दनस्य धर्मार्थयुक्तं मधुरं समं च ।
समाददे वाक्यमथाग्र्यजोऽस्य संपूज्य वाक्यं तदतीव राजन् ॥२५॥

Purohitayāna. This title is evidently a misnomer; there is no mention of the Purohita, far less does he set out as yet nor need we suppose he is hinted at in the description of a suitable envoy. It is doubtful whether Krishna would have singled out a Panchala Purohita as the best intermediary between the Kurus for he evidently desired to try conciliation first, before resorting to threats. The choice of the Purohita was that of King Drupada and the leaders of the Brahmavarta nations who desired to break the supremacy among them of the Kurus.

Valmiki

THE GENIUS OF VALMIKI

OUT of the infinite silence of the past, peopled only to the eye of history or the ear of the Yogin, a few voices arise which speak for it, express it and are the very utterance and soul of those unknown generations, of that vanished and now silent humanity. These are the voices of the poets. We whose souls are drying up in this hard and parched age of utilitarian and scientific thought when men value little beyond what gives them exact and useful knowledge or leads them to some outward increase of power and pleasure, we who are beginning to neglect and ignore poetry and can no longer write it greatly and well,—just as we have forgotten how to sculpture like the Greeks, paint like the mediaeval Italians or build like the Buddhists—are apt to forget this grand utility of the poets, one noble faculty among their many divine and unusual powers. The Kavi or Vates, poet and seer, is not the *manīṣī*; he is not the logical thinker, scientific analyser or metaphysical reasoner; his knowledge is one not with his thought, but with his being; he has not arrived at it but has it in himself by virtue of his power to become one with all that is around him. By some form of spiritual, vital and emotional oneness he is what he sees; he is the hero thundering in the forefront of the battle, the mother

weeping over her dead, the tree trembling violently in the storm, the flower warmly penetrated with the sunshine. And because he is these things, therefore he knows them; because he knows thus, spiritually and not rationally, he can write of them. He feels their delight and pain, he shares their virtue and sin, he enjoys their reward or bears their punishment. It is for this reason that poetry written out of the intellect is so inferior to poetry written out of the soul, is,—even as poetical thinking,—so inferior to the thought that comes formed by inscrutable means out of the soul. For this reason, too, poets of otherwise great faculty have failed to give us living men and women or really to show to our inner vision even the things of which they write eloquently or sweetly because they are content to write about them after having seen them with the mind only, and have not been able or have not taken care first to be the things of which they would write and then not so much write about them as let them pour out in speech that is an image of the soul. They have been too easily attracted by the materials of poetry, *artha* and *śabda*; drawn by some power and charm in the substance of speech, captivated by some melody, harmony or colour in the form of speech, arrested by some strong personal emotion which clutches at experience or gropes for expression in these externals of poetry, they have forgotten to bathe in the Muses' deepest springs.

Therefore among those ancient voices, even when the literature of the ages has been winnowed and chosen by

Time, there are very few who recreate for us in poetic speech deeply and mightily the dead past, because they were that past, not so much themselves as the age and nation in which they lived and not so much even the age and nation as that universal humanity which in spite of all differences, under them and within them, even expressing its unity through them, is the same in every nation and in every age. Others give us only fragments of thought or outbursts of feeling or reveal to us scattered incidents of sight, sound and outward happening. These are complete, vast, multitudinous, infinite in a way, impersonal, many-personed in their very personality, not divine workmen merely but fine creators endowed by God with something of His divine power and offering therefore in their works some image of His creative activity.

(*Incomplete*)

Translations

I

THE BOOK OF THE WILD FOREST*

CANTO I

THEN, possessing his soul, Rama entered the great forest, the forest Dundac with difficulty approachable by men and beheld a circle there of hermitages of ascetic men; a refuge for all living things, with ever well-swept courts and strewn with many forms of beasts and swarming with companies of birds and holy high and temperate sages graced those homes. The high of energy approached them unstringing first his mighty bow and they beholding him like a rising moon with wonder in their looks gazed at the fabric of his beauty and its glory and softness and garbed grace and at Vaidehie too with unfalling eyelids they gazed and Luxman; for they were things of amazement to those dwellers in the woods. Great-natured sages occupied in doing good to all living things, they made him sit a guest in their leafy home and burning with splendour of soul like living fires they offered him guest-worship due and presented all things of auspice, full of high gladness in the act, roots, flowers and fruits they gave, yea, all the hermitage they laid at the feet of

* *Araṇyakāṇḍa*

Rama. And high-souled, learned in righteousness they said to him with outstretched and upward folded palms: "For that he is the keeper of the virtue of all this folk, a refuge and a mighty fame, high worship and honour are the king's, and he holds the staff of justice and is reverend to all. Of Indra's self he is the fourth part and protects the people. O seed of Raghou, therefore he enjoys noble and beautiful pleasures and to him men bow down. Thou shouldst protect us, then, dwellers in thy dominions; for whether the city hold thee or the wilderness, still art thou the king and the master of the folk. But we, O king, have laid by the staff of offence, we have put anger from us and the desire of the senses and 'tis thou must protect us always, ascetics rich in austerity but helpless as children in the womb.

CANTO 2

Now when he had taken of their hospitality, Rama towards the rising of the sun took farewell of all these seers and plunged into mere forest scattered through with many beasts of the chase and haunted by the tiger and the bear. There he, and Luxman following him, saw a desolation in the midmost of that wood, for blasted were tree and creeper and bush and water was nowhere to be seen, but the forest was full of the screaming of vultures and rang with the crickets' cry. And walking with Sita there Cacootstha in that haunt of fierce wild beasts beheld the appearance like a mountain peak and heard

the thundering roar of an eater of men; deep set were his eyes and huge his face, hideous was he and hideous bellied, horrid, rough and tall, deformed and dreadful to the gaze and wore a tiger's skin moist with fat and streaked with gore, a terror to all creatures even as death the ender when he comes with yawning mouth. Three lions, four tigers, two wolves, ten spotted deer and the huge fat-smeared head of an elephant with its tusks he had stuck up on an iron spit and roared with a mighty sound. As soon as he saw Rama and Luxman and Sita Maithili he ran upon them in sore wrath like Death the ender leaping on the nations. And with a terrible roar that seemed to shake the earth he took Vaidehie up in his arms and moved away and said, "You who wearing the ascetic's cloth and matted locks, O ye whose lives are short, yet with a wife have you entered Dundac woods and you bear the arrow, sword and bow, how is this that you being anchorites hold your dwelling with a woman's beauty? Workers of unrighteousness, who are ye, evil men, disgrace to the garb of the seer? I Viradha the Rakshasa range armed these tangled woods eating the flesh of the sages. This woman with the noble hips shall be my spouse, but as for you, I will drink in battle your sinful blood." Evil-souled Viradha speaking thus wicked words, Sita heard his haughty speech, alarmed she shook in her apprehension as a plantain trembles in the storm-wind. The son of Raghou seeing the beautiful Sita in Viradha's arms said to Luxman, his face drying up with grief, "Behold, O my brother, the daughter

