ART. XVII.—*How the Mahābhārata*¹ Begins. By EDWIN ARNOLD, C.S.I., M.R.A.S., Officer of the White Elephant of Siam.

THE following pages offer an imperfect and unpretending analysis of the opening portions of the Great Indian Epic, the Mahābhārata ; with a free version here and there of striking passages, and in most of these instances the Sanskrit text. So cumbrous an introduction to the mighty Poem was, perhaps, compiled in days long subsequent to those of the finer sections of the Epic. It seems principally directed to the exaltation of Brahmans, and the glorification of Royal and Saintly Pedigrees ; but a closer study—as, for example, of the long catalogue which occurs in the description of the Serpent-People—would probably give useful results to ethnology and geography.

The Calcutta Edition of the Mahābhārata, in four quarto volumes, commences thus :—

To Narayen, Nara, best of males, give heed ;
To great Saraswati be paid her meed,
So shall this Story worthily proceed.²

After prefatory matter, the text begins : Ugrasravah, or Sauti, the son of Lomaharshana, Came to the sages in the Naimish Wood, What time they wrought the twelve-year sacrifice For Saunaka. He, learnèd in Purāns,

¹ श्रीमहाभारतं

॥ आदिपर्व ॥

² नारायणं नमस्कृत्य नरक्षैव नरोत्तमं ।

देवीं सरस्वतीञ्चैव ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ।

Each Parva of the Mahābhārata opens with this, or a similar, dedicatory verse.

Folded his hands before them, and said this—

“What will ye that I now discourse to you?”¹

The Sages desire him to discourse upon “Yoga,” but observe that the wise and holy Saunaka is at present in the house of Sacrifice. As soon as he takes his seat, the “Paurâniko” may fitly begin. The great man enters, and, saluting the narrator, wishes to hear from him of Bhrigu’s family. He recites the pedigree of Bhrigu. Saