A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF EPIC-*THE MAHABHARATA:* BEYOND A RELIGIOUS TEXT

Dr. Nitin Malhotra
Assistant Professor
Division of (English) Communication, Galgotias University,
Greater Noida, India

Dr. Ruchika Jain
Assistant Professor
Department of Commerce,
Gobindgarh Public College, Alour, India

Dr Amit Narula
Assistant Professor, DAV College Chandigarh

ABSTRACT

The *Mahabharata* is not only a religious text that is associated with a sect called 'Hindu' rather it is a storehouse of the multiple topics of all segments of life in every aspect. Hence the present review of available literature will open up a paradigm of answers to the questions of everyday lives and triggering the imaginative capability of students in English classroom setups. This paper is a review of existing literature related to the *Mahabharata* as a text of universal connections and provides exuberant aid to the teachers to teach and the researchers to explore. The study has been made through the research papers available in the Scopus database from the last five years (2018-2022) using the epic's title the *Mahabharata*. Our research strategy generated 256 *results in total, out of which 85 articles were published between 2018 and 2022. But after careful analysis, finally, 37 articles were included in the review by following* "**Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)***, 2020"*. The results opened up multiple key terms such as weapons, animals, women, masculinity, human agency, non-violence, anthropocentric and common welfare i.e. *param dharma.* All these terms are found prevalent in the research database and exploration based on character representation imbibing the predetermined views of human life. The said terms identify the characters of the epic presenting universal messages throughout and the subjects of the epic are not only imaginary but rather a source of maintaining value and ethics in society. This systematic literature review is the first attempt of its type on the research papers on the *Mahabharata* available in the Scopus database in which we have organized the results into five clusters that would be mechanically meaningful for the researchers and academicians writing and exploring the *Mahabharata* from the perspectives of the research in different disciplines. Future research will enrich the field by investigating the remaining untouched areas of the *Mahabharata* like human aspirations, avarice, patriarchy, male chauvinism, women as men's counterparts, wildlife, struggle and consolidation of strength, Krishna as a character or God, the *Mahabharata* as a cultural, folkloric and anthropological text, and especially as a text guiding for spiritual well-being.

Keywords: Epic, Mahabharata, Indian Culture, SLR, English teaching

INTRODUCTION

The oral tradition in India is replete with compositions and texts which are available in various modes of singing, recitation, enunciation, and enactment. Narrative tradition involves the participation of the masses and sees ahead the texts into a public transaction. Texts thus received and disseminated become public property and that is exactly what the *Mahabharata* is - such is the reach of its narrative and sub-narratives. The *Mahabharata* is different from other ancient epics in that no other epic explicitly discusses questions of life on all subjects. Birth, death, love, weapons, animals, marriage, conflict, complexity, and so on…abound in all the epics but the concern is with personal honor and valor. The Epilogue to the *Mahabharata* exclaims with pride "Whatever is here, may be found elsewhere; what is not cannot be found

anywhere else" (Ganguli 1993).In the *Mahabharata* alone, the issue is social and secular and the grain of skepticism and indeterminacy runs through the main narrative like a layer of mica in a sandstone rock. It is, undoubtedly, larger than *Iliad* and *Odyssey* merged together, and it is accessible in three recensions: those are of Pune, Kumbhakonam, and Nīlakanṭhiki. It contains, in all, 100217 shlokas culminated in 18 parvas those equal to 18 books and an addendum *Harivansha Puraṇa*. The *Mahabharata* accommodates the grandeur of the civilization that has produced it and is similar to an ocean for the number of subjects it deals. It is a *prabandhakavya* (that is meant as structured composition), an *itihasa* (that incorporates the record of all happened), a *purakalpaitihasa* (that it is a repository of several protagonists), 'fifth *Veda*', a *Dharmashastra* (a treatise describing the way of life). The *Mahabharata* has, in its long history, been commented upon by 36 learned commentators from the all directions (Malhotra 2020). The presence of these commentators and commentaries is evidence of the fact that the Indian community has recognized this text as central to its culture and society (Pattanaik 2010).

The *Mahabharata* carries diverse topics being an epic of Indian literature. It is an epic poem that tells the story of a dynastic struggle for the throne of Hastinapur, an ancient kingdom in northern India on the one hand and is filled with numerous sub-narratives (Ganguli1993). While the *Mahabharata* is often associated with Hinduism, it can also be understood as a non-religious text that offers a wide range of insights into human nature, ethics, politics, and society. It can be understood through multiple threads. Firstly, the *Mahabharata* is a complex and multi-layered narrative that contains a wealth of human experiences and emotions. It portrays characters that are flawed, complex, and often contradictory. The epic deals with universal themes such as love, loyalty, duty, power, and sacrifice, which are not limited to any particular religious or cultural context. Secondly, the *Mahabharata* provides a fascinating insight into ancient Indian society and politics. It describes the customs, traditions, and values of different social groups, including kings, warriors, Brahmins, and merchants. It explores issues such as caste, gender, and social hierarchy, and offers a critique of social injustices and oppression. Thirdly, the *Mahabharata* also offers a range of philosophical and ethical perspectives that can be understood as non-religious. It contains dialogues on topics such as the nature of existence, the role of destiny, the meaning of life, and the importance of self-realization. These discussions are often framed within a broader context of human experience and are not limited to any specific religious belief. And, finally, the *Mahabharata* has been interpreted and reinterpreted over the centuries by various scholars, writers, and artists. It has been adapted into different forms of literature, art, and performance, including plays, films, and television series. These adaptations often emphasize different aspects of the epic, highlighting its relevance to contemporary issues and concerns.