of Janak, lord of men, my wife of noble life taken into Viradha's arms, the king's daughter high-splendoured and nurtured in utter ease! The thing Kaikeyie desired, the thing dear to her that she chose for a gift, how quickly today, O Luxman, has it been utterly fulfilled, she whose foresight was not satisfied with the kingdom for her son, but she sent me, beloved of all beings, to the wild woods. Now today she has her desire, that middle mother of mine. For no worse grief can befall me than that another should touch Vaidehie and that my father should perish and my own kingdom be wrested from my hands." So Cacootstha spoke and Luxman answered him, his eyes filled with the rush of grief, panting like a furious snake controlled, "O thou who art like Indra and the protector of this world's creatures, why dost thou afflict thyself as if thou wert one who has himself no protector, even though I am here, the servant of thy will? Today shall the Rakshasa be slain by my angry shaft and Earth drink the blood of Viradha dead. (The wrath that was born in me against Bharat for his lust of rule, I will loose upon Viradha as the Thunderer hurls his bolt against a hill.)"

Canto 3

Then Viradha spoke yet again and filled the forest with his voice. "Answer to my questioning, who are ye and whither do ye go?" And Rama answered to the Rakshasa with his mouth of fire, in his pride of strength he answered

his questioning and declared his birth in Ikshwaku's line. "Kshatriyas accomplished in virtue know us to be, farers in this forest, but of thee we would know who thou art that rangest Dundac woods." And to Rama of enormous might Viradha made reply: "Java's son am I, Shatahrida was my dam and Viradha am I called by all Rakshasas on earth...

II

AN ARYAN CITY*

COSHALA by the Soroyou, a land
Smiling at heaven, of riches measureless
And corn abounding glad; in that great country
Ayodhya was, the city world-renowned,
Ayodhya by King Manou built, immense.
Twelve yojans long the mighty city lay
Grandiose, and wide three yojans. Grandly spaced
Ayodhya's streets were and the long highroad
Ran through it spaciously with sweet cool flowers
Hourly new-paved and hourly watered wide.
Dussarutha in Ayodhya, as in heaven
Its natural lord, abode, those massive walls
Ruling, and a great people in his name
Felt greater,—door and wall and ponderous arch
And market places huge. Of every craft
Engines mechanical and tools there thronged,
And Craftsmen of each guild and manner. High rang
With heralds and sonorous eulogists
The beautiful bright city imperial.
High were her bannered edifices reared,
With theatres and dancing-halls for joy

* *Bāla Kāṇḍa*: *Sarga* 5

Of her bright daughters, and sweet-scented parks
Were round and gardens cool. High circling all
The city with disastrous engines stored
In hundreds, the great ramparts like a zone
Of iron spanned in her moated girth immense
Threatening with forts the ancient sky. Defiant
Ayodhya stood, armed, impregnable,
Inviolable in her virgin walls.
And in her streets was ever large turmoil,
Passing of elephants, the steed and ox,
Mules and rich-laden camels. And through them drove
The powerful barons of the land, great wardens
Of taxes, and from countries near and far
The splendid merchants came much marvelling
To see those orgulous high builded homes
With jewels curiously fretted, topped
With summer houses for the joy of girls,
Like some proud city in heaven. Without a gap
On either side as far as eye could reach
Mass upon serried mass the houses rose,
Seven-storied architectures metrical
Upon a level base, and made sublime.
Splendid Ayodhya octagonally built,
The mother of beautiful women and of gems
A world. Large granaries of rice unhusked
She had and husked rice for the fire, and sweet
Her water, like the cane's delightful juice,
Cool down the throat. And a *real* voice throbbed of drums.
The tabour and the tambourine, while ever

The lyre with softer rumours intervened.
Nor only was she grandiosely built,
A city without earthly peer,—her sons
Were noble, warriors whose arrows scorned to pierce
The isolated man from friends cut off
Or guided by a sound to smite the alarmed
And crouching fugitive, but with sharp steel
Sought out the lion in his den or grappling
Unarmed they murdered with their mighty hands
The tiger roaring in his trackless woods
Or the mad tusked boar. Even such strong arms
Of heroes kept that city and in her midst
Regnant king Dussaruth the nations ruled.

III

SPEECH OF DUSSARUTH TO THE ASSEMBLED STATES-GENERAL OF HIS EMPIRE*

Then with a far reverberating sound
As of a cloud in heaven or war-drum's call
Deep-voiced to battle and with echoings
In the wide roof of his majestic voice
That like the resonant surges onward rolled
Moving men's hearts to joy, a King to Kings
He spoke and all they heard him.

"It is known
To you, O princes, how this noblest realm
Was by my fathers ruled, the kings of old
Who went before me, even as one dearest son
Is by his parents cherished; therefore I too
Would happier leave than when my youth assumed
Their burden, mankind, my subjects, and this vast
World-empire of the old Ikshwacou kings.
Lo I have trod in those imperial steps
My fathers left, guarding with sleepless toil
The people while strength was patient in this frame
O'erburdened with the large majestic world.
But now my body broken is and old,

* *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa: Sarga* 2, ll. 1-20

Aging beneath the shadow of the white
Canopy imperial and outworn with long
Labouring for the good of all mankind.
My people, Nature fails me! I have lived
Thousands of years and many lives of men
And all my worn heart wearies for repose.
Weary am I of bearing up this heavy
Burden austere of the great world, duties
Not sufferable by souls undisciplined:
O folk, to rest from greatness I desire.
Therefore with your august, assembled will,
O powers and O twice-born nations, I
Would share with Rama this great kingdom's crown,
Rama, my warrior son, son by kingly birth
And by gifts inherited confessed my son,
Rama, a mighty nation's joy. Less fair,
Yoked with his favouring constellation bright,
The regent moon shall be than Rama's face,
When morn upon his crowning smiles. O folk,
Say then shall Luxman's brother be your lord,
Glory's high favourite who empire breathes?
Yea, if the whole vast universe should own
My son for king, it would be kinged indeed
And regal: Lords, of such desirable
Fortune I would possess this mother of men;
Then would I be at peace, at last repose
Transferring to such shoulders Earth. Pronounce
If I have nobly planned, if counselled well;
Grant me your high permissive voices; People,

But if my narrower pleasure, private hope,
Of welfare general the smooth disguise
Have in your censure donned, then let the folk
Themselves advise their monarch or command.
For other is disinterested thought
And by the clash of minds dissimilar
Counsel increases."

