The Social Conditions of the People of India in the Time of the Mahabharata

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THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

IN THE TIME OF THE MAHABHARATA

by

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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to describe in a systematic way the social life and conditions of some of the early Indian tribes who lived in North India. It is an attempt to arrange all the details of their physical and ethnic environment and to give a consistent picture of their social life and institution.

Most of the material from which this has been taken is found in the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic; because many facts in this are lacking, other sources of information have been drawn upon. Even then the picture is not as complete as is desired, for many origins are completely obscured.
OUTLINE

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The character of a society, like that of an individual, is largely the product of environment; therefore a study of the environment of a people is necessary to understand their character. It is here the purpose to describe the social status of the Hindu, as found in the Mahabharata, and to determine if possible from this his character. Therefore it is important to consider the physical characteristics of the land in which he lived, the climate, natural boundaries, relative location, the character of its surface, mineral resources, animal and vegetable life, and its climate. All of these had a great deal to do in determining what the Hindu of the Mahabharata was.

India in form is that of a great triangle with its base resting upon the Himalayan range and its apex extending far into the ocean. Because of its size and isolation, it might almost be called a continent instead of a country.

The Himalayas not only form a double wall along the north of India, but at both their eastern and western extremities they send out ranges to the south that protect its northeastern and northwestern frontiers. On the northeast these offshoots, under the name of Naga and Patkoi Mountains, form a barrier between Assam and the tribes of Upper Burmah.

On the northwest, India is separated by the well-marked ranges of the Safed Kah and Sulamon Mountains from Afghanistan and by a southern continuation of lower hills from Baluchistan.
The peninsula proper is bounded on the west by the Arabian sea and on the east by the Bay of Bengal. The empire included within these boundaries is rich in variety of scenery and climate, from the highest mountains of the world to the vast river deltas, raised only a few inches above the level of the sea. India has three natural and well defined physical divisions. First, that of the Himalayas, which form an unbroken watershed extending from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, a distance of 1400 miles, and from which the three great Indian rivers rise. It is this portion of the country which supplies the key to the ethnology and history of India. The second natural division of the great broad river plains of the north which are for the most part alluvial and extend nearly from sea to sea. It is bounded on the north by the Himalaya Mountains and on the south by the Vindhya and Satpura ranges. The third division comprises the territory south of the Vindhya and Satpura mountain ranges, or peninsular India. It is with the first two divisions that the Mahabharata has to deal.

The central and eastern portions of the great central plain are very fertile, because of abundance of rain, while northern and western parts are dry, arid plains on account of little rainfall. This second natural division formed the theatre of the ancient race movements, where the civilization and political destinies of the whole Indian peninsula were molded.

The natural resources of India are considerable. There is every evidence, from the literary and political history of India that at one time it was heavily wooded. This forest has been restricted during the last few centuries to the broken and hilly
ground in Central India, along the chief mountain ranges and in the river valleys of Burmah. This is so because of the great and growing population. Of the timbers that are most widely used in India, the teak stands first. It is a very hard, heavy, valuable wood, found in the forests of Burmah, along the Ghat and in the Vindhia and Satpura ranges. Besides the teak, sandal and blackwood may be mentioned, which are less valuable as timber, but more useful for ornamental work. In the Ganges valley the sal takes the place of the teak. In the Himalayas the deodars and other cedars grow, besides various kinds of oak which flourish from the Punjab to Bhutan. In the dry, arid plains of the west a few species of acacia are found. Besides those already mentioned, there are several others, such as the pipal, which furnishes abundant shade, the sacred banyan, under whose spreading branches the Hindu delights to sit and meditate, the bamboo, one of the most valuable trees of India because in many places it furnishes the material for houses, food and domestic utensils. The mango is valuable as a shade and a fruit tree. The fig in some places has a similar value. The various kinds of palms have contributed their part to the comfort and profit of man. All of the trees here mentioned are indigenous to India and many are mentioned in the Mahabharata; therefore we may conclude that they formed part of the forest then.

Among the animals common to India, the horned cattle must be given the first place, except in the desert and Sindh, where the camel predominates, and in the damp climate of the deltas
and parts of the coast, where the buffalo thrives. Besides, there are cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, horses and elephants, nearly all of which are mentioned in the poem.

The climate of India varies from continental climate in the north to an oceanic climate in the south. This condition is brought about by the physical configuration of the country. The plateau of Afghanistan and the high ranges of the Himalayas on the north shut off India from Central Asia, and by robbing the winds of their moisture, produce a climate characterized by great heat and low humidity of the atmosphere. On the south the prevailing wind comes from the ocean and produces a very different type of weather conditions, the chief features of which are great uniformity of temperature, great atmospheric dampness, and frequent rains. The continental type of weather prevails over almost the whole of India from December to May, and the oceanic type from June to November, thus giving rise to the two great divisions of the year, the dry season or the northeast monsoon, and the rainy season or southwest monsoon. From this description, some idea may be gained of the physical environment, the climate and productions of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. Whether the result of environment or not, it is true that, compared with the Anglo-Saxon, the Hindu has been overcome by nature instead of making himself its conqueror. This semi-tropical climate and the extreme fertility of the soil made food easy of access and tended to produce an easy-going and lethargic temperament.
A brief survey of the physical environment of the people of India has been given so that we may know the surroundings in which they live and the conditions against which they struggled. The question now arises as to whom the Indo-Aryans were, from whence they came and what they brought with them. To answer this, we shall have to go to the Vedas, from which we derive our information. As to the time of the composition of the Vedas, there has been much conjecture. By all orthodox Hindus they are believed to have been breathed forth as a divine revelation, and to the unbiased inquirer, the period of civilization which produced them now seems to have been earlier than was formerly supposed. The period from 1200 to 1500 B.C. was for a long time thought to be the earliest period to which with safety, the composition of the Vedic Hymns could be assigned. Max Müller says that "within the sight of the Indus and its tributaries, the southeastern Aryans spoke a language more primitive than Sanskrit or Zend about 3000 B.C." The latest theories based on astronomical data place the period of Vedic civilization as far back as 4500 B.C. and the Hymns themselves 2500 B.C. It seems more probable that the whole period of early Sanskrit literature must be placed at a much earlier date than that to which it has until recently been assigned. It is in these Hymns that the hopes and ideals of the early Aryans are found, for in them is contained all that the tribe, sib, or family of poets, who composed them, contained.

1. Max Müller: Biographies and Words p. 153
2. Barth: Indian Antiquities. 1894.
deemed worthy of being preserved as a record of the best the age knew and as a history of the literature of their race.

These treasured verses, collected in what is known as the Hymns of the Rig Veda are all that are left to enable us today to pierce the mists of the long past history of India.³ Philology tells us that the Aryans came from a land where the climate was for the most part cold, although a summer was known. Time was there measured by the moon; the year was lunar, unadjusted to a solar year, and time itself was computed by the night.⁴ That the Aryans did not come from a very southern climate has long been known, since they possessed common names for winter, such as Sanskrit hima, Latin heima.⁵ There is but little doubt that there did exist a people living united somewhere, probably in Europe, known as Aryans, who spoke a language from which the modern languages of Europe have diversified, as well as the languages spoken by the Zend-speaking Iranians of Persia and the Sanskrit-speaking peoples of Vedic times in India. That these Aryan-speaking peoples separated the one from the other in some ancient period and that the ancestry of the Indo-Aryans traveled eastward to seek new pasture lands and homes, seems certain. The Indo-Aryans parted from those of like kindred, to carry to the East the intellectual vigor and physical energy they inherited in common with all races bred and nurtured amid the harsh necessities of a northern climate. All that is certainly known is that one division of the tribes, the Iranians, sought a home

3. R.W.Frazer, Literary History of India, p. 29
4. " " " " " " " p. 39
5. Max Müller, Biographies of Words.
In Persia, the other the Indo-Aryans, passed onward toward the Indus, to seek new homes in the sunlit plains of India. Full 4000 years ago these first historic invaders of India must have stood gazing in wonder and amazement, from the lofty heights of some one of these northern passes, on the rich valleys lying at their feet.

On the first dawn of Vedic history, the Aryans appear amid the bleak mountain ranges in the northwest of India, where they first made their homes. From here, tribes spread southward to the junction of the Indus with the rivers of the Punjab and later to the fertile plains along the Ganges and Jumna. Very little is known of the aboriginal inhabitants whom the Aryans found in the land. The Vedic hymns mention them only to revile them. That they possessed some civilization is certain from the architecture, which the invaders found. Some of the Aryans formed marriage relations with the aborigines, and these gave rise to a new class of varying purity of blood and of varying social position. The Aryan tribes were for the most part pastoral nomads, although they had some knowledge of agriculture. Max Muller says that the Aryans did not depend upon mere chance for their food but cultivated the soil and grew some kind of grain. Cattle were milked, horses were kept in droves for milk or food. Grain was sown, while ploughs, reaping hooks and millstones were used in preparing the fields, gathering the harvest, grind—

6. Frazer: Literary History of India, p. 13
7. LaFosse: History of India, p. 6
8. Frazer: Literary History of India, p. 35
9. Max Muller: Biographies and Words, p. 134
ing the grain. Oxen were yoked together before rude wagons. Copper was probably known, but it is doubtful if gold and silver were in use. The people had some kind of rudely made houses. Weaving and working in leather were well known, and garments were made from the wool of the sheep.

This sketch gives some idea of the early Aryans who invaded India and of the aborigines whom they found in the land; also of the fusing of the two races, the formation of a third class, and of the civilization to which they had attained. From this we are able to get a background for the study of the people of the Mahabharata, and to note the advancement which they made over their Aryan forefathers.

11. " " " " " " 13.
12. " " " " " " 15.
13. " " " " " " 11.
CATTLE RAISING.

The immigration of the Aryan people into India must have commenced at an early date, for many centuries before Christ, according to Mahabharata, they had made some advance in civilization. They had already settled to peaceful pursuits and while some families cultivated the land and practiced agriculture, others wandered about with their flocks and herds to different pasture lands. They not only had domesticated cattle, sheep and goats, but the horse also had been subjugated to their use.

The wealth of the purely pastoral people was counted by the numbers of cattle, sheep, and goats that they possessed. The wealth of many of the incipient agriculturists was also counted in this way.

Cattle lifting was a common practice with the kings of ancient India, as with the chiefs of ancient Greece. An idea of the great size of the flocks and herds owned by the kings who occupied the Ganges valley can be had from the statement in the Mahabharata that the king of the Trigartas united with the king of the Kushas and drove off sixty thousand head of cattle from the Matsya kingdom.

besides The kings and chieftains, owning a great number of cattle, also must have exercised some care in their breeding; for such expressions as these occur: "Matsya's finest breed," 5

2. LaFosse's Hist. of India, p. 5.
3. Mahabharata, p. 269.
"Bulls of various breeds and colors," etc.

According to the Vedas, goats and sheep were raised and their flesh was eaten. The wool of the sheep was used for the making of clothing. Goat skins were used for sword scabbards and many other things. In the Vedic Hymns there are traces of human sacrifice. Gradually animals came to be substituted for human beings. First a horse was substituted for man, then an ox, then a sheep, then a goat, and finally grains came to be used, such as rice and barley. The order of animal sacrifice was the order of their domestication. It seems that the connection between men and their steeds at the time of the Mahabharata was close, and that the men loved and cared for their horses, and had a great many and a great variety of them.

Maya's monarch gave as a gift to his son-in-law seven thousand of the best horses. There is another mention of a gift of two hundred horses. "Steeds of every hue," "gray and pigeon colored coursers," "horses bred in famed Kamaja," "dark and grey of deepest hue," "piebald horses trained to battle," "steeds of metal true and tried," "Yudhishthir's coursers were ivory white." These expressions show something of the numbers and varieties that the people had.

Elephants were in common use and must have been kept in herds something like cattle and horses. This shows that they were at least semidomesticated. They were given away as presents.

and used in making long journeys and for carrying on warfare.

Domesticated goats, sheep, cattle and horses were owned in great numbers by the kings of the Ganges valley. It is likely that these animals were domesticated by them; for there was no opportunity of procuring them elsewhere.
AGR I C U L T U R E.

The reader of Indian history is impressed with the fact that, at one time, India was heavily wooded. According to the Rig Veda, the early Aryans who invaded India were for the most part a pastoral people leading a semi-nomadic life and depending chiefly upon their flocks for subsistence. Although this was true, they had a knowledge of certain grains, and must have practiced a rude agriculture. It is but natural to expect that these same people, after reaching the broad and fertile plains of India, with its tropical or semi-tropical climate, would continue those occupations with which they were familiar. During the hunting and fishing stage and also during the pastoral stage of primitive peoples, agriculture is carried on chiefly by the women. Among the Hindus the women were the ones who stayed at home, looked after the children, kept the fire and tended the fields while the husband was in search of game.1

In early Vedic times the custom of women2 participating in harvest offerings and harvest festivals, as they did, arose from the fact that in those days the duties of agriculture lay, for the most part, in the hands of the women.3 Krishna brought with him, from his seagirt land, presents of slaves and damsels for the Panduas.4 Karna promised to give a hundred milch kine and

2. Gahila Guhja Sutras 1, 3, 15.

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damsels to anyone who would point out Arjun to him on the battle field. 5

These facts show that the Aryan tribes possessed slaves. In time all direct agricultural operations passed for the most part into the hands of the slaves and the subjugated aborigines. Two classes had sprung up—the conquerors, who became the landlords, and the conquered, who became the cultivators. 6 The captive women took their places in the field beside the captive men. One proof that the people of the Mahabharata were in the agricultural stage rather than the pastoral, is that the men captured in war were saved to till the soil. 7

In the agricultural stage the landlord was concerned about laborers to till his land, while in the pastoral stage he was chiefly concerned about the increase of his flocks and herds. In the Mahabharata we have mention of the herds of cattle, steeds, fertile acres, peaceful hamlets rich and fair, of corn, rice and other grains, which clearly indicates that these people with whom we have here to deal lived a more or less settled life, kept flocks and herds and practiced agriculture. 8 Yudhisthir gave lands to the Brahmans and bullocks to the laboring swain, which is another proof that agriculture was carried on. 9 Of the grains that they cultivated, there is mention of rice; 10 corn; 11 and produce, gifts and grain, which indicates that there were other grains than those mentioned. The staple grains used during the Vedic period were

5. Mahabharata p.335 Coups.15-18. 10. Mahabharata p.229, Coup.35.
wheat, barley and rice. Wheat and barley may have been the grains referred to by the word produce.

It is certain that these people possessed some rude implements for carrying on their agriculture, for ploughs, yokes, reaping hooks and millstones are mentioned. In the Mahabharata also the ploughshare is spoken of and the steeds were yoked together before the war chariot; "bullocks for the laboring swain" seems to indicate that there must have been some arrangement by which the cattle were fastened together for use.

There is no mention of threshing grain, although it must have been done, since the women ground the grain for their food on grinding stones. It is likely that the grain was trampled out by horses or oxen on a plot of ground made hard for that purpose. This kind of threshing floor is common everywhere in India today.

In concluding the evidence of the agricultural stage, it seems certain that the majority of the people practiced agriculture, although many kept only flocks and herds, while others were engaged in both. Tilling the soil had passed from the hands of the land owners to the serfs, who cultivated wheat, corn, rice and barley.

13. LaFosse, Hist. of India, p. 5.
FOOD.

From what has already been written, some knowledge can be had of how the Hindu must have lived and what he ate. In Vedic times the people lived chiefly upon the milk and meat that their flocks and herds supplied. Horses were kept in droves for milk or food. So also at the time of the Mahabharata, the people had large flocks of goats, sheep, cows and horses, the milk from which and the flesh of which they used as food. Curds and butter were made and used. Horse flesh was cooked and used as a food, also the forest red deer was slain and eaten. The people raised barley, corn, rice, sugar cane and probably wheat. The women ground the cereals into flour, from which they baked cakes and bread. How this was prepared is unknown; it is supposeable that it was a flat, unleavened cake or bread made of flour and water and baked in the ashes, which is the bread of the Hindu today. Sugar cane was probably chewed and the juice swallowed, as is the present custom.

The native fruits of India are figs, mangoes and cetaphals, and these are used as a food now and probably were then. The soft, tender sprouts of the bamboo are now in many places cooked and used as a food. They may or may not have been so used at the time of the Mahabharata. There is frequent mention of the lotus and the people may have used the tubers of the lotus plant.

for food, but there is no mention of vegetables in the poem.

Drunkenness was common in Vedic times, and it may have been at this time, although it is not mentioned. The juice of the soma plant, a highly intoxicating drink, was used freely in sacrifice, which might indicate that drunkenness was common in the days of the Bharata. It was supposed that at the same time that this beverage was being used on earth in sacrifice, that the gods in heaven were also using it. The mystery of the soma plant has never been disclosed. No one knows whence it came, and no one knows how the juice was prepared and fermented. Palm juice was another drink which was much prized by the Hindus of olden times, and they also drank cool and sparkling water. As civilization advanced, the food supply became more stable, there was less tendency to depend upon flocks and herds, but a greater tendency to depend upon the products of the field for support.

The people of the Mahabharata had a more stable food supply than those of Vedic times. They depended less upon their flocks for subsistence but came to depend more upon the crops of their fields. All life became more stable. Bread was baked and food cooked, showing a knowledge of the use of fire. The fruits and drinks were practically the same as those of former days.

The characteristics of the Aryan people and the progress that they had made in the arts and crafts before they entered India, has been given, under Ethnic Environment.

Whatever civilization was taken to the aborigines of India from without was taken by these Aryan invaders, who entered through the northeastern mountain passes into India. The mountain ranges which surround India prevented all intercourse with outside nations except through the passes named.

Many years elapsed between the writing of the first portion of the Mahabharata and the last. ¹ During this time India suffered many invasions, some of which we have knowledge of and some of which we have not. All, however, contributed something to the life of the people to whom they went.

The aborigines whom the Aryans found in the land, possessed a certain civilization and some of them were even superior to their conquerors. ² The chiefs possessed forts and castles and must therefore have had a knowledge of the art of masonry. Their when they conquered, however, entered India, built dome-shaped houses, made of basket work and daubed over with mud. ³ The advance the people of the Mahabharata had made over those of Vedic times is seen in their buildings and architecture. The Mahabharata relates how the Panduas, at Indra Prastha, a few miles from the present city of Delhi, hewed their city out of the forest and built their palaces roundabout. ⁴ The buildings of the capital city of the Panchalas

1. Mahabharata p. 197
2. LaFosse, Hist. of India p. 4.
kingdoms are spoken of as "towering domes"; "stately palaces"; "swan white mansions"; "sparkling gems the chambers lighted"; and spacious stairs were wide and high. Undoubtedly the poet has given a somewhat embellished description of the architecture. However it shows at least a knowledge of that art. In the days of the Mahabharata, learning and the crafts flourished. Men of every guild and trade were mentioned. The people lived in towns and villages and followed their different pursuits. They had a knowledge of spinning, weaving and blacksmithing, although it may have been crude.

When Savitri went to live in her forest home, she took off her good clothing and put on a dress made from the bark of a tree. Before the Pandu brothers went into exile, they put on clothing made of deer skin. "Silken robes of costly splendor," "flags and cloth of gold"; "fabrics by the artist wove," "scarfs belaced with gold," all show that fine fabrics were woven and used. Carpets are also mentioned.

Drona had the picture of a water jar on his ensign, and the quotation "when a tender infant rested in a water jar" is found in the poem. This shows that the people had some kind of pottery and it is likely that they used either baked or sundried earthen jars for cooking purposes. Jars and vessels...
whichly inlaid with gold\textsuperscript{18} costly cups and golden vases\textsuperscript{19} were mentioned so these too, must have formed a part of the household utensils. Jewelled girdles, bangles and necklaces were worn\textsuperscript{20} and this may have been one way the people had of accumulating wealth. The people at the time of the Mahabharata were in such frequent wars with each other and with neighboring tribes that they became skilled in the manufacture and use of the necessary military weapons. The people knew the use of iron and steel. Some of their arrows were tipped with iron and others were made of steel. They had known the use of copper since early Vedic times. The use of gold was known. It was woven into cloth while bows and arrows and sword scabbards were tipped with it.

Beds were used. The Indian bed of today consists of the sides and end pieces hewed out of wood. At the corners where they are joined together, holes are cut out, through which the legs are fitted, joining the sides and ends. The frame is then woven over with tape or heavy jute string. The advance that the people of the Mahabharata had made over the Aryan invaders of Vedic times is seen in the difference of architecture, kind of cloth woven and the knowledge and use of metals.

18. Mahabharata p. 361 Coup. 4
19. " 361 4
20. " 350 16
The Mahabharata relates the story of a great war, that took place between two contending factions of the Bharata family, with their allied forces. However, this ancient epic gives few details as to the way this war was conducted.

Duryodhan's army including horse, foot soldiers, cars and elephants, numbered over one hundred thousand; Yudhisthir's army was smaller. Bhishma was commander and chief of Duryodhan's army, and Arjun, brother of Yudhisthir, commanded the latter. The army was divided into sections, each bearing an ensign of war on its standard. This shows that the people had some army organization, although they do not seem to have had any orderly way of meeting and fighting the enemy. Army leaders were driven on the battlefield in war chariots and Prince Duryodhan appeared seated in a howda on an elephant. The people fought with pikes, axes, clubs, maces, swords, spears, dart, lances and sabres. The soldiers wore coats of mail much like those worn by the ancient Greeks, and carried shields for protection.

Yudhisthir's army was equipped with a superior grade of bows and arrows. Elephants were used and were the most powerful war engines that the armies possessed. They were placed in the battle front for making attacks upon the enemy. Soldiers fought from the elephants' backs with comparative safety. The method of warfare here described resembled that of ancient Greece and Rome.

GOVERNMENT.

The Mahabharata deals with the people who lived chiefly within the territory bounded by the eastern and western oceans, the Himalaya mountains in the north and the Vindhiya and Satpura ranges in the south. This region was the famed Aryawarti, "the abode of the learned."¹ The government and the religion of its people are so closely woven together that one cannot be separated from the other.

Neither in Vedic times nor at the time of the Mahabharata were there caste distinctions as there later came to be, although there were beginnings of them.² The fact of the Aryans making slaves of the aborigines whom they conquered gave rise to two classes, the landlords and the serfs.³ The intermarriage of these two classes gave rise to a third class, who had some social privileges.⁴ Besides these, there began to be formed the Brahman or priestly class, whose duty it was to look after the religious side of life.⁵

The people were engaged much of the time in war, either with each other, or with hostile tribes. Through this, they learned that it was economy to have trained men for war, and this gave rise to the warrior or Rajput class.⁶ A third class or Sudras, which was composed of tradesmen and mechanics, is also mentioned. ⁷ These classes arose more from the necessity of the times and re-

1. Manu 11, 17. 5. LaFosse Hist. of India p.8. 2. LaFosse Hist. of India p.6,11. 6. " " " " " 11. 3. Frazer, Lit.Hist. of India p.30. 7. Mahabharata p.199 Coup.18. 4. " " " " "  

-22-
presented more of an industrial than a social distinction. In Vedic times the people lived for the most part in joint families, united in their ancient sibs or clans into settlements, under a common chief or head man. In time of war or when there was any great danger, the clans joined together, forming the tribe, for mutual protection. The king or raja was elected from among the chieftains as the chosen representative of the people, and this office soon became hereditary.

In choosing their king the people of the Mahabharata seem to have followed the custom established in Vedic times, for Karu was chosen king from among the princes because of his warlike valor.10

The story of the Mahabharata is the story of two contending parties of the same family, who claimed the right of kingship.11 Pandu and Dharita Raatha were two brothers of the Bharata family, the most powerful tribe of northern India. Pandu, the elder brother, died early and the office of the king fell upon his younger brother Dharita-Raatha. Pandu was the father of five sons and Dharita-Raatha of one hundred.12 In time, Yudhisthir, the eldest son of Pandu and the rightful heir to the throne, wanted his kingdom, which was given to him, thus recognizing the hereditary right of the king.13

The people rendered obedience to their kings. The offerings.

11. " 127
12. " 358.
to the chosen chief, were held to be voluntary. Nevertheless there is evidence that at times he oppressed the people, to collect his revenue. 14

15 A city was chosen as the seat of Government, from which the king ruled his subjects. The tribal priest and those of lesser importance were the king’s advisers and sat with him in the royal council hall. Some kind of a coronation service took place, when a chieftain was proclaimed king. A great feast or sacrifice seemed to form a part of the service, for the people brought corn, treasures and golden coin. The king was seated upon a throne and the Brahman priests stood before him and repeated mantras from their holy books. They then consecrated water and sprinkled it over him, thus anointing him king. He was then permitted to partake of the sacred beverage of the soma plant. A red umbrella was raised over his head and a chowri fan was waved as a part of the ceremony. After all of these rites had been accomplished, the king was arrayed in royal robes. The significance of raising the umbrella and waving the chowri fan is not known. It may have been to drive away evil spirits. The red umbrella would not be an umbrella such as we have. It might have had a rudely constructed framework covered with skins or cloth dyed red. Chowri fans are common in India today. They are small hand fans, usually adorned with peacock feathers around the edge and covered with small chowri shells, which are sometimes

15. Mahabharata p.192 Coup.3. 17. " 207 " 4
used as a medium of exchange. The royal robes might have been made of bright colored silk or some other fine material. The king was obliged to lay aside the signs of his warriorhood, his horse, chariot, armor, bow and arrow, and take up the sign of sacerdotal power, and become a Brahman during the period of the inauguration.

Yudhiṣṭhir, the eldest brother of the five sons of Pandu, had been made king, with his capital at Indra-Prastha on the Jumna. Yudhiṣṭhir and his brothers resolved to perform the Rajasuya or Imperial sacrifice, which was a formal assumption of the Imperial power of one king over all the kings of the surrounding country. His brothers went out with troops in all directions to proclaim his supremacy over the others, who with the exception of one, came to recognize his supremacy.

The time which elapsed between the composition of the Vedas and the Mahābhārata had given rise to class distinctions. The king as in Vedic times continued to be chosen from among the war-like chieftains as representatives of the people. A more detailed inauguration ceremony had come to be observed.

FAMILY ORGANIZATION.

It is certain that there did exist a people living united somewhere, probably in Europe, who spoke a language from which the modern languages of Europe have come. The language spoken by the Zend speaking Iranians of Persia and the Sanskrit speaking people of Vedic times in India points to a common origin with the Indo-European languages. The reason for making this assertion is the similarity of languages and of ideas which the philologists give. For example, in Sanskrit the word for home is dome, in Latin it is domus, in Slav doma. If this be true, then it is certain that the Aryan invaders who entered India possessed a common heritage with those whom they left behind in Europe. The first history that we have of them after they reached India is found in the Vedas. These tell us that they were grouped together in clans, each member within the separate clan bearing as a distinctive appellation the name of some common ancestor or father who exercised patriarchal authority over the sib or clan.

Marriage was as a rule monogamous, the bride being purchased from a neighboring tribe or captured by force from a hostile tribe. On entering her new home, the wife fell absolutely under the power of her husband. He had the right to decide if her offspring should

2. " " " " 10.
4. " " " " 11.
5. Schrader, Prehistoric Antiquities, p. 311.
be allowed to live or be exposed to die. The wife belonged to her husband, body and soul, and what she produced was his property as much as the calf of his cow or the crop of his field. There is no evidence of any matriarchal system under which the children and property would belong to the mother.

The position of the Aryan woman in later Vedic times seems to have improved from the fact that some of the hymns of the Rig Veda were composed by them, and they were considered worthy to take part with their husbands in the performance of the domestic sacrificial rites. They were also permitted to sing the holy hymns and tend the sacred fire which was kept burning on the hearth.

This improvement in their position doubtless came about as a result of the marriage between the Aryans and the aborigines, which gave rise to a new class to whom were granted social privileges above those enjoyed by their aboriginal parents who were universally held in a condition of slavery.

It is certain that at the time of the Mahabharata the purdah system which required all women of higher classes to be kept in seclusion has not been inaugurated, for on festival occasions the queen, ladies and maidsen, gorgeously attired were present to witness games and sports with the men. A place was prepared for them and they were treated with consideration.

At the close of the great war when

1. Schrader: prehistoric Antiquities p. 388
2. Max Miller: Biographies and Words p. 17
3. La Fosse: History of India p. 6
4. p. 6
5. Mahabharata p. 199. Coup. 16,17
the king Dharita Rashtra had been made sonless, he went to his wife Gandhari for comfort. Vyasa, the priest, arranged to have chariots for the women so that they might be taken to the battle field to reclaim their dead. The king's wife is spoken of as

"Stainless queen and stainless woman, ever righteous, ever good, Stately in her mighty sorrow, on the field Gandhari stood." 2

All this goes to show that the position of woman, at the time of the Mahabharata was higher than it was in early Vedic times.

The desire of every Indian home today is for children. The Hindoo considers a man happy in proportion to the number of children he possesses. There is nothing so terrible in the eyes of a Hindoo as the misfortune of not having children. There is a superstition connected with the desire for children, besides that of perpetuating the race, and that is, that the man who leaves no son or grandson behind to perform the last duties in connection with his funeral is in danger of being cut off from all access to the abode of bliss after death. 3 If there are no sons born into an Indian home, then daughters are desired, because, in their offspring there is hope. The same desire for children was manifest in the days of the Bharatas, for Aswapati king of Madra, who, having neither sons nor daughters, sacrificed daily to the gods and besought them for offspring. Finally the prayer maiden told him his prayer would be answered. In time a daughter whom the Brahmans named Savitri, "the

2. " p.349, 3. Dubois and Beauchamp, Hindu Manners and Customs, p.593.
gift of Heaven," was born into his home. The welcome this child received in the home can be seen from the following couplet:

"And the king performed its birth-rites, with a glad and grateful mind,
And the people blessed the dear one, with their wishes good and kind."

As the position of woman was higher at the time of the Mahabharata than it had been, it would be natural to expect a closer family relationship and a stronger attachment of parents for their children than there was formerly. Savitri was much loved and cared for in her home. As she grew, "each passing season added to her, fresher sweetness, deeper love." Her unfolding beauty is compared to the opening petals of a flower.