The *Mahabharata*, therefore, can be understood as a non-religious text that offers a rich and diverse range of insights into human nature, society, and ethics. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to engage with universal themes and inspire reflection and interpretation across different cultural and historical contexts. Furthermore, despite the significant attention paid by multiple researchers to different aspects of life in the *Mahabharata* in recent years, many researchers still believe that there is still scope for investigating the remaining untouched areas of the *Mahabharata* like human aspirations, avarice, patriarchy, male chauvinism, women as men counterpart, wildlife, struggle and consolidation of strength, Krishna as a character or God, the *Mahabharata* as a cultural, folkloric and anthropological text, and especially as a text guiding for spiritual well-being.

This review's goal is to measure up to the following questions:
1:   What are the publishing trends in the fields of the *Mahabharata* studies?
2:   How does the *Mahabharata* remain a part of oral and cultural tradition in Epic Studies?
3:   What are the major universal key factors in the literature expansion on the *Mahabharata?*
4:   Which prominent themes are not being covered by researchers?
5:   Which relevant future research directions can be taught in the English Classrooms from the *Mahabharata*?

METHODOLOGY

The authors devised a strategy for locating relevant material for their systematic review. On March 7, 2023, the structured database of Scopus was searched using the phrase "Mahabharata."The SCOPUS database was chosen because of its reliability and credibility in the field of study. There were 256 results in total in the database. The query timeframe was set to last five years, from 2018 to 2022, and the data was filtered to 85 results. The search strategy was inherently limited to journal articles alone. When the research was confined to journal publications, the resulting figure was 40.A few of the articles had to be eliminated from the process since they were written in languages other than English, which brought the overall count to 37. The researchers thoroughly reviewed the abstracts of these publications and discovered they were all relevant to the study's objectives.

In total, 37 articles are shortlisted for review. These articles have the following common attributes:

- The articles under review emphasise the universal nature of the *Mahabharata* as a cultural text and not merely a religious scripture.

- It encompasses a wide range of human expectations and aspirations, questions and answers on different topics which aids the teachers in the English setup to explore through characters, stories and tales.
- The different ideas are discussed such as birth, death, love, weapons, animals, marriage, conflict, complexity and avarice, patriarchy, male chauvinism, women as men counterpart, wildlife, struggle and consolidation of strength, Krishna as a character or God, the *Mahabharata* as a cultural, folkloric and anthropological text, and especially as a text guiding for spiritual well-being and so on to assemble and construct ideology amongst the students.
- These articles were published during 2018 to 2022.
- These papers were published in SCOPUS-listed journals.
- The articles are published in English language.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The following set of papers, though divided into five clusters, apprehensively mentions some of the broad areas of the *Mahabharata*
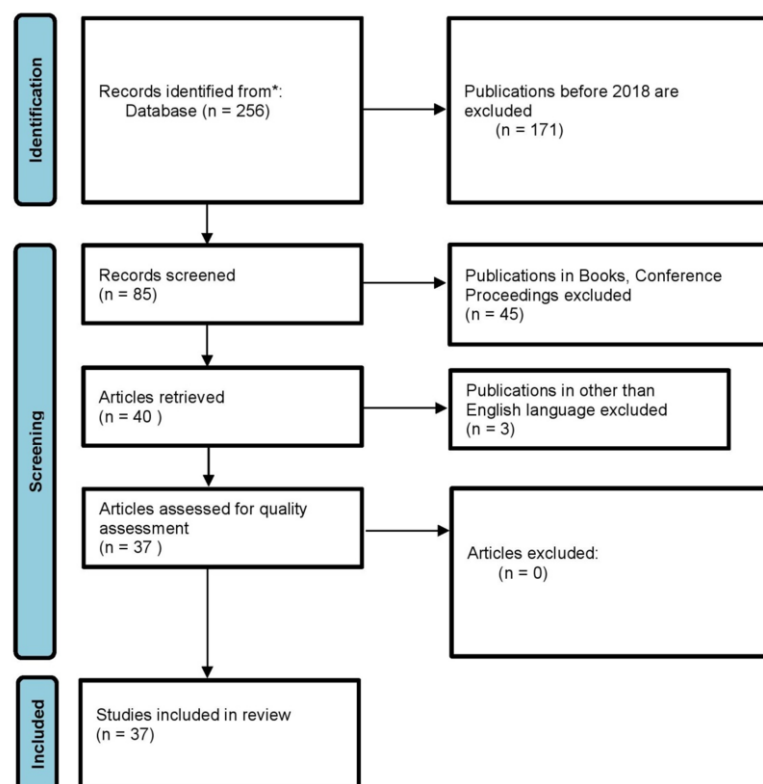

Figure 1 was created for the methodology of a systematic literature review using Page et al.

such as weapons in the war, status of female identities, and masculine stance over the issues, subalterns, sovereignty, common welfare as *param dharma,* animality, ethics, morality, gender-queer, hegemony, music, militarism, politics, and narratives.

Table 1 depicts the details of 37 articles included in the present review.

Table 1: Articles included in the Review

Author/s	Year	Weblink	Analytical Insight and Implication/s
Pathak. S.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85145100229&doi=10.1558%2frosa.24397&partnerID=40&md5=2a0f93674b0aded5098182a7a991a6e7	Hanuman and Duryodhana are being analysed from the glance of aesthetic and theological visions. Through the major character in the epic Ramayana, Hanumat and Duryodhana as the major character in the *Mahbharata,* the paper emphasises on the prominent categorized distinctions between contrasting poetic and architectural renderings.
Morales-Harley R.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85145084561&doi=10.1558%2frosa.24400&partnerID=40&md5=1191373de7d7830267be2949b41e71c4	The paper examines the vision of the*Mahabharata*in order to recognize the auctorial techniques like representation of masculinity, humorous shifts and self-references.It pacifies the space for cultural subjects in detail.
Babkiewicz A., Sellmer S.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85145058177&doi=10.1558%2frosa.24401&partnerID=40&md5=9cff8ce260fd570458e8290b80ffaf83	The paper extensively evaluates the usage of four weapons in the Mahābhārata, reconstructing their version of available prehistory, textual and material evidence, and visualises how they have been used in order to understand the human reach of weapons in the *Mahabharata.*
Thankaraj J.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85146676122&doi=10.1111%2ferev.12748&partnerID=40&md5=e8d81baa310ff8b5d665144d64385a42	Both the *Mahabharata* and Qohelet hold that people have a predeterministic view of human existence that states the suffering, failure, and oppression are human fate from the moment they are born. It is not appropriate to assert that God predetermines poverty, oppression, violence, and atrocities in human life under this viewpoint because it disregards the reality that people today have the freedom to act as they choose.
Black B.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85140457766&doi=10.3390%2frel13100898&partnerID=40&md5=e10cdfe5a885b6988b310cdd875ed864	The Shanti-Parva of the *Mahabharata* features Janaka's dialogues with self-cultivation, renunciation, and liberation and his treatment to them as the supreme goals. The conversations portray the monarchy as dynamic and brittle, with the king currently showcasing his intelligence and restraint. This procedure adds to the continuing dialogue about ancient Indian sovereignty that is taking place across texts and religions.
Gorai B., Dwivedi R.R.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85133974343&partnerID=40&md5=4e9bdb6ba55b50ecf8462bde6365549e	In order to advance a non-violent, sustainable way of life, the article analyses two of the parama (greatest) dharmas from the *Mahabharata*: the first one is *anshrmansya* that contains the absence of inhumanity, animal-killing, and betrayal, and the second one as *ahimsa* (non-violence). It explores the subtleties of violence and nonviolence as well as how they can be applied practically in daily living.
Black B.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85130995456&doi=10.1093%2fjhs%2fhiab021&partnerID=40&md5=971da4440f664d4f6d4dec3c55a60e16	The article enlists the significance of snakes in the *Mahabharata*, focusing on Ulupi, a character who is a key player in the narrative development of animal's stand in the text. It examines her serpent identity, her relationships to other notable snake characters, and the connections between her descent and other snake lineages. The two crucial incidents of snake sacrifice of Janamejaya and the conflagration of the Khandava Forest are also covered.
Dey A.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85129806275&doi=10.17462%2fpara.2022.01.14&partnerID=40&md5=203dfbdaf6e9818209ac41f0db040824	The *Mahabharata* claims to legitimize societal codes that regulates and control women and their existence in private and public domains in the society and encourages an accommodating position for women in their relationships and the wider place in the social order. "*The Palace of Illusions*" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni provides societal transformation through the idea of giving a feminist camouflage by giving the narrative voice to the main

| Author/s	Year	Weblink	Analytical Insight and Implication/s
			female character and re-entering the excluded groups. Additionally, taboo subjects like pleasure and feminine sexuality are covered in this translation.
Bhattacharjee A.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85127201450&doi=10.1007%2fs42240-022-00121-w&partnerID=40&md5=9d2cfddcde49ef2a17282c39030fe70d	The *Mahbhrata* holds that humans are unable to comprehend their own demise and it is asserted that the ability for human rationalisation is required to disavow and refute the claim that the behaviour of animals can be understood. The goal of the paper is to understand and investigate the extent to which the experienced animality is ingrained in the framework of human perception, the complication of the concept of a priori and its nature through the analysis of the jantu and pakshi-upakhyans (Tales on animals and birds) in the Aranyak Parva.
Black B.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85125082591&doi=10.1007%2fs11407-022-09313-2&partnerID=40&md5=65d8dc78330eea2b590e33883d1f7768	Dharma is the central theme of the *Mahabharata*, but at its subtle level (Sukshma Dharma) its meaning and implications are difficult to understand. It ponders over the intricate question of how to react in ethically ambiguous circumstances. It is often associated with marginalized characters who are demonstrated with their knowledge by instinctive and spontaneous behaviour.
Singh V.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85075055493&doi=10.1177%2f0021989419881231&partnerID=40&md5=7dc28255fac964834b74c52b95b10643	This piece looks at how Amar Chitra Katha's knowledge-based, conservative pedagogy gave way to a more globalized, entertainment-focused, market-centered approach to the adaptation of Indian epics into comic books. It examines how the production and distribution of comic books are influenced by trends and by factors such as society, religion, politics, and industry. It also looks at how comics are categorised as cyberpunk, post-apocalyptic, or superhero styled comics, as well as how the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata's* "core" tales came to be.
Mahadevan K.	2022	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85136287889&doi=10.32022%2fPHI31.2022.120-121.7&partnerID=40&md5=c02ec051ae727f4682208e3d42530573	The author contends that the analogy between human identities based on gender and various social locations of class and caste results in a variety of feminist perspectives as it analyses the effects of interjecting in the Gadamer-Habermas debate on the hermeneutics of culture and tradition from a feminist perspective.
Khangai R.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85117571238&doi=10.1177%2f03769836211052099&partnerID=40&md5=00f09facf9a215da31e47224525f1dd8	The epic battles to justify the narrative of Draupadi's humiliation in the royal court through various mythologies to assuage the moral unease brought on by patriarchal control over women's bodies that is held inviolate. The epic's characters are shown to be passive, having their lives and bodies changed to suit men's perceptions. The obsession with chastity is a sign that a woman's body is being treated as a commodity.
Fleming C.T.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85125130981&doi=10.1093%2fjhs%2fhiaa015&partnerID=40&md5=a69ca578e810472d06b0518ee7b7f79c	This essay examines the intentions behind various characters' endeavours in the unrighteous dice-game in the *Mahabharata* using *Dharamshastras* (Sanskrit jurisprudential literature) and Nalakabhacaturdhara's *Bharatbhavadhapa* (7th Century). It promotes a scholarly emphasis on law nuance and tact.
Lorndale T.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85125125664&doi=10.1093%2fjhs%2fhiab011&partnerID=40&md5=ace6abd5e1213537249b5ad15c1d0a77	The Vikramarjunavijaya of Pampa (VAV) and the Sahasabhimavijrey of Ranna are two specific *Mahabharata* accounts that are examined in the article's examination of the Sauptikaparvan's acceptance history in primitive Kannada. It contends that these two texts change the legendary slaughter into an episode about contesting Krishna's, the Vishnu avatar's, actions and momentarily restoring Duryodhana to the authority. By doing this, the Kaurava monarch is given the opportunity to put an end to the conflict on his own terms and, in the end, passes away upholding the Kshatriya dharma principles for which he had earlier argued and battled. It is shown how these two schools give readers a place to think about and react to bigger questions of religion, dharma, and human endeavour through a close and comparative reading.
Pillai S.S.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-	Hindu studies heavily rely on Dupada's supplication to Krsna found in two Mahabharatas—Villiputtr's Tamil

121

Author/s	Year	Weblink	Analytical Insight and Implication/s
		85125117752&doi=10.1093%2fjhs%2fhiaa016&partnerID=40&md5=ef64dea3d8f23d101a908e376cd4c151	Paratam from the fifteenth century and SabalsinghCauhan's. It serves a variety of functions, including illustrating the power of prapatti, or "selfsurrender," and transforming the complete dicing episode's narrative into a bhakti (devotional) tale. A comparable tale can be found in both the 'OUP' and the 'OCHS'.
Sharma V.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85125115033&doi=10.1093%2fjhs%2fhiab014&partnerID=40&md5=945c8a282046d00c62819c44015aab7d	An essential treatise in Madhva-Vaisnavism that describes the treatise's deeper meaning is the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. It emphasises the difference between the morally upright Pandavas and the dishonest Kauravas and examines two episodes that either obfuscate or overturn the line separating the two. Vedanticization is the process of constructing theology through the story as opposed to simply offering a reading of the text that accords with one's pre-existing philosophical convictions.
Sinha S., Bhattacharya K.S.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85120352572&doi=10.21659%2frupkatha.v13n3.36&partnerID=40&md5=ab3fa94c1939efc6a43a4464820f0f50	The article aims to examine two transsexual prince Shikhandi and the King who got pregnant Yuvanashwa, who vacillated between gendered identities and opposed the dominant hetero-normative sexuality. The essay also looks at the queer versions of Kings Sudyumna and Bhangashwan, who challenged the signified gender binaries and outlined a range of potential outcomes. The study places a strong emphasis on the trauma and defiance of the marginal by drawing on deconstructivist and queer theories.
SzczurekP.	2021	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85129734716&doi=10.24917%2f20841043.11.2.8&partnerID=40&md5=f4927de3a8908665fce1eb0f29dcfc1a	Yudhishthira's perspective on the dharma is the subject of this essay. He makes his ambiguous statement while referencing early Buddhist ethics and the exaltation of *kshatriyas*. Even though he thinks that regaining the kingdom through peaceful means would be ideal, he also thinks that if war is unavoidable, it must be embraced.
Roy K.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85123908726&doi=10.1177%2f2348448920951515&partnerID=40&md5=9c7026c6cb7726a639d70d9570cb8f8b	With a focus on the identities of the deceased as kshatriyas and kings, the paper examines the similarities and differences between masculine and feminine expressions of mourning in reaction to bereavement.
Gaurh K.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85097795255&doi=10.1177%2f0376983620968004&partnerID=40&md5=926eac5c433408afa32cb75ee54c8240	The music pertaining to early India in the first millennium BCE has been explored in the present research article. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata encompass representations of music and musicians, are examined for any references to music. The goal is to examine how an art form interacts with society by focusing on "art in society," rather than "society in art."
Balkaran R.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85087830306&doi=10.1007%2fs11407-020-09277-1&partnerID=40&md5=23e2875b8153c21049ad108f66a69328	The paper references the epic's avian artistry through its own skilful framing. It also uses that literary heritage to further its own ideological goals.
Sharma V.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85087517150&doi=10.1007%2fs11407-020-09276-2&partnerID=40&md5=7bcd209b2ff40b38ff7cac69a525a7ae	The Sanskrit term *upeksha* is used more frequently to refer to its characters. This article makes the case that the issue of power and emphasizes the value of commentaries on the epics and Puranas as a source of research for difficult theological and ethical issues.
Kosuta M.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85091346978&doi=10.1080%2f15027570.2020.1824578&partnerID=40&md5=9a117151667c73a3517614263e5c90d8	The present article examines the *Bhagavad-Gita* focusing on Krishna's perspective on Kshatriya dharma, using paradigms established in the ethics of war debate that highlights important aspects of human nature in terms of religious principles and rituals.
Mondal P.	2020	https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85090326904&doi=10.31838%	The present research paper contributes to the traditional continuity of current Sanskrit writing by providing pertinent data. It is an attempt to create ethical, social,