Then with a deep sound
As when a cloud with rain and thunder armed
Invades the skies, the jewelled peacocks loud
Clamour, assembled monarchs praised their king.
And like a moving echo came the voice
Of the great commons answering them, a thunder
And one exultant roar. Earth seemed to rock
Beneath the noise. Thus by their Emperor high
Admitted to his will great conclave was
Of clergy and of captains and of kings
And of the people of the provinces
And of the people metropolitan: all these
Deliberated and became one mind.
Resolved, they answered then their aged king.

IV

A MOTHER'S LAMENT*

"Hadst thou been never born, Rama, my son,
Born for my grief, I had not felt such pain,
A childless woman. For the barren one
Grief of the heart companions, only one,
Complaining, "I am barren"; this she mourns,
She has no cause for any deeper tears.
But I am inexperienced in delight
And never of my husband's masculine love
Had pleasure,—still I lingered, still endured
Hoping to be acquainted yet with joy.
Therefore full many unlovely words that strove
To break the suffering heart had I to hear
From wives of my husband, I the Queen and highest,
From lesser women. Ah, what greater pain
Than this can women have who mourn on earth,
Than this my grief and infinite lament?
O Rama, even at thy side so much
I have endured, and if thou goest hence,
Death is my certain prospect, death alone.
Cruelly neglected, grievously oppressed
I have lived slighted in my husband's house

* *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa: Sarga* 20. ll. 36-55

As though Kaikayie's serving-woman,—nay,
A lesser thing than these. If any honours,
If any follows me, even that man
Hushes when he beholds Kaikayie's son.
How shall I in my misery endure
That bitter mouth intolerable, bear
Her ceaseless petulance. Oh, I have lived
Seventeen years since thou wast born, my son,
O Rama, seventeen long years have I lived,
Wearily wishing for an end to grief;
And now this mighty anguish without end!
I have no strength to bear for ever pain;
Nor this worn heart with suffering fatigued
To satisfy the scorn of rivals yields
More tears. Ah how shall I without thy face
Miserably exist, without thy face,
My moon of beauty, miserable days?
Me wretched, who with fasts and weary toil
And dedicated musings reared thee up,
Vainly. Alas, the river's giant banks,
How great they are! and yet when violent rain
Has levelled their tops with water, they descend
In ruin, not like this heart which will not break.
But I perceive death was not made for me,
For me no room in those stupendous realms
Has been discovered; since not even today
As on a mourning hind the lion falls
Death seizes me or to his thicket bears
With his huge leap,—death ender of all pain.

How livest thou, O hard, O iron heart,
Unbroken, O body, tortured by such grief,
How sinkst thou not all shattered to the earth?
Therefore I know death comes not called—he waits
Inexorably his time. But this I mourn,
My useless vows, gifts, offerings, self-control.
And dire ascetic strenuousness perfected
In passion for a son,—yet all like seed
Fruitless and given to ungrateful soil.
But if death came before his season, if one
By anguish of unbearable heavy grief
Naturally might win him, then today
Would I have hurried to his distant worlds
Of thee deprived, O Rama, O my son.
Why should I vainly live without thine eyes,
Thou moonlight of my soul? No, let me toil
After thee to the savage woods where thou
Must harbour, I will trail these feeble limbs
Behind thy steps slow as the sick yearning dam
That follows still her ravished young." Thus she
Yearning upon her own beloved son;—
As over her offspring chained a centauress
Impatient of her anguish deep, so wailed
Cowshalya; for her heart with grief was loud.

V

THE WIFE*

But Sita all the while, unhappy child,
Worshipped propitious gods. Her mind in dreams
August and splendid coronations dwelt
And knew not of that woe. Royal she worshipped,
A princess in her mind and mood, and sat
With expectation thrilled. To whom there came
Rama, downcast and sad, his forehead moist
From inner anguish. Dark with thought and shaken
He entered his august and jubilant halls.
She started from her seat, transfixed, and trembled,
For all the beauty of his face was marred,
Who when he saw his young beloved wife
Endured no longer; all his inner passion
Of tortured pride was opened in his face.
And Sita, shaken, cried aloud, "What grief
Comes in these eyes? Was not today thine hour
When Jupiter, the imperial planet, joins
With Pushya, that high constellation? Why
Art thou then pale, disturbed? Where is thy pomp,
Thy crowning where? No foam-white softness silk

* *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa: Sargas* 26-30

With hundred-shafted canopy o'erhues
Thy kingly head, no fans o'erwave thy face
Like birds that beat their bright wings near a flower;
Minstrel nor orator attends thy steps
To hymn thy greatness, nor are heralds heard
Voicing high stanzas. Who has then forbade
The honeyed curds that Brahmins Veda-wise
Should pour on thy anointed brow,—the throngs
That should behind thee in a glory surge,—
The ministers and leading citizens
And peers and commons of the provinces
And commons metropolitan? Where stays
Thy chariot by four gold-clad horses drawn,
Trampling, magnificent, wide-maned? thy huge
High-omened elephant, a thunder-cloud
Or moving mountain in thy front? thy seat
Enriched with curious gold? Such are the high
Symbols men lead before anointed kings
Through streets flower-crowned. But thou com'st
careless, dumb,
Alone. Or if thy coronation still,
Hero, prepares and nations for thee wait,
Wherefore comes this grey face not seen before
In which there is no joy?" Trembling she hushed.
Then answered her the hope of Raghou's line:
"Sita, my sire exiles me to the woods.
O high-born soul, O firm religious mind,
Be strong and hear me. Dussaruth my sire,
Whose royal word stands as the mountains pledged

To Bharath's mother boons of old, her choice
In her selected time, who now prefers
Athwart the coronation's sacred pomp
Her just demand; me to the Dundac woods
For fourteen years exiled and in my stead
Bharath, my brother, royally elect
To this wide empire. Therefore I come, to visit
And clasp thee once, ere to far woods I go.
But thou before King Bharath speak my name
Seldom; thou knowest great and wealthy men
Are jealous and endure not others' praise.
Speak low and humbly of me when thou speakest,
Observing all his moods; for only thus
Shall man survive against a monarch's brow.
He is a king, therefore to be observed;
Holy, since by a monarch's sacred hands
Anointed to inviolable rule.
Be patient; thou art wise and good. For I
Today begin exile, Sita, today
Leave thee, O Sita. But when I am gone
Into the paths of the ascetics old
Do thou in vows and fasts spend blamelessly
Thy lonely seasons. With the dawn arise
And when thou hast adored the Gods, bow down
Before King Dussaruth, my father, then
Like a dear daughter tend religiously
Cowshalya, my afflicted mother old;
Nor her alone, but all my father's queens
Gratify with sweet love, smiles, blandishments

And filial claspings;—they my mothers are,
Nor than the breasts that suckled me less dear.
But mostly I would have thee show, beloved,
To Shatrughna and Bharath, my dear brothers,
More than my life-blood dear, a sister's love
And a maternal kindness. Cross not Bharath
Even slightly in his will. He is thy king,
Monarch of thee and monarch of our house
And all this nation. 'Tis by modest awe
And soft obedience and high toilsome service
That princes are appeased, but being crossed
Most dangerous grow the wrathful hearts of kings
And mischiefs mean. Monarchs incensed reject
The sons of their own loins who durst oppose
Their mighty policies, and raise, of birth
Though vile, the strong and serviceable man.
Here then obedient dwell unto the King,
Sita; but I into the woods depart."