Other instances are given of the love of parents for their children. When Arjun appeared on the tourney ground to display his skill in the use of the bow and arrow, the people cheered him and then it was said of Pritha, his mother, that she was overjoyed and that "milk of love suffused her bosom, tear of joy was in her eye." Later when this same Arjun received the news that his son Abhimanyu had been slain on the battle field, xxxx he sank down upon the ground and "moments passed in voiceless sorrow and in speechless bitter tear, sobs within his malled bosom smote the weeping listener's ear." "Softer tear-drops wept his mother, joyless was Subhadra's life." And Arjun said:

"Earth to me is void and cheerless, joyless is my heart and home, Dreary without Abhimanyu is this weary world to roam."

7. Mahabharata p. 334, Couplet 63.
At the time of Savitri's birth the king performed the birth-rites.¹ When an Indian child is eleven days old, the father calls in a Brahman priest, who begins the ceremony by spending a period of time in San Kalpa, or intensive meditation. Then he approaches the mother, who with the baby in her arms is seated by her husband on a cloth-covered earthen platform which is set up in the center of the house. Standing before the parents, the priest offers puja (sacrifice) to the god, and goes through the ceremony of consecrating water, and after the water has been consecrated, he pours a small quantity of it into the hands of the father and mother of the child, who drink a portion of it and pour the rest over their heads. He also sprinkles this water over the house and all who are living in it, and throws what remains down the wall. The pur- chita is then presented with some betel nut and a small gift, after which he departs.² This ceremony, which is called the Jata-Karma, or caste work, removes all uncleanness from the house. The mother, however, does not become perfectly pure before the end of the month when a boy is born, and forty days when a girl is born. Until that time has elapsed she must live apart and have no communication with anyone. This custom closely resembles that which Jewish women were obliged to follow under similar circumstances.³ Knowing the tenacity with which the Indian people cling to their old customs, it seems quite probable that the birth-rites mentioned in the couplet may have been performed in this way.⁴

2. Dubois & Beauchamp, Hindu Manners & Customs, p.155.
3. Levitique, Chap.11.
To a Hindu, marriage is the most important and most engrossing event of life. It is a subject of endless conversation and of the most prolonged preparation. An unmarried man is looked upon as having no social status and as being an almost useless member of society. There are men, however, who, from pious motives remain unmarried and who are looked up to and treated with the utmost respect. But it is only those who have renounced the world and have chosen to lead the life of an ascetic. For women or girls not to be married is an almost unheard-of thing. The question of marriage has been looked upon more or less in the same way for many centuries. The attitude taken in the Mahabharata is very much the same as that taken today; for it was a disgrace then, and it is the same now, for a man not to have his daughters married. The position taken in the following couplets will show the attitude, as it was in Mahabharata.

"For our sacred sastras sanction, holy Brahmans oft relate
That the duty-loving father sees his girl in wedded state.
Therefore choose a loving husband, daughter of my house and love,
So thy father earn no censure, or from men or gods above."

The suggestion of the daughter choosing a husband would indicate the Mother family; but the people were in the Agricultural and Pastoral or semi-pastoral stage when the Father family prevailed; that is, family descent was counted only on the side of the father.

No suitors came to claim Savitri, the daughter of Aswapati as

1. Hindu Manners and Customs, p. 205.
wife. So she was permitted to choose a husband for herself. Savitri chose the son of a deposed king. There is no mention of any wedding ceremony. Savitri went to live with her husband who remained with his parents in the forest. To these Savitri became as a daughter. There is no age mentioned either in the marriage of Savitri nor of Draupadi. The fact of their choosing husbands for themselves would mean that they were older than girls are now, when married. The common age now for Brahmins to be married is, for the young men, sixteen years, and the girls chosen for them are generally five or seven, or at the utmost, nine years of age. In the application of this rule, however, there is a wide divergence. The story of the wedding of Draupadi is given more in detail than that of Savitri. Draupadi the daughter of Draupada, king of the Panchalas, became the wife of the five sons of Pandu. Her marriage, which was arranged for by her father, was a public Swayamvara, bride's choice. The place where the Swayamvara was held was a large open field, surrounded by a high wall, outside of which buildings were erected to accommodate the assembled crowd. Inside the wall a large pavilion had been built for the bride, the queens, kings and guests of honor, from which they could see and enjoy the festivities. The rank and file of the people arranged themselves around the sides of the enclosed field. In the center of the enclosed space, a high pole had been raised with

1. Mahabharata p.255, Couplet 34.  
5. Hindu Customs & Manners, supra, p.212.  
7. " " 11-17.
a target placed on the top. A distance from the target a whirling
discus was arranged through which the competitors who wished to
try for the bride, had to shoot and hit the mark. It is to be
noted that the custom observed in the marriage of Savitri and
Draupadi are quite different, although both are called the bride's
choice. Savitri made the choice of her husband independently;
Draupadi's marriage was arranged by her father. Her husband
was to be the man who could perform some feats set for him. So
she did not really make a choice. These differences may denote
different tribal customs or indicate a transition period. Kings,
monarchs, handsome youths and noble princes came from near and
distant lands bringing with them food, milch-kine, wealth, jew-
el's, gold, gifts and garments for the bride whom they hoped to
win. Besides the people of note who came to witness the marriage
festivities and partake of the king's hospitality were Brahmins
and the rank and file of the nations. Dancers, singers and actors
came to entertain the crowd while the priests versed in sacred
mantras came to perform the religious rites.

The merry-making lasted for 15 days, after which the bridal
day finally dawned. Draupadi came forth gaily attired bearing
a garland of flowers on her arm. Then a Brahman priest or pura-
hita repeated the sacred mantras, lighted the holy fire to which

1. Mahabharata p. 315 Coup.7.
3. " " 212 " 12,13.
5. " " " 15.  
8. " " " 2.
he offered sacrifice and from which he sought blessings and grace. Then in silence Draupadi’s brother took her to the pavilion before the assembled crowd, and proclaimed to the suitors what they must do in order to obtain the bride. Many tried in vain to hit the mark with the bow and five arrows which had been given them; but failed.

The second son of Pandu alone was successful. Draupadi smiled upon him and gave to him the bridal garland and the bridal robe. After the tumult was over, the five brothers led Draupadi to the home where their mother Pritha was staying, and announced to her that they had won a great prize. Pritha, without knowing that it was a woman, told them to enjoy their prize in common. The mother having said this, her mandate could not be disregarded and so Draupadi became the wife of the five sons of Pandu.

The custom of fraternal polyandry, that is, of brothers marrying a common wife, prevails now in Thibet and among the Hill tribes of the Himalayas. It never prevailed among the Aryan Hindus of India. It is prohibited in their laws and institutes, and finds no sanction in their literature, ancient or modern. There is evidence of comradeship and the mark of true devotion between the Panduas and their wife Draupadi. Between Savitri and her husband Satyanau, who were mentioned above, there is an

1. Mahabharata p. 215, Coup. 3.
2. " " " 4-8.
4. " " " 220 " 20.
5. " " " 221 " 26.
6. " " " 224.
7. " " " 225 " 28.
8. " " " 253 Coup. 2.
almost unparalleled devotion. The union of a widow in levirate marriage with her husband's brother for the purpose of raising up offspring for the deceased husband, gives evidence in itself of at least the non-universality of the ancient Aryan custom of the widow being put to death on the decease of the husband. Sometimes the body of the deceased was burned, though burial was also in vogue. In one hymn it is prayed that both those who are burned and those who are not burned may hereafter gain the perfect path, and a body such as they desire!

In summing up the evidence on the family organization, we have very good proof that in some prehistoric time, the Indo-Aryans formed a class in common with the Indo-Europeans, and that they had a common ancestry. The form of marriage was, as a rule, monogamous, although there is an example of a polyandrous form of marriage. The Swayamvara or bride's choice may seem to indicate the Matriarchal period, although industrially they were in the Patriarchal period. The fact of the bride's choosing a husband would indicate the age limit of girls to be higher than at the present time. The priests or those who became ascetics did not marry; all other men did. All women were married then, as all women are married now, but in former times the women were not secluded. The funeral pyre had been instituted but was not observed absolutely. Those who were burned alive with the bodies

2. Rig Veda 10: 40, 2.
3. " " , 15, 14.
of their husbands and those who were not, seem to have been respected alike. The people had a great desire for children, supported largely upon superstitious reasons. The status of children is governed largely by the status of the mother, and as the status of the mother was higher than today, so was that of the children.
RELIGION.

The form of government when the Aryans entered India was patriarchal, that is, the family and not the tribe was the unit of society.\(^1\) The father, as head of the family, was its ruler and its priest combined. The religion of these people consisted in the worship of what was awe-inspiring, or what struck them as especially beautiful or beneficial in nature.

They prayed to the sun and the clouds, fire and thunder, the dawn and bright sky: not looking upon them as objects of terror, in which lurked malignant powers, but as instinct with bright and friendly spirits worthy to receive their hymns of praise, and ready to listen to their prayers for help and protection.\(^2\) It was nature that held spell-bound the imagination of the newly come Aryans, and it was to glorify her, and seek the aid of her powers, vaguely personified as diwās, deities or bright ones—that the Vedic poets composed their songs of praise.\(^3\)

The composer of the Vedic Hymns or Brahmanas, as they were called, belonged to no one class or order. He, on whom the gift of song had fallen, became the poet-priest.\(^4\)

Gradually, a change came over the race. The family no longer continued to be the unit of society, as it had been, its place as unit passing to the tribe. A king was elected from among the chieftains as their chosen representative. Along with the political change, came a religious change.\(^5\) The more thoughtful ones,

2. La Fosse, Hist. of India, p. 2.
their number probably confined to a few families noted for their knowledge of religion and their proficiency in the performance of its rites, formed themselves into a class apart from the community, a priestly class. From this class of poet priests or Brahmanas the "purohita" or domestic chaplain was chosen, and he took his place beside the king, swayed the policy of the tribe and ruled the king's thoughts. The use of sacrifices in time came to be more and more frequent and the maker of the prayers and the composer of the hymns came to be more relied upon and of greater importance. As the religious ritual developed, other sacrificing priests were appointed to chant the hymns, perform the sacrifices or assist in various duties. The Brahmanas, sons or descendants of the early poet-priests were trained to hold in their family the general supervision over the entire sacrificial system. (Frazier, p. 37.)

As the Aryan tribes wandered through the gloomy wooded mountain passes towards the low land plains of India, the sacred duty of each householder was to preserve bright, within his homestead the once kindled spark of life. Should once the life go from the gleaming spark and it lie cold, as man lies cold in death, then the kindling sticks of armu wood were brought forth, and the sacred flame was soon brought to life again by the rubbing of two pieces together. To the Aryan mind, the new-born fire had a will, a potency of its own, as much as had man. It was animated by a soul, it breathed, it went free, it was a friend in the household.
It was a god, the assistance of which must be courted, the great power of which must be won as an aid to the conquering Aryans. So, all the phenomena of nature became more or less vaguely personified in one form or another; and prayers, charms and incantations were composed and sung to sway these deities, to make them more propitious and cause them to aid their worshipers. Throughout the development of the Vedic religion, some one of the Vedic gods came out from among the rest, endowed with some special powers, older deities passed away and were forgotten, and for them hymns were no longer fashioned. Newer deities inspired the poet’s praise as fulfilling new functions in the course of the people’s changing life. Varuna was the deity who rose nearest to the heights of monotheistic greatness as the sole ruler of the universe. It was he, who by his magic measured out the earth with the sun, and he was the god who saw into the hearts of all. Indra, the god of battle and of storm, was the great heroic deity of the conquering Aryans. Indra was the god to whom the Aryans prayed for rain. He it was who aided the Aryans in conquering the dark-skinned aborigines whom they found along the river valleys, as they penetrated farther into India. Each poet as he sang the praises of his favored deity, and strove in his song to magnify his attributes. To him the main conception of each deity was determined and defined, yet its glory was enhanced by ascribing to it universal powers and giving to it praises couched in high sounding terms. The entire worship was pervaded by a

7. " " " " " " 54.
common and early pantheistic phase of thought,—nature in all its phenomena was held to be endowed with soul life. This was nature worship; the expressions of the vague, unaided intuitions of the soul as it sought for some solution of that which lay beneath the surface. Visvamitra and Vasishta were two rival poet priests, who were contending for the favor of the renowned king Sudas, of the Tritsus tribe. Finally Vasishta prevailed and remained to sing the praise of his patron, the conquering Sudas. Vasishta, by his mystic prayers, brought the aid of Indra to the king and hurled back Visvamitra and his warlike friends the Bharatas. In the end these two powerful tribes became friends.

A third great Vedio tribe, the Kurus—whose king, Kutsa, had led the Bharatas in Vedic war against Sudas, king of the Tritsus tribe, united with them and formed the great alliance of the Kurus, who dwelt in the plains of Kurukshetra, and who afterwards built their renowned capital at Hastinapur on the Ganges 65 miles northeast of Delhi. Kurukshetra became the great place of sacrifice for the Aryans, the center in which the sacred literature was compiled and elaborated and where the Mahabharata was probably written.

A Brahman priesthood had arisen, with a chief priest who composed the songs and prayers, and was the religious head of the tribe. He had subordinate priests who aided him in the duties

8. Frazer, Lit. Hist. of India, P. 56
Dharita Raashtra was king of the Kurus, and Drona was priest and preceptor and warrior. Drona proposed to the king that a public tournament be held, so that his pupils, the sons of the king and the sons of Pandu whom he had trained in the art of war could display their skill. This proposal met with the favor of the king and preparations were made for carrying it out.

The altar or place of sacrifice is something that meets the traveller everywhere in India. It may be a small elevated plot of ground or, as was common in Vedic times, an enclosed structure today as with a thatched roof. In ancient times these were sacred places on which the priests offered sacrifices to their gods to secure their good will. The phrase, "lighted altars," shows that there was a fire, and it may have been the object worshiped. Fire was sometimes offered to the sun and sometimes to all the planets.

Besides the sacrifice of fire, the priests offered other daily sacrifices to the gods, such as incense, flowers, rice, vegetables and fruit. "Holy gifts and offerings" may have been some of the products of nature which were commonly used, as referred to above.

The sacrifice may have been made to "the auspicious star." It shows that the custom at this time was much the same as it is now, for a Hindu before he will undertake anything of any importance, must consult some special star.

13. " " 5.
"Came the saintly white robed Drona, white his sacrificial thread, White his sandal-mark and garlands, white the locks that crowned his head. 14

The common dress of Hindu priest today before going to sacrifice is a long white cloth, draped about his body. The sacrificial thread was probably like that worn by Brahmans today. It is a thin cord, composed of three strands of cotton, each strand formed by nine threads which hang from the left shoulder and fall down on the right hip. The cotton with which it is made must be gathered from the plant by the hand of a pure Brahmin, and carded and spun by persons of the same caste, so as to avoid the possibility of its contamination by passing through unclean hands. 15 The number three adopted and, so to say, consecrated, in this and many other instances, is evidently used in an allegorical sense. It is thought to refer to the principal divinities of India, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. 16 Children from the age of five to nine are invested with this cord. March, April, May and June are considered the most favorable months for its investiture. 17 Sandals, some of wood and some of leather, are worn in India today. Garlands of marigold and other flowers are worn about the neck of officiating priests. Karna, the half brother of the Panduas, was crowned king of Anga and the coronation service in described thus:

"Karna by his warlike valor is of crowned king the peer, Karna shall be crowned monarch, nations shall his mandate hear."