Author/s	Year	Weblink	Analytical Insight and Implication/s
		2fjcr.07.08.201&partnerID=40 &md5=f00553253647b7c8f788 4d9273b9d9e4	spiritual, and contemporary values at both individual and societal life and aids in reviving Indian culture's origins.
Sinha K.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85071046467&doi=10.1177%2 f0257643019852823&partnerI D=40&md5=d7660574341755 8e6266f70c1b21e065	The four aims of human life—dharma, artha (financial gain), kama (sensual satisfaction), and moksha from the *Mahabharata* are studies in contrast to the unconventional conviction of ahimsa the paper examines the continual development of the ideal of dharma. Additionally, it displays the orthodox values of traditional *Sanatan* tradition.
Framarin C.G.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85068343035&doi=10.1007%2 fs11407-019-09254- 3&partnerID=40&md5=487ba c45d9fcef513e90de3b15766b3 2	The present paper discusses the mental pain as more complicated and it encompasses emotions like dislike, dissatisfaction, and disappointment. This analysis draws attention to and elucidates the widely held belief that *dukha* permeates all aspects of existence.
Takahashi K.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85062601060&doi=10.1007%2 fs10781-019-09387- 0&partnerID=40&md5=5f470 63366f7baf4dce5e9bba2fb2c58	This article is a close reading of the text that indicates the touch on human physiology and psychology, and yoga practice that concentrates on the *manas* (mind) and the *manovah* (conveying through mind) in the *Mahabharata* (12.207.16–29).
Mishra D.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85073299004&doi=10.17010% 2fpijom%2f2019%2fv12i7%2f 145585&partnerID=40&md5= 117604a81cc4f30a43464df37d b79fac	The present paper is an attempt to carry out the government policies and public relation strategies of the modern day through the *Mahabharata*. The current study focused on how Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the vision of cultural diplomacy as a strategic decision to strengthen India's position in South Asian countries and the western world.
Dalmiya V.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85046541210&doi=10.1007%2 fs11841-018-0644- y&partnerID=40&md5=b4c38 14cdfc6437e3759186dd3f3058 7	The present paper illustrates the anecdote of *Pujani* (a bird-mother) and Brahmdutta from the *Mahabharata*. It mentions how even those whose identities are shaped by their interactions with others are capable of escaping unhealthy relationships. In this essay, the significance of autonomy is examined in connection to feminist relational selves' rethinking of autonomy.
Kaur M., Kaur L.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85066759776&partnerID=40& md5=7eb3e780656bc594395f6 91cffda6686	The present paper envisions Devdutt Pattnaik's point of view while rewriting the *Mahabharata* in order to meet modern demands. It is an appeal to the current generation of tech-savvy readers to provide a clear grasp of what has happened exactly.
Choudhuri S., Basu J.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85062905506&doi=10.1177%2 f0971333618825072&partnerI D=40&md5=098ca3128f94a6b 6bfdbdabfb20b67b6	This article analyses and stimulates the discussion of the cultural relevance and ecological validity of vignettes, which are frequently criticized for their limited scope, physical harms fictitiously, singular focus on one-character, and omission of socio-cultural considerations.
Ray A.	2019	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85070861142&doi=10.1080%2 f02564718.2019.1627103&part nerID=40&md5=d9a1c7b8f50 6c547803dc16bd166622a	This paper highlights the Simonti Sen's historicist and textual interpretation of the *Mahabharata* that is dissected, along with how it limits the text's rich hermeneutic possibilities and issues in its translation.
Jha (Singh) V., Chandran M.	2018	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85029530448&doi=10.1080%2 f21504857.2017.1355823&part nerID=40&md5=bc574f10c10 cd18956234ec00e6740de	The paper looks at literary and non-literary reading strategies for a graphic novel adaptation of the *Mahabharata*. It makes the case that the verbal and visual forms of expression are never truly distinct from one another.
Howard V.R.	2018	https://www.scopus.com/in ward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0- 85058532752&doi=10.1007%2 fs11841-016-0538- 9&partnerID=40&md5=03efe e2c6dd07f77371bb613ae52f91 8	The present research paper interprets the tale of the hawk and dove and the King's humane and ethical vision through it.
Hooper C.	2018	https://www.scopus.com/in	This article examines the key themes and lessons of the

| Author/s	Year	Weblink	Analytical Insight and Implication/s
			epic, such as lineage and birth stories, exile, and war, in addition to the women and their treatment of them through its tales from a Jungian perspective.
García-Arroyo A.	2018		This article aims to refute the prevalent Brahmanical rhetoric that has created essentialist models of male and female identity in a form of counter discourse.

Publication Trend

Figure 2 demonstrates the annual trend of the publications that comprise this review. Publications in this discipline are clearly on the rise. Researchers seem to become keen on researching the Mahabharata. Out of a total of 37 analyzed scholarly articles, 12 articles are credited to the year 2022 because the Indian scriptures are not only read from the perspective of any particular religion rather they have been studied from the approach of a wide range of subjects being covered by them. Indian scholars are also endeavouring towards studying Indian scriptures from different angles which has resulted in the Scopus database publications as well.

Publication Trend
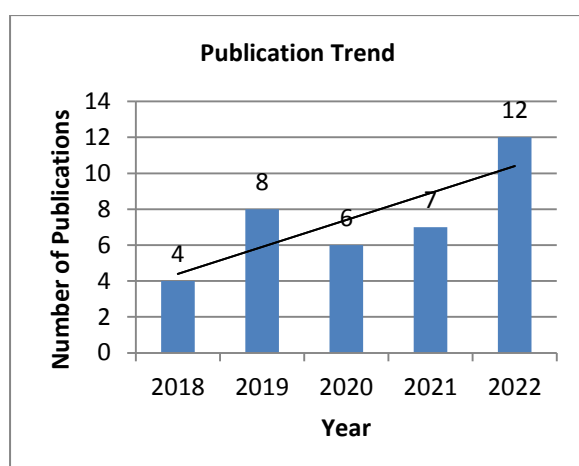
CONTENT ANALYSIS

The available literature is divided into five clusters based on the similarity of the epic *Mahabharata* using network analysis software VOS viewer. The purpose of this method is to emphasize upon the readers the practicality of the *Mahabharata's* structure and its universality in opening up new avenues of research in Indian Culture through it. An effort has also been made to avoid using Sanskrit phrases other than those deemed necessary for clarity in the context of this review. One of the primary reasons for avoiding Sanskrit terminology is the English language's

incapacity to provide a justifiable explanation for these terms. VOS viewer was used to examine the co-occurrence of terms in chosen articles. The terms originated from both the title and abstract sections.Toal1169 terms were discovered. Once the threshold limit of three was set, 105 terms met it. According to the software's default parameters, 63 terms (60%) were visualised, and the co-occurrence of these 63 phrases was investigated. Five clusters were found based on the network (Figure 2). The reason underlying cluster formation is that terms in a cluster indicate the same areas of investigation(Van Eck and Waltman 2022).
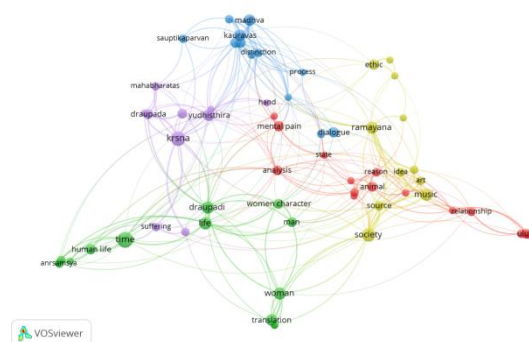
Cluster 1: Stance of Animals in Indian Culture &*Mahabharata*

Animals have always been an integral part of Indian culture and mythology, and their significance can be traced back to ancient texts like the Vedas and the Puranas. In Indian culture, animals are revered as sacred beings and are often associated with gods and goddesses (Bhattacharjee A.2022). The *Mahabharata* glorifies the significance of snakes, focusing on one snake character, Ulūpī, who played the prominent role in the unfolding of the narrative from the range of vision of animality. (Black B. 2022) It looks at her identity as a snake and how ithas been related to other characters whether animals, snakes or humans. It has shown as well as the

relationship between her lineage and other snake lineages. It is to understand here that the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya and the incident of the burning of the Khandava forest also are prominent references in the *Mahabharata*, and how the unique perspective of animals contributes to the wider appreciation from the readers of the *Mahabharata*. (Chaturvedi 2006)

Cluster 2: Concept of Non-Violence in the *Mahabharata*

The concept of non-violence or ahimsa is an important theme in the *Mahabharata*. The epic describes the struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, which ultimately leads to a great war. While the *Mahabharata* depicts many instances of violence and warfare, it also emphasizes the importance of non-violence in certain situations (Gorai B., Dwivedi R.R.2022).One of the most notable examples of this is the character of Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers and a skilled warrior. Before the start of the Kurukshetra war, Arjuna is overcome with doubt and confusion about the morality of fighting against his own family and friends. He seeks counsel from Lord Krishna, who teaches him about the principles of dharma, or righteous action, and the importance of non-attachment to the fruits of action. (Sinha K.2019)

Lord Krishna emphasizes the idea of non-violence in various ways, including encouraging Arjuna to fight for a just cause, without harbouring hatred or a desire for revenge. He also emphasizes the need to consider the impact of one's actions on others and to act in a way. Another example of the concept of non-violence in the *Mahabharata* is the character of Bhishma. Although he is a skilled warrior and fights on the side of the Kauravas, Bhishma is known for his adherence to the principles of dharma and his respect for life. He refuses to harm women or children, and even when he is mortally wounded in battle, he chooses to remain alive until an auspicious moment for his death (Kaur M., KaurL. 2019 &Howard V.R. 2018).The *Mahabharata* also contains teachings on non-violence in the form of parables and stories. For example, the story of Nala and Damayanti emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and non-violence, even in the face of great adversity. Overall, while the *Mahabharata* depicts many instances of violence and warfare; it also emphasizes the importance of non-violence in certain situations and the need to act in a way that is compassionate and just.

Cluster 3: Concept of Women/Gender and Queer in the *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata*, one of the most significant ancient Indian epics, depicts the social and cultural norms of the time in which it was written, which includes the portrayal of women, gender, and queer identities (Dey A. 2022).Women in the Mahabharata are often portrayed as powerful and influential figures, but they are also subject to societal norms and restrictions. For example, the character of Draupadi who is the wife of the five Pandava brothers (though it has been happened accidentally), is depicted as a strong-willed and intelligent woman who takes an active role in shaping the events of the epic. However, she is also subject to humiliation and abuse and is disrobed in public by the Kauravas during the gambling scene.

On the other hand, the character of Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is depicted as a dutiful and obedient wife who follows the commands of her husband, (Roy K. 2020) King Pandu. Despite this, she is also shown to be a wise and resourceful woman who is respected by her sons and other characters in the epic.

In terms of gender and queer identities, the *Mahabharata* contains characters who challenge traditional gender norms and roles (Mahadevan K. 2022). For example, the character of Shikhandi is depicted as a transgender person who was born female but raised as a male and ultimately played as aremarkable reason in the downfall of Bhishma.

Additionally, the character of Arjuna disguises himself as a eunuch during his exile, which challenges traditional notions of masculinity and gender identity.

However, it is important to note that the *Mahabharata* was written in a patriarchal society, and therefore, certain gender and queer identities are not always portrayed in a positive light (Sinha S.& Bhattacharya K.S. 2021). Nonetheless, the epic does contain instances where it challenges societal norms and provides a platform for discussions about gender and sexuality.

Cluster 4: Adaptations and Dharma renditions in the *Mahabharata*

The *Mahabharata* is one of the most significant ancient Indian epics that establish three orders of dharma as individual dharma, universal dharma and dharma at the time of calamity (Malhotra 2020). Due to its enumerations, it has been adapted in various forms throughout history, including literature, theatre, and film. These adaptations often re-interpret the original text, while still incorporating its themes and characters. One way that the *Mahabharata* has been adapted is by focusing on different aspects of its central theme of dharma, or righteous action. (Black B.) For example, some adaptations may highlight the moral dilemmas faced by the characters, and explore the consequences of their choices. Other adaptations may focus on the idea of karma, and how the characters' actions lead to their ultimate fate (Sinha K.2019).Another way that the *Mahabharata* has been adapted is by re-imagining the characters and their relationships. For example, some adaptations may explore the romantic relationships between characters that are only hinted at in the original text. Other adaptations may introduce new characters or change the characteristics of existing ones, to fit a particular interpretation or message (Sharma V.2021).In addition, some adaptations of the *Mahabharata* may incorporate elements of other cultures or traditions. For example, the Indonesian version of the epic, known as the "Bharatayuddha," incorporates elements of Javanese culture and folklore, and portrays the characters in a more humanized and relatable manner (Mishra D. 2019).Overall, adaptations of the *Mahabharata* often reflect the changing attitudes and beliefs of different cultures and societies, while still retaining the core themes and messages of the original text.

Cluster 5: Suffering and Pain in the *Mahabharata*

Suffering and pain are major themes in the *Mahabharata* that is the one of the two major ancient Indian epics. The epic not only iterates the story of the Kurukshetra War and the enmity between the two sub-groups of a royal family, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The conflict arises due to a succession dispute between the two sides. Throughout the *Mahabharata*, characters experience various forms of suffering and pain (Framarin C.G. 2019) The Pandavas face numerous trials and tribulations, including exile, betrayal, and the loss of loved ones. They are forced to endure tremendous physical and emotional pain, and must constantly confront their mortality (Szczurek P. 2021) The Kauravas also suffer in their ways. They are consumed by jealousy, greed, and hatred and their actions ultimately lead to their downfall. Many of them die in battle, and those who survive are left to grapple with the consequences of their actions. The *Mahabharata* also explores the nature of suffering itself (Sharma V. 2020). The characters struggle to make sense of their pain and grapple with questions about the meaning of life, the nature of reality, and the role of fate in shaping their destiny.

Ultimately, the *Mahabharata* portrays suffering as an intrinsic part of the human experience and suggests that it is through our struggles and challenges that we can grow, learn, and ultimately find meaning and purpose in our lives.

CONCLUSION

It is apprehended that the present systematic literature review aligns to provide a finer understanding of the structure and texture of the epic the *Mahabharata* which is a storehouse of knowledge on all the subjects about life. The selected research papers mention multiple subjects such as the war, the status of female identities, masculine stance over the issues, subalterns, sovereignty, common welfare as *param dharma,* animality, ethics, morality, gender-queer, hegemony, music, militarism, politics, and narratives through oral to written form. The *Mahabharata* has been established in three parts: *Jaya* of 8800 verses, *Bharata* of 23000 verses, and finally the *Mahabharata* of 1,00,000 verses. In this way, the *Mahabharata* is not only a historical narrative of the fight between the two groups of a family; rather it is the compendium of all concerned areas of politics, society, economy, culture, and literature. In the words of Shelden Pollock, "It (the Mahabharata) represents itself for the most part as itihasa, an account of 'the way things indeed were'. However, much modern scholarship may complicate the factuality of that record… Yet the *Mahabharata* was not only itihasa, it was also kavya." (Pollock 1977) After much consideration, there is still scope for investigating the remaining untouched areas of the *Mahabharata* such as medicine, ayurveda, hypnosis, environment studies,

management and commercial scopes, human aspirations, avarice, patriarchy, women as men's counterparts, wildlife, struggle and consolidation of strength, Krishna as a character or God, The *Mahabharata* as a cultural, folkloric and anthropological text, and especially as a text guiding the spiritual well-being and many more.

Author Statement

Dr. Nitin Malhotra initiated the conception through epic studies and introduced the epic *Mahabharata* for this review. Dr.Ruchika Jain designed the research through its technical perspective i.e. the application of a systematic literature review model. She acquired the data from the Scopus research database along with it she sequenced and framed the systematic literature review data as required. She has drafted the manuscript in sequential order with the Prisma model and shaped the clusters in a pattern throughVOSviewer. Dr. Nitin Malhotra has clustered the key terms and mentioned the analysis through a detailed study of research papers available in the Scopus database. He has elaborated the way for future trends and research on the *Mahabharata.* He will be the corresponding author for the present study.

REFERENCES

Abhisheki, Janaki.1998.*Tales and Teachings of the Mahabharat*.Mumbai: BhartiyaVidyaBhavan.

Aurobindo, Sri. 1991.*On the Mahābhārata: Essays and Translations.* Puducherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

Bhattacharjee A. 2022. Reason, Death, and the Animal: The Mahābhārata and the Eruption/Interruption of the Ethical, Journal of Dharma Studies, 63-81

Black B. 2022. The Subtlety of Subtales: Subaltern Voices of Sūkṣma Dharma in the Mahābhārata, International Journal of Hindu Studies, 37-62

Babkiewicz A., Sellmer S. 2022. Obsolete Weapons in the Mahābhārata: An Attempt at Reconstruction, Religions of South Asia, 201-219

Black B. 2022. Politics without Fear: King Janaka and Sovereignty in the Mahābhārata, Religions.

Black B. 2022. Through the Eyes of Ulūpī: A Distinctive Snake Perspective in the Mahābhārata, Journal of Hindu Studies, 83-105

Balkaran R. 2020. Avian Artistry: Decoding the IntertextualityBetween Mahābhārata and MārkaṇḍeyaPurāṇa, International Journal of Hindu Studies, 199-237

Chaturvedi, Badrinath.2006.The *Mahābhārata-An Enquiry in the HumanCondition*, Orient Blackswan.

Choudhuri S., Basu J. 2019. Traditional Stories as Possible Vignettes in the Research of Moral Judgement: A Preliminary Report Using Stories from Mahabharata , Psychology and Developing Societies, 187-219

Dalmiya V. 2019. A Case of Relational Autonomy in the Mahābhārata: the Story of Pūjanī, Sophia, 239-254

Dey A., 2022. Unmuting and reinterpreting the Mahabharata through feminist translation in The Palace of Illusions (2008), Paralleles, 168-179

Fleming C.T. 2021. Gambling with Justice: A Juridical Approach to the Game of Dice in the Dyutaparvan of the Mahabharata , Journal of Hindu Studies.