He ended, but Videha's daughter, she
Whose words were ever soft like one whose life
Is lapped in sweets, now other answer made
In that exceeding anger born of love,
Fierce reprimand and high. "What words are these,
Rama, from thee? What frail unworthy spirit
Converses with me uttering thoughts depraved,
Inglorious, full of ignominy, unmeet
For armed heroical great sons of Kings?
With alien laughter and amazed today

I hear the noblest lips in all the world
Uttering baseness. For father, mother, son,
Brother or son's wife, all their separate deeds
Enjoying their own separate fates pursue.
But the wife is the husband's and she has
Her husband's fate, not any private joy.
Have they said to thee 'Thou art exiled'? Me
That doom includes, me too exiles. For neither
Father nor the sweet son of her own womb
Nor self, nor mother, nor companion dear
Is woman's sanctuary, only her husband
Whether in this world or beyond is hers.
If to the difficult dim forest then,
Rama, this day thou journeyest, I will walk
Before thee, treading down the thorns and sharp
Grasses, smoothing with my torn feet thy way;
And henceforth from my bosom as from a cup
Stale water, jealousy and wrath renounce.
Trust me, take me; for, Rama, in this breast
Sin cannot harbour. Heaven, spacious terraces
Of mansions, the aerial gait of Gods
With leave to walk among those distant stars,
Man's wingèd aspiration or his earth
Of sensuous joys, tempt not a woman's heart:
She chooses at her husband's feet her home.
My father's lap, my mother's knees to me
Were school of morals, Rama; each human law
Of love and service there I learned, nor need
Thy lessons. All things else are wind; I choose

The inaccessible inhuman woods,
The deer's green walk or where the tigers roam,
Life savage with the multitude of beasts,
Dense thickets; there will I dwell in desert ways,
Happier than in my father's lordly house,
A pure-limbed hermitess. How I will tend thee
And watch thy needs, and thinking of no joy
But that warm wifely service and delight
Forget the unneeded world, alone with thee.
We two shall dalliance take in honied groves
And scented springtides. These heroic hands
Can in the forest dangerous protect
Even common men, and will they then not guard
A woman and the noble name of wife?
I go with thee this day, deny who will,
Nor aught shall turn me. Fear not thou lest I
Should burden thee, since gladly I elect
Life upon fruits and roots, and still before thee
Shall walk, not faltering with fatigue, eat only
Thy remnants after hunger satisfied,
Nor greater bliss conceive. O I desire
That life, desire to see the large wide lakes,
The cliffs of the great mountains, the dim tarns,
Not frighted since thou art beside me, and visit
Fair waters swan-beset in lovely bloom.
In thy heroic guard my life shall be
A happy wandering among beautiful things,
For I shall bathe in those delightful pools,
And to thy bosom fast-devoted, wooed

By thy great beautiful eyes, yield and experience
On mountains and by rivers large delight.
Thus if a hundred years should pass or many
Millenniums, yet I should not tire or change,
For wandering so not heaven itself would seem
Desirable, but this were rather heaven.
O Rama, Paradise and thou not there
No Paradise were to my mind. I should
Grow miserable and reject the bliss.
I rather mid the gloomy entangled boughs
And sylvan haunts of elephant and ape,
Clasping my husband's feet, intend to lie
Obedient, glad, and feel about me home."

But Rama, though his heart approved her words
Yielded not to the entreaty, for he feared
Her dolour in the desolate woods; therefore
Once more he spoke and kissed her brimming eyes.
"Of a high blood thou comest and thy soul
Turns naturally to duties high. Now, too,
O Sita, let thy duty be thy guide;
Elect thy husband's will. Thou shouldst obey,
Sita, my words, who art a woman weak.
The woods are full of hardship, full of peril,
And 'tis thy ease that I command. Nay, nay,
But listen and this forestward resolve
Thou wilt abandon: Love! for I shall speak
Of fears and great discomforts. There is no pleasure
In the vast woodlands drear, but sorrows, toils,

Wretched privations. Thundering from the hills
The waterfalls leap down, and dreadfully
The mountain lions from their caverns roar
Hurting the ear with sound. This is one pain.
Then in vast solitudes the wild beasts sport
Untroubled, but when they behold men, rage
And savage onset move. Unfordable
Great rivers thick with ooze, the python's haunt,
Or turbid with wild elephants, sharp thorns
Beset with pain and tangled creepers close
The thirsty tedious paths impracticable
That echo with the peacock's startling call.
At night thou must with thine own hands break off
The sun-dried leaves, thy only bed, and lay
Thy worn-out limbs fatigued on the hard ground,
And day or night no kindlier food must ask
Than wild fruit shaken from the trees, and fast
Near to the limits of thy fragile life,
And wear the bark of trees for raiment, bind
Thy tresses piled in a neglected knot,
And daily worship with large ceremony
New-coming guests and the high ancient dead
And the great deities, and three times 'twixt dawn
And evening bathe with sacred accuracy,
And patiently in all things rule observe.
All these are other hardships of the woods.
Nor at thy ease shalt worship, but must offer
The flowers by thine own labour culled, and deck
The altar with observance difficult,

And be content with little and casual food.
Abstinent is their life who roam in woods,
O Mithilan, strenuous, a travail. Hunger
And violent winds and darkness and huge fears
Are their companions. Reptiles of all shapes
Coil numerous where thou walkest, spirited,
Insurgent, and the river-dwelling snakes
That with the river's winding motion go,
Beset thy path, waiting. Fierce scorpions, worms,
Gadflies and gnats continually distress,
And the sharp grasses pierce and thorny trees
With an entangled anarchy of boughs
Oppose. O many bodily pains and swift
Terrors the inhabitants in forests know.
They must expel desire and wrath expel,
Austere of mind, who such discomforts choose,
Nor any fear must feel of fearful things.
Dream not of it, O Sita; nothing good
The mind recalls in that disastrous life
For thee unmeet; only stern miseries
And toils ruthless and many dangers drear."