14. Mahabharata p.199 Coup.20
16. " " " " " " " "
17. " " " " " " " "
"Forth they brought the corn and treasure, golden coin and water
jar.
On the throne they seated Karna famed in many a deathful war,
"Brahmans chanted sacred mantras which the holy books ordain,
And anointed crowned Karna, king of Anga's fair domain.
"And they raised the red umbrella, and they waved the chowri fan.
Blessings on the crowned monarch! honor to the bravest man!
"Now the holy rites accomplished, in his kingly robes arrayed,
Karna unto prince Duryodhan thus in grateful accents prayed." 18

The first couplet states that Karna was chosen king because of
his warlike valor. "Corn and treasure" may have meant, besides
corn, barley and rice, because these came later to be much used
in sacrifice. "Golden coin," shows that they had some system of
money exchange, although what part it performed in this sacrifice
is not stated. "Water jars" containing holy water, made sacred
by the officiating priest repeating mantras which the holy books
ordained, were carried to the place of sacrifice. The king was
anointed by sprinkling him with the holy water from the water jar.
The Mahabharata on two different occasions, when kings were crowned,
mentions the red umbrella and the chowri fan. The significance of
these in the performance of this rite I have been unable to ascen-
tain.

The Rajasuya sacrifice was one that was performed when some
chief wished to assert his superiority and power over the kings
of the surrounding nations. Yudhisthir, the eldest son of Pandu
and rightful heir to the throne, was crowned king of Indra Prastha

18Mahabharata p. 207 Coup.7--11.
on the Jumna. He decided to perform this sacrifice, so his brothers went out with troops in all directions to proclaim his supremacy. They met with but little resistance. The king of Behar resisted and was slain; the other kings came to the sacrifice bringing their tribute with them. In connection with the performance of this sacrifice, Krishna, the much worshiped god of India today, first comes to notice. At the coronation service, the priest Narad performed the sacrificial rites,

"And a ray of heavenly wisdom lit the rishi's inner eye, As he saw the gathered monarchs in the concourse proud and high! He had heard from lips celestial in the heavenly mansions bright All these kings were gods incarnate, portions of Celestial Light. And he saw in them embodied beings of the upper sky, And in lotus-eyed Krishna saw the Highest of the High, Saw the ancient world's preserver, great creation's Primal Cause, Who had sent the gods as monarchs to uphold his righteous laws."

Thus to Krishna was given supreme place among the heroes. Now completed, Before Krishna took his departure for his kingdom, Yudhisthir addresses him in regard to the Imperial sacrifice.

"By thy grace and by thy valor," said Yudhisthir thus replies, By thy presence, noble Krishna, I performed this high emprise and continuing, he says that it is by his power that he was able to perform this sacrifice. Yudhisthir bowed down before Krishna as chief of all the gods. "Krishna was declared to be first of all warriors, the regent of the universe, therefore do we worship Krishna, amongst the best and oldest and not others."
Krishna is he who is origin of the universe, and that in which the universe is to dissolve. He is the unmanifest primal matter, the creator, "creation's primal cause," the eternal and beyond the ken of all creatures. "Therefore doth he of unfailing glory deserve the highest worship." The funeral rites, performed after the close of the great war which secured to the Pandus their kingdom, are here given.

"Victor of a deathful battle, sad Yudhisthir viewed the plain,
Friends and kindmen, kings and chieftains, countless troops untimely slain;
Men in nations, countless, nameless, from each court and camp afar,
From the east and west collected, fell in Kuru-Kalutra's war."

Then spoke Yudhisthir to the priests and said,

"Pious rites are due to formen and to friends and kinsmen slain,
None shall lack a fitting funeral, none shall perish on the plain."

"Wise Vidura and his comrades sped on sacred duty bound,
Sandalwood and scented aloes, fragrant oil and perfumes found,
Silken robes of costly splendor, fabrics by the artist wove,
Dry wood from the thorny jungle, perfumes from the scented grove,
Shattered cars and splintered lances, hewed and ready for the fire,
Piled and ranged in perfect order into many a funeral pyre.
Kings and princes, noble warriors, were in rank and order laid,
And with streams of fragrant ghee were the rich libations made.
Blazed the fire with wondrous radiance by the rich libations fed,
Sanctifying and consuming mortal remnants of the dead.

Pitri-Medha due to fathers was performed with pious care,
Hymns and wails and lamentations mingled in the midnight air.
Sacred songs of rik and saman rose with women's piercing wail,
And the creatures of the wide earth heard the sound subdued and pale.

23. Mahabharata p. 352,353, Coups. 1, 3-5.
25. "  "  " 16.
Smokeless and with radiant lustre shone each red and lighted pyre,
Like the planets of the bright sky throbbing with celestial fire.

Thousand fires for them were lighted, they received the pious rite,
Such was good Yudhisthir's mandate, such was wise Vidura's might.

All the dead were burned to ashes and the sacred rite was o'er,
Dhrita-rashtra and Yudhisthir slowly walked to Ganga's shore. 26

Childless dames and weeping widows thither in their anguish came,
Due and holy rites to render to departed chiefs of fame.

Casting forth their jewelled girdles, gems and scarfs with gold belaced,
Gave oblations of the water unto warriors true and bold,

Unto fathers, unto husbands, unto sons in battle slayed,
Offering of the sacred water sorrowing wives and mothers made.

And so great the host of mourners wending to perform the rite,
That their footsteps made a pathway in the sad and sacred site,

And the shelving banks of Ganga peopled by the sorrowing train,
Wide-expanding, vast and sealike, formed a scene of woe and pain. 27

Done the rites to the departed, done oblations to the dead,
Slowly then the sad survivors on the river's margin spread,

Far along the shore and sand bank of the sacred sealike stream,
Maid and matron lave their bodies 'neath the morning's holy beam,

And ablutions done, the Kurus, slow and sad and cheerless, paft.
Wend their way to far Hastina with a void and vacant heart. 28

This instance of funeral rites shows that cremation was the way adopted for taking care of the dead. In Vedic times both burying and burning were practiced, although now most castes burn, though some low castes bury.

King Yudhisthir said that funeral rites for all the dead should be performed and commanded the priests to make ready for it.

27. " 354, " 4, 5.
Vidura, one of the relatives and priests, with his comrades collected the sandal wood, scented aloes, fragrant oil and perfume from the scented grove. A paste made of sandal wood was applied to the forehead as a mark of respect for the dead, while the oil was applied only in places on the body. The funeral pyres were made from splintered lances and shattered battle cars.

The litter may not have been used on this occasion, for there is no mention of it. It is ordinarily made of two long pieces of wood fastened together with transverse pieces. They fasten the toes and thumbs together and the body is wrapped with a cloth and placed on the litter. The litter is then covered with flowers, green leaves and colored cloths. When all is ready, the chief mourner gives the signal to depart. He walks at the head of the procession carrying an earthen jar in which a fire has been placed. The parents and friends of the deceased surround the litter. After reaching the funeral pyre the corpse is laid upon it, and the chief mourner places a coin in the mouth of the deceased and the friends and relatives in turn deposit a few grains of wet rice. The significance of the coin is not given, but the wet rice is placed in the mouth so that hunger and thirst may at the same time be satisfied. The relatives then come and deprive the corpse of all the jewels it possessed. The chief mourner then walks three times around the pyre and pours some water upon it from an earthen vessel which he carries on his shoulder. A lighted torch

Hindu

29. Dubois & Bauachamp, Manners & Customs, p.161.
is brought to him but before taking it, it is customary for him
to show his grief by uttering mournful cries and, following his
example, all who are present weep bitterly or pretend to do so.
Then the chief mourner takes the torch and sets fire to the four
corners of the pyre. As soon as the fire has caught hold of it,
everybody retires with the exception of the four who have carried
the corpse and they must remain on the spot until the whole pyre
has been consumed.

After the corpse has been consumed, the four who remain
near the pyre return to the place where the other people present
at the ceremonies have assembled. Three times they walk around
the assembly, asking permission to take a bath in the Ganges. Then
they proceed to perform their ablutions in order to purify them­
selves of the pollution of having carried a corpse. The chief
mourner invites all present to take the bath of the dead, which
is supposed to be on behalf of the deceased whose body has just
been consumed by the flames. This bath, it is supposed, will re­
fresh him after the fiery ordeal. It is not until all these for­
malities have been observed, that the people are allowed to take
food. They have neither eaten nor drunk anything since the moment
the deceased expired. This seems to describe somewhat the funer­
al service set forth in the Mahabharata. After each one had per­
formed rites to the departed, he went his way with void and aching
heart to the capital, Hastina.
The horse sacrifice closes the Epic. King Yudhisthir had been troubled because of the carnage of war. Vyasa advised the performance of the Aswa Medha or horse sacrifice for the expiation of the blood shed. The sacrifice of the horse was an ancient Hindu custom practiced by kings exercising suzerain powers over surrounding kings.

A horse was let free and was allowed to wander from place to place accompanied by the king's guard. If any neighboring king ventured to detain the animal, it was a signal for war. If no king ventured to restrain the wanderer, it was considered a tacit mark of submission to the owner of the animal. And when the horse returned home, it was sacrificed with great pomp and splendor at a feast, to which all neighboring kings were invited. Yudhisthir, who was the king, allowed the sacrificial horse to wander at will, and Arjun accompanied it. Wherever the horse was stopped, Arjun fought and conquered, and thus proclaimed Yudhisthir's supremacy over all neighboring potentates. After various wars and adventures, Arjun returned victorious with the horse to Hastinapur. Then preparations were made for the great sacrifice, the site of which the Brahmans were to choose.

"Skilled mechanics, cunning artists, raised the structures for the rite, And with every needful object graced the sacrificial site." 32

"Eighteen cubits square the structure, four deep layers of brick in height,

30. Mahabharata p.358.
With a spacious winged triangle like an eagle in its flight.  

"And the consecrated altar, built and raised of bricks of gold,  
Shone in splendor like the Altar Daksha built in days of old."  

The altar here named is not described. Of the animals brought  
to be sacrificed it is said:

"Beasts whose flesh is pure and wholesome, dwellers of the lake and  
sky,  
Priests assigned each varied offering to each heavenly power on  
high.  
Bulls of various breed and color, steeds of matl true and tried;  
Other creatures, full three hundred, to the many stakes were tied.  
A sacrificial pillar had to be erected for tying the animal. The  
pillar was hewn with an ax, care being taken to utter the incanta- 
tion, "Oh ax, hurt it not!"  
As a further precaution a blade of  
"darbha" grass was placed between the ax and the tree, so that it  
might not receive the first blow. When the tree out of which the  
sacrificial part had to be hewn was cut down, offerings were made  
upon the stump, "lest evil spirits should arise therefrom."  
The sacrificial stake was then carved out, ornamented with a ring at  
the top, anointed and dedicated to Visnu. Some have thought that  
the idea of the Indian idol sprang from the sacrificial stake. Af- 

ter the dedication of the stake, a priest girds it with a rope of  
Kusa grass. The sacred Kusa grass is a marshy grass, which grows  
along the Ganges river. It is much used in sacrifice and is said  
to be the grass upon which the black antelope feeds.

33. Mahabharata p. 363, Coup. 18.  
34. "  17.  
35. "  19.  
38. "  6, 4, 10.
The horse for the Aswa Medah sacrifice was chosen before its birth. It was reared with care until it was three years old. Sacrifices were constantly made to Indra that he might watch over the young animal, to Yama the god of death, that he might preserve it from death, and every accident, to Varuna for rain that he might cause plenty of grass to grow. "According to the Vedas, the horse was slain and Queen Draupadi was placed beside the slain animal."39

"Priests adept in sacred duty cooked the steed with pious rite, And the stream of welcome fragrance sanctified the sacred rite.40 Good Yudhisthir and his brothers by the rules of rishis spoke, Piously inhaled the fragrance and the sin-destroying smoke. Severed limbs and sacred fragments of the courser duly dressed, Priests upon the blazing altar as a pious offering placed. Vyasa, herald of the Vedas, raised his voice in holy song, Blessed Hastinas righteous monarch and the many nationed throng."41

When the animal was killed for sacrifice, every limb was preserved. According to later custom, the animal was killed by beating it to death.42. The priest, during the slaying, averted his eyes; any blood that fell was received on the sacred grass and was considered an offering to the Rakshas or demons. To the officiating priest and to the sacrificer were presented allotted parts of the cooked food.43 In case of the horse sacrifice here given, it seems that the steam from the cooking and the smoke from the fire were inhaled and were supposed to have some purifying effect.

Uydhisthir, after the sacrifice was over, was considered king of all north India. His uncle Dharita Rashtra, with his wife Gandhari and Pritha, mother of the Pandus, retired into the forest. Here he saw as in a vision the spirits of all the slain warriors, his sons, grandsons and kinsmen, clad and armed as they were in battle. The spirits disappear in the morning at the bidding of Vyasa, who called them. At last Dharita Rashtra, Gandhari and Pritha were burnt to death in a forest conflagration, death by fire being considered holy. After this, there was a great journey and ascent to heaven. On hearing of the death of Krishna, the Pandus placed Arjun's grandson on the throne and retired to the Himalayas. Draupadi dropped dead on the way, then the two younger brothers, then Arhun and then Bhima. Uydhisthir alone proceeded to heaven in person in a celestial car. There Uydhisthir underwent some trial, bathed in the celestial Ganges and rose with a celestial body. He then met Krishna in heavenly form, blazing in splendor and glory. He met also his brothers, whom he had lost on earth and who were now Immortals in the sky, clad in heavenly forms.

Thus the religion of the people changed from an unorganized to an organized and hereditary priesthood, and along with the growth in the priesthood came a corresponding growth in the ritual.

44. Mahabharata p. 367.
CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing chapters it has been shown that the people of the Mahabharata were chiefly in the agricultural stage, although the arts and crafts flourished to a certain degree, and some of the people continued in the pastoral stage.

It has been seen that, as population increased, life tended to become more settled and the food supply more stable and of better quality, and thus man's desire ever to better his condition was in a measure gratified in them.

They carried on organized warfare, had a knowledge of and were skilled in the use of the bow and arrow and kindred warlike implements. Among some primitive peoples war was carried on for reasons, such as wife-stealing, plunder, vanity, and various other like causes, but the people of the Mahabharata, like their Aryan ancestors, fought because of the necessity for self protection and the procuring of food. They learned through experience that it was economy to have trained warriors, men whose duty it was to do the fighting for the tribe. Thus a warrior, or Rajput, class was formed for this purpose, leaving some of the people free to till the soil and to follow their different pursuits.

Along with the fighting class arose a priestly class, whose duty it was to look after the religious side of life. This, too, was economical. The worship at first was very simple, the wandering bard sang songs of praise to some object, as the sun, chose some place of worship, as that marked by a special kind of tree or stone. After the tribes had worshiped there for a number of
times, a certain sacredness became attached to the place. Such places multiplied and along with the increase of the number of places came a corresponding increase in the number of priests and the formation and growth of a ritual.