Framarin C.G. 2019. Mental Pain in the Mahābhārata, International Journal of Hindu Studies, 103-122

Ganguli, Kisari Mohan. 1993.trans. *The Mahābhārata*.4 vols.New Delhi: MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1993. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eng/maha/>Accesed on: 11.3.2023

García-Arroyo A. 2018. A deconstruction of the Mahabharata: When Draupadi writes back, Miscelanea, 13-29

Gaurh K. 2020. Representations of Music and Musicians in the Sanskrit Epics: The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, Indian Historical Review, 247-262

Gorai B., Dwivedi R.R. 2022.Ahimsa and Anṛśaṃsya Dharma from the Mahabharata for a sustainable universe, Journal of Dharma, 203-216

Howard V.R. 2018. Lessons from 'the hawk and the dove': Reflections on the

mahābhārata's animal parables and ethical predicaments, Sophia, 119-131

Hooper C. 2018.The Mahabharata. Psychological Perspectives, 76- 91

Jha (Singh) V. Chandran M. 2018. Reading a retelling: Mahabharata in the graphic novel form, Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics, 373-390

Kaur M., Kaur L. 2019. Revisiting the epic of Mahabharata: A case study of Jaya by DevduttPattanaik, International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering, 484-487

Khangai R. 2021. Patriarchy and Virginity Myth in the Mahābhārata, Indian Historical Review, 233-250

Kosuta M. 2020. Ethics of War and Ritual: The Bhagavad-Gita and Mahabharata as Test Cases, Journal of Military Ethics, 186-200

Lorndale T. 2021.Avataras, Goddesses, and Kauravas: Reading the Old Kannada Sauptikaparvan as an Alternative Ending to the Mahabharata , Journal of Hindu Studies, 301-325

Mahadevan K. 2022. The Gadamer–Habermas Debate through Mahabharata 's Women Intersectional Feminist Engagements with Tradition and Critique [Diskusija med Gadamerjem in Habermasomskozperspektivožensk v Mahabharati. Intersekcijskifeminističnispoprijemi s tradicijo in kritiko], Phainomena, 147-185

Malhotra, Nitin. 2020.*The Mahabharata and Dharma Discourse: A Vision of Clarity through its Tales.* United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publications. 2020. Print.

---. July, 2016."Art of Narration in the *Mahbharata*" *Poetcrit*.Vol.III.

---. May, 2020. "An analytical Study of Cultural Intermediaries through the Select Tales of the *Mahabharata*".*IJPR: Hampstead Psychological Associates, USA.* Vol. 24 Issue-5.

Mishra D. 2019. Cultural diplomacy of the Mahabharata : A case study of its application with special reference to modern India, Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management, 49-57

Mondal P. 2020. A study on twentieth century sanskrit dramas by bengal dramatists based on the Mahabharata , Journal of Critical Reviews, 956-960

Morales-Harley R. 2022. Lifting Brides/Lifting Enemies: Male Embraces in the Mahābhārata'sĀdiparvan and Virāṭaparvan, Religions of South Asia, 184-200

Pattanaik, Devdutt. 2010.*Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahābhārata.* New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2010. Print.

---. 2003.*Indian Mythology: Tales, Symbols and Rituals.*Inner Traditions India.

Pathak S. 2022. Demonic and Demidivine Beauty in the Eyes of Demidivine and Demonic Beholders: Making Hanumat Disbelieve and DuryodhanaMisbelieve through (A-)Puruṣārthic Assembling-Hall Aesthetics in the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, Religions of South Asia, 137-157

Pillai S.S. 2021. The Mahabharata asKrsnacarita: Draupadi's Prayer in Two Regional Retellings, Journal of Hindu Studies, 259-278

Pollock, Sheldon. 1977.*Aspects of Versification in Sanskrit Lyric Poetry*.CUP-American Oriental Series: Volume 61.

Ray A. 2019. Vicissitudes of Reading the Mahabharata as History: Problems Concerning Historicism and Textualism, Journal of Literary Studies, 1-19

Roy K. 2020. Gendering grief: The StrīParvan of the Mahābhārata, Studies in Peoples History, 109-120

Sen, Nilmadhav. 1962. "The Influence of Epics on Indian Life and Literature."*The Cultural Heritage of India.*Vol.2.Ed.S.K.De, et.al. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission.

Singh V.. 2022. Epics as cultural commodities: Comics books of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata , Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 203-223

Sharma V. 2021. Reading the Mahabharata asSastra: The Role of the 'Righteous' Pandavas and 'Villainous' Kauravas in Madhva'sDvaitavedanta, Journal of Hindu Studies, 279-300

---, 2020. The Problem of Indifference to Suffering in the Mahābhārata Tradition, International Journal of Hindu Studies, 177-197

Shenoy, Ashwini. 2019.Shikhandini: Warrior Princess of the Mahabharata. Leadstart Publishing Pvt Ltd.

SinhaK.. 2019. Redefining Dharma in a Time of Transition: Ānṛśaṃsya in the Mahābhārata as an Alternative End of Human Life, Studies in History, 147-161

Sinha S., Bhattacharya K.S. 2021. By me shall he be nursed! queer identity and representation in the Mahabharata , Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities.

Sullivan, B.M. 2011.*The Mahābhārata: Perspectives on Its Ends and Endings*. Hindu Studies 15, 1–7.

Szczurek P. 2021.Dharmaraja and Dhammaraja (II) Yudhiṣṭhira's moral dilemmas before the great battle (Mahabharata 5,70), Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal, 465-495

Takahashi K. 2019.TheManas and the Manovahā Channel in the Vārṣṇeyādhyātma of the Mahābhārata: A Critical Reading of Mahābhārata 12.207.16–29, Journal of Indian Philosophy, 421-452

Thankaraj J. 2022. Time in Ecclesiastes and the Mahabharata: Impact on Human Agency, Ecumenical Review, 807-827

Van Eck, Nees Jan, and Ludo Waltman, 2022, VOSviewer Manual. p. 51.

***