Then Sita with the tears upon her face
Made answer very sad and low: "Many
Sorrows and perils of that forest life
Thou hast pronounced, discovered dreadful ills.
O Rama, they are joys if borne for thee,
For thy dear love, O Rama. Tiger or elk,
The savage lion and fierce forest-bull

Marsh-jaguars and the creatures of the woods
And desolate peaks, will from thy path remove
At unaccustomed beauty terrified.
Fearless shall I go with thee if my elders
Allow, nor they refuse, themselves who feel
That parting from thee, Rama, is a death.
There is no danger, Hero, at thy side.
Who shall touch me? Not sovran Indra durst,
Though in his might he master all the Gods,
Assail me with his thunder-bearing hands.
O how can woman from her husband's arms
Divorced exist? Thine own words have revealed,
Rama, its sad impossibility.
Therefore my face is set towards going, for I
Preferring that sweet service of my lord,
Following my husband's feet, surely shall grow
All purified by my exceeding love.
O thou great heart and pure, what joy is there
But thy nearness? To me my husband is
Heaven and God. O even when I am dead
A bliss to me will be my lord's embrace.
Yea, thou who know'st, wilt thou, forgetful grown
Of common joys and sorrows sweetly shared,
The faithful heart reject, reject the love?
Thou carest nothing then for Sita's tears?
Go! poison or the water or the fire
Shall yield me sanctuary, importuning death."

Thus while she varied passionate appeal

And her sweet miserable eyes with tears
Swam over, he her wrath and terror and grief
Strove always to appease. But she alarmed,
Great Janac's daughter, princess Mithilan,
Her woman's pride of love all wounded, shook
From her the solace of his touch and weeping
Assailed indignantly her mighty lord.
"Surely my father erred, great Mithila
Who rules and the Videhas, that he chose
Thee with his line to mate, Rama unworthy,
No man but woman in a male disguise.
What casts thee down, wherefore art thou then sad,
That thou art bent thus basely to forsake
Thy single-hearted wife? Not Savitri
So loved the hero Dyumathsena's son
As I love thee and from my soul adore.
I would not, like another woman, shame
Of her great house, turn even in thought from thee
To watch a second face; for where thou goest
My heart follows. 'Tis thou, O shame! 'tis thou
Who thy young wife and pure, thy boyhood's bride
And bosom's sweet companion, like an actor,
Resign'st to others. If thy heart so pant
To be his slave for whom thou art oppressed,
Obey him thou, court, flatter, for I will not.
Alas, my husband, leave me not behind,
Forbid me not from exile. Whether harsh
Asceticism in the forest drear
Or paradise my lot, either is bliss

From thee not parted, Rama. How can I,
Guiding in thy dear steps my feet, grow tired
Though journeying endlessly? as well might one
Weary, who on a bed of pleasure lies.
The bramble-bushes in our common path,
The bladed grasses and the pointed reeds
Shall be as pleasant to me as the touch
Of cotton or of velvet, being with thee.
And when the storm-blast rises scattering
The thick dust over me, I, feeling then
My dear one's hand, shall think that I am smeared
With sandal-powder highly-priced. Or when
From grove to grove upon the grass I lie,
In couches how is there more soft delight
Or rugs of brilliant wool? The fruits of trees,
Roots of the earth or leaves, whate'er thou bring,
Be it much or little, being by thy hands
Gathered, I shall account ambrosial food,
I shall not once remember, being with thee,
Father or mother dear or my far home.
Nor shall thy pains by my companionship
Be greatened; doom me not to parting, Rama.
For only where thou art is Heaven; 'tis Hell
Where thou art not. O thou who know'st my love,
If thou canst leave me, poison still is left
To be my comforter. I will not bear
Their yoke who hate thee. And if today I shunned
Swift solace, grief at length would do its work
With torments slow. How should the broken heart

That once has beaten on thine, absence endure
Ten years and three to these and yet one more?"
So writhing in the fire of grief, she wound
Her body about her husband, fiercely silent,
Or sometimes wailed aloud; as a wild beast
That maddens with the fire-tipped arrows, such
Her grief ungovernable and like the streams
Of fire from its stony prison freed,
Her quick hot tears, or as when the whole river
From new-culled lilies weeps,—those crystal brooks
Of sorrow poured from her afflicted lids.
And all the moonlight glories of her face
Grew dimmed and her large eyes vacant of joy.
But he revived her with sweet words: "Weep not;
If I could buy all heaven with one tear
Of thine, Sita, I would not pay the price,
My Sita, my beloved. Nor have I grown,
I who have stood like God by nature planted
High above any cause of fear, so suddenly
Familiar with alarm. Only I knew not
Thy sweet and resolute courage, and for thee
Dreaded the misery that sad exiles feel.
But since to share my exile and o'erthrow
God first created thee, O Mithilan,
Sooner shall high serenity divorce
From the self-conquering heart, than thou from me
Be parted. Fixed I stand in my resolve
Who follow ancient virtue and the paths
Of the old perfect dead; ever my face

Turns steadfast to that radiant goal, self-vowed
Its sunflower. To the drear wilderness I go.
My father's stainless honour points me on,
His oath that must not fail. This is the old
Religion, brought from dateless ages down,
Parents to honour and obey; their will
Should I transgress, I would not wish to live.
For how shall man with homage or with prayer
Approach the distant Deity, yet scorn
A present godhead, father, mother, sage?
In these man's triple objects live, in these
The triple world is bounded, nor than these
Has all wide earth one holier thing. Large eyes,
These therefore let us worship. Truth or gifts,
Or Honour or liberal proud sacrifice,
Nought equals the effectual force and pure
Of worship filial done. This all bliss brings,
Compels all gifts, compels harvests and wealth,
Knowledge compels and children. All these joys
And human boons great filial souls on earth
Recovering here enjoy, and in that world
Heaven naturally is theirs. But me whatever,
In the strict path of virtue while he stands,
My father bids, my heart bids that. I go,
But not alone, o'ercome by thy sweet soul's
High courage. O intoxicating eyes,
O faultless limbs, go with me, justify
The wife's proud name, partner in virtue, Love,
Warm from thy great high-blooded lineage old

Thy purpose springing mates with the pure strain
Of Raghou's ancient house. O let thy large
And lovely motion forestward make speed
High ceremonies to absolve. Heaven's joys
Without thee now were beggarly and rude.
Haste then, the Brahmin and the pauper feed
And to their blessings answer jewels. All
Our priceless diamonds and our splendid robes,
Our curious things, our couches and our cars,
The glory and the eye's delight, do these
Renounce, nor let our faithful servants lose
Their worthy portion." Sita, of that consent
So hardly won sprang joyous, as on fire,
Disburdened of her wealth, lightly to wing
Into dim wood and wilderness unknown.

VI

THE SLAYING OF DHUMRAKSHA

(A Fragment)

Loud in their gladness and their lust of fight
Shouted the forest-host when they beheld
The dreadful Rakshas coming forth to war,
Dhumraksha; loud the noise of mellay clashed,
Giants and Apes with tree and spear and mace
Smiting their foemen. For the Giants hewed
Their dread opponents earthward everywhere,
And they too with the trunks of trees bore down
Their monstrous foes and levelled with the dust.

धूम्राक्षं प्रेक्ष्य निर्यान्तं राक्षसं भीमं विक्रमम्।
विनेदुर्वानराः सर्वे प्रहृष्टा युद्धकांक्षिणः॥
तेषां सुतुमलं युद्धं संजज्ञे हरिरक्षसाम्।
अन्योन्यं पादपैर्घोरं निघ्नतां शूलमुद्गरैः॥
घोरैश्च परिघैश्चित्रैस्त्रिशूलैश्चापि संहतः।
राक्षसैर्वानरा घोरैर्विनिकृत्ताः समन्ततः॥
वानरै राक्षसाश्चापि द्रुमैर्भूमौ समीकृताः

(युद्धकाण्ड सर्ग ५२. १–४)

APPENDIX

THE Veda is thus the spiritual and psychological seed of Indian culture and the Upanishads the expression of the truth of highest spiritual knowledge and experience that has always been the supreme idea of that culture and the ultimate objective to which it directed the life of the individual and the aspiration of the soul of the people: and these two great bodies of sacred writing, its first great efforts of poetic and creative self-expression, coming into being at a time preceding the later strong and ample and afterwards rich and curious intellectual development, are conceived and couched in the language of a purely psychic and spiritual mentality. An evolution so begun had to proceed by a sort of enriching descent from the spirit to matter and to pass on first to an intellectual endeavour to see life and the world and the self in all their relations as they present themselves to the reasoning and the practical intelligence. The earlier movement of this intellectual effort was naturally accompanied by a practical development and organisation of life consciously expressive of the mind and spirit of the people, the erection of a strong and successful structure of society shaped so as to fulfil the mundane objects of human existence under the control of a careful religious, ethical and social order and discipline, but also so as to provide for the evolution of the soul of man through these things to

a spiritual freedom and perfection. It is this stage of which we get a remarkably ample and effective representation in the immediately succeeding period of Indian literary creation.

This movement of the Indian mind is represented in its more critical effort on one side by a strenuous philosophical thinking crystallised into the great philosophic systems, on the other by an equally insistent endeavour to formulate in a clear body and with a strict cogency an ethical, social and political ideal and practice in a consistent and organised system of individual and communal life and that endeavour resulted in the authoritative social treatises or Shastras of which the greatest and the most authoritative is the famous Laws of Manu. The work of the philosophers was to systematise and justify to the reasoning intelligence the truths of the self and man and the world already discovered by intuition, revelation and spiritual experience and embodied in the Veda and the Upanishads, and at the same time to indicate and systematise methods of discipline founded upon this knowledge by which man might effectuate the highest aim of his existence. The characteristic form in which this was done shows the action of the intuitive passing into that of the intellectual mentality and preserves the stamp and form expressive of its transitional character. The terse and pregnant phrase of the sacred literature abounding in intuitive substance is replaced by a still more compact and crowded brief expression, no longer intuitive and poetic, but severely intellectual,—the expression of a

principle, a whole development of philosophic thought or a logical step burdened with considerable consequences in a few words, sometimes one or two, a shortest decisive formula often almost enigmatic in its concentrated fullness. These Sutras or aphorisms became the basis of ratiocinative commentaries developing by metaphysical and logical method and with a considerable variety of interpretation all that was contained at first in the series of aphoristic formulas. Their concern is solely with original and ultimate truth and the method of spiritual liberation, *mokṣa*.

The work of the social thinkers and legislators was on the contrary concerned with normal action and practice. It attempted to take up the ordinary life of man and of the community and the life of human desire and aim and interest and ordered rule and custom and to interpret and formulate it in the same complete and decisive manner and at the same time to throw the whole into an ordered relation to the ruling ideas of the national culture and frame and perpetuate a social system intelligently fashioned so as to provide a basis, a structure, a gradation by which there could be a secure evolution of the life from the vital and mental to the spiritual motive. The leading idea was the government of human interest and desire by the social and ethical law, the Dharma, so that it might be made,—all vital, economic, aesthetic, hedonistic, intellectual and other needs being satisfied duly and according to the right law of the nature, —a preparation for the spiritual existence. Here too we

have as an initial form the aphoristic method of the Vedic *gṛhya-sūtras*, afterwards the diffuser, fuller method of the Dharma Shastras,—the first satisfied with brief indications of simple and essential socio-religious principle and practice, the later work attempting to cover the whole life of the individual, the class and the people. The very character of the effort and its thoroughness and the constant unity of idea that reigns through the whole of it are a remarkable evidence of a very developed intellectual, aesthetic and ethical consciousness and a high turn and capacity for a noble and ordered civilisation and culture. The intelligence at work, the understanding and formative power manifested is not inferior to that of any ancient or modern people, and there is a gravity, a unified clarity and nobility of conception which balances at least in any true idea of culture the greater suppleness, more well-informed experience and science and eager flexibility of experimental hardihood which are the gains that distinguish our later humanity. At any rate it was no barbaric mind that was thus intently careful for a fine and well unified order of society, a high and clear thought to govern it and at the end of life a great spiritual perfection and release.

The pure literature of the period is represented by the two great epics, the Mahabharata, which gathered into its vast structure the greater part of the poetic activity of the Indian mind during several centuries, and the Ramayana. These two poems are epical in their motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the

world, but are entirely of their own kind and subtly different from others in their principle. It is not only that although they contain an early heroic story and a transmutation of many primitive elements, their form belongs to a period of highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture, is enriched with a body of mature thought and uplifted by a ripe nobility and refined gravity of ethical tone and therefore these poems are quite different from primitive edda and saga and greater in breadth of view and substance and height of motive—I do not speak now of aesthetic quality and poetic perfection—than the Homeric poems, while at the same time there is still an early breath, a direct and straightforward vigour, a freshness and greatness and pulse of life, a simplicity of strength and beauty that makes of them quite another kind than the elaborately constructed literary epics of Virgil or Milton, Firdausi or Kalidasa. This peculiar blending of the natural breath of an early, heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual, even the philosophic mind is indeed a remarkable feature; these poems are the voice of the youth of a people, but a youth not only fresh and fine and buoyant, but also great and accomplished, wise and noble. This however is only a temperamental distinction: there is another that is more far-reaching, a difference in the whole conception, function and structure.

One of the elements of the old Vedic education was a knowledge of significant tradition, Itihasa, and it is

this word that was used by the ancient critics to distinguish the Mahabharata and the Ramayana from the later literary epics. The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihasas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose. The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not intend merely to tell an ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things with a high success; they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation. The Mahabharata has been spoken of as a fifth Veda, it has been said of both these poems that they are not only great poems but Dharma Shastras, the body of a large religious and ethical and social and political teaching, and their effect and hold on the mind and life of the people have been so great that they have been described as the bible of the Indian people. That is not quite an accurate analogy, for the bible of the

Indian people contains also the Veda and Upanishads, the Purana and Tantras and the Dharma Shastras, not to speak of a large bulk of the religious poetry in the regional languages. The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice; it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India. All these things were brought together and disposed with artistic power and a telling effect in a poetic body given to traditions half legendary, half historic but cherished henceforth as deepest and most living truth and as a part of their religion by the people. Thus framed the Mahabharata and Ramayana, whether in the original Sanscrit or rewritten in the regional tongues, brought to the masses by Kathakas,—rhapsodists, reciters and exegetes, —became and remained one of the chief instruments of popular education and culture, moulded the thought, character, aesthetic and religious mind of the people and gave even to the illiterate some sufficient tincture of philosophy, ethics, social and political ideas, aesthetic emotion, poetry, fiction and romance. That which was for the cultured classes contained in Veda and Upanishad, shut into profound philosophical aphorism and treatise or inculcated

in Dharma Shastra and Artha Shastra, was put here into creative and living figures, associated with familiar story and legend, fused into a vivid representation of life and thus made a near and living power that all could readily assimilate through the poetic word appealing at once to the soul and the imagination and the intelligence.

The Mahabharata especially is not only the story of the Bharatas, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India. It is said popularly of it and with a certain measure of truth that whatever is in India is in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation; it is the poem of itself written by a whole people. It would be vain to apply to it the canons of a poetical art applicable to an epic poem with a smaller and more restricted purpose, but still a great and quite conscious art has been expended both on its detail and its total structure. The whole poem has been built like a vast national temple unrolling slowly its immense and complex idea from chamber to chamber, crowded with significant groups and sculptures and inscriptions, the grouped figures carved in divine or semi-divine proportions, a humanity aggrandised and half uplifted to superhumanity and yet always true to the human motive and idea and feeling, the strain of the real constantly raised by the tones of the ideal, the life of this world amply portrayed but subjected to the conscious influence and presence

of the powers of the worlds behind it, and the whole unified by the long embodied procession of a consistent idea worked out in the wide steps of the poetic story. As is needed in an epic narrative, the conduct of the story is the main interest of the poem and it is carried through with an at once large and minute movement, wide and bold in the mass, striking and effective in detail, always simple, strong and epic in its style and pace. At the same time though supremely interesting in substance and vivid in the manner of the telling as a poetic story, it is something more,—a significant tale, Itihasa, representative throughout of the central ideas and ideals of Indian life and culture. The leading motive is the Indian idea of the Dharma. Here the Vedic notion of the struggle between the godheads of truth and light and unity and the powers of darkness and division and falsehood is brought out from the spiritual and religious and internal into the outer intellectual, ethical and vital plane. It takes there in the figure of the story a double form of a personal and a political struggle, the personal a conflict between typical and representative personalities embodying the greater ethical ideals of the Indian Dharma and others who are embodiments of Asuric egoism and self-will and misuse of the Dharma, the political a battle in which the personal struggle culminates, an international clash ending in the establishment of a new rule of righteousness and justice, a kingdom or rather an empire of the Dharma uniting warring races and substituting for the ambitious arrogance of kings and aristocratic clans the supremacy, the calm

and peace of a just and humane empire. It is the old struggle of Deva and Asura, God and Titan, but represented in the terms of human life.

The way in which this double form is worked out and the presentation of the movement of individual lives and of the national life first as their background and then as coming into the front in a movement of kingdoms and armies and nations show a high architectonic faculty akin in the sphere of poetry to that which laboured in Indian architecture, and the whole has been conducted with a large poetic art and vision. There is the same power to embrace great spaces in a total view and the same tendency to fill them with an abundance of minute, effective, vivid and significant detail. There is brought too into the frame of the narrative a very considerable element of other tales, legends, episodes, the most of them of a significant character suitable to the method of Itihasa, and an extraordinary amount of philosophical, religious, ethical, social and political thinking sometimes direct, sometimes cast into the form of the legend and episode. The ideas of the Upanishads and of the great philosophies are brought in continually and sometimes given new developments, as in the Gita; religious myth and tale and idea and teaching are made part of the tissue; the ethical ideals of the race are expressed or are transmuted into the shape of tale and episode as well as embodied in the figures of the story, political and social ideals and institutions are similarly developed or illustrated with a high vividness and clearness and space is found too for aesthetic

and other suggestions connected with the life of the people. All these things are interwoven into the epic narrative with a remarkable skill and closeness. The irregularities inevitable in so combined and difficult a plan and in a work to which many poets of an unequal power have contributed fall into their place in the general massive complexity of the scheme and assist rather than break the total impression. The whole is a poetic expression unique in its power and fullness of the entire soul and thought and life of a people.

The Ramayana is a work of the same essential kind as the Mahabharata; it differs only by a greater simplicity of plan, a more delicate ideal temperament and a finer glow of poetic warmth and colour. The main bulk of the poem in spite of much accretion is evidently by a single hand and has a less complex and more obvious unity of structure. There is less of the philosophic, more of the purely poetic mind, more of the artist, less of the builder. The whole story is from beginning to end of one piece and there is no deviation from the stream of the narrative. At the same time there is a like vastness of vision, an even more wide winged flight of epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in the detail. The structural power, strong workmanship and method of disposition of the Mahabharata remind one of the art of the Indian builders, the grandeur and boldness of outline and wealth of colour and minute decorative execution of the Ramayana suggest rather a transcript into literature of the spirit and style of Indian painting.

The epic poet has taken here also as his subject an Itihasa, an ancient tale or legend associated with an old Indian dynasty and filled it in with detail from myth and folklore, but has exalted all into a scale of grandiose epic figure that it may bear more worthily the high intention and significance. The subject is the same as in the Mahabharata, the strife of the divine with the titanic forces in the life of the earth, but in more purely ideal forms, in frankly supernatural dimensions and an imaginative heightening of both the good and the evil in human character. On one side is portrayed an ideal manhood, a divine beauty of virtue and ethical order, a civilisation founded on the Dharma and realising an exaltation of the moral ideal which is presented with a singularly strong appeal of aesthetic grace and harmony and sweetness; on the other are wild and anarchic and almost amorphous forces of superhuman egoism and self-will and exultant violence, and the two ideas and powers of mental nature living and embodied are brought into conflict and led to a decisive issue of the victory of the divine man over the Rakshasa. All shade and complexity are omitted which would diminish the single purity of the idea, the representative force in the outline of the figures, the significance of the temperamental colour and only so much admitted as is sufficient to humanise the appeal and the significance. The poet makes us conscious of the immense forces that are behind our life and sets his action in a magnificent epic scenery, the great imperial city, the mountains and the ocean, the forest and wilderness,

described with such a largeness as to make us feel as if the whole world were the scene of his poem and its subject the whole divine and titanic possibility of man imaged in a few great or monstrous figures. The ethical and the aesthetic mind of India have here fused themselves into a harmonious unity and reached an unexampled pure wideness and beauty of self-expression. The Ramayana embodied for the Indian imagination its highest and tenderest human ideals of character, made strength and courage and gentleness and purity and fidelity and self-sacrifice familiar to it in the suavest and most harmonious forms coloured so as to attract the emotion and the aesthetic sense, stripped morals of all repellent austerity on one side or on the other of mere commonness and lent a certain high divineness to the ordinary things of life, conjugal and filial and maternal and fraternal feeling, the duty of the prince and leader and the loyalty of follower and subject, the greatness of the great and the truth and worth of the simple, toning things ethical to the beauty of a more psychical meaning by the glow of its ideal hues. The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanuman, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human image of its ethical ideal; it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite

yet firm soul tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable thing than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct.

The poetical manner of these epics is not inferior to the greatness of their substance. The style and the verse in which they are written have always a noble epic quality, a lucid classical simplicity and directness rich in expression but stripped of superfluous ornament, a swift, vigorous, flexible and fluid verse constantly sure of the epic cadence. There is a difference in the temperament of the language. The characteristic diction of the Mahabharata is almost austerely masculine, trusting to force of sense and inspired accuracy of turn, almost ascetic in its simplicity and directness and a frequent fine and happy bareness; it is the speech of a strong and rapid poetical intelligence and a great and straightforward vital force, brief and telling in phrase but by virtue of a single-minded sincerity and, except in some knotted passages or episodes, without any rhetorical labour of compactness, a style like the light and strong body of a runner nude and pure and healthily lustrous and clear without superfluity of flesh or exaggeration of muscle, agile and swift and untired in the race. There is inevitably much in this vast poem that is in an inferior manner, but little or nothing that falls below a certain sustained level in which there is always something of this virtue. The diction of the Ramayana is shaped in a more attractive mould, a marvel of sweetness and strength, lucidity and warmth and grace; its phrase has

not only poetic truth and epic force and diction but a constant intimate vibration of the feeling of the idea, emotion or object: there is an element of fine ideal delicacy in its sustained strength and breath of power. In both poems it is a high poetic soul and inspired intelligence that is at work; the directly intuitive mind of the Veda and Upanishads has retired behind the veil of the intellectual and outwardly psychical imagination.

This is the character of the epics and the qualities which have made them immortal, cherished among India's greatest literary and cultural treasures, and given them their enduring power over the national mind. Apart from minor defects and inequalities such as we find in all works set at this pitch and involving a considerable length of labour, the objections made by western criticism are simply expressions of a difference of mentality and aesthetic taste. The vastness of the plan and the leisurely minuteness of detail are baffling and tiring to a western mind accustomed to smaller limits, a more easily fatigued eye and imagination and a hastier pace of life, but they are congenial to the spaciousness of vision and intent curiosity of circumstance, characteristic of the Indian mind, that spring, as I have pointed out in relation to architecture, from the habit of the cosmic consciousness and its sight and imagination and activity of experience. Another difference is that the terrestrial life is not seen realistically just as it is to the physical mind but constantly in relation to the much that is behind

it, the human action is surrounded and influenced by great powers and forces, Daivic, Asuric and Rakshasic, and the greater human figures are a kind of incarnation of these more cosmic personalities and powers. The objection that the individual thereby loses his individual interest and becomes a puppet of impersonal forces is not true either in reality or actually in the imaginative figures of this literature, for there we see that the personages gain by it in greatness and force of action and are only ennobled by an impersonality that raises and heightens the play of their personality. The mingling of terrestrial nature and supernature, not as a mere imagination but with an entire sincerity and naturalness, is due to the same conception of a greater reality in life, and it is as significant figures of this greater reality that we must regard much to which the realistic critic objects with an absurdly misplaced violence, such as the powers gained by Tapasya, the use of divine weapons, the frequent indications of psychic action and influence. The complaint of exaggeration is equally invalid where the whole action is that of men raised beyond the usual human level, since we can only ask for proportions consonant with the truth of the stature of life conceived in the imagination of the poet and cannot insist on an unimaginative fidelity to the ordinary measures which would here be false because wholly out of place. The complaint of lifelessness and want of personality in the epic characters is equally unfounded: Rama and Sita, Arjuna and Yudhishthira, Bhishma and Duryodhana and Karna

are intensely real and human and alive to the Indian mind. Only the main insistence, here as in Indian art, is not on the outward saliences of character, for these are only used secondarily as aids to the presentation, but on the soul life and the inner soul quality presented with as absolute a vividness and strength and purity of outline as possible. The idealism of characters like Rama and Sita is no pale and vapid unreality; they are vivid with the truth of the ideal life, of the greatness that man may be and does become when he gives his soul a chance and it is no sound objection that there is only a small allowance of the broken littleness of our ordinary nature.

These epics are therefore not a mere mass of untransmuted legend and folklore, as is ignorantly objected, but a highly artistic representation of intimate significances of life, the living presentment of a strong and noble thinking, a developed ethical and aesthetic mind and a high social and political ideal, the ensouled image of a great culture. As rich in freshness of life but immeasurably more profound and evolved in thought and substance than the Greek, as advanced in maturity of culture but more vigorous and vital and young in strength than the Latin epic poetry, the Indian epic poems were fashioned to serve a greater and completer national and cultural function and that they should have been received and absorbed by both the high and the low, the cultured and the masses and remained through twenty centuries an intimate and formative part of the life of the whole

nation is of itself the strongest possible evidence of the greatness and fineness of this ancient Indian culture.

(*Foundations of Indian Culture* III—Chap. 12)

(*11 pt. Plantin*)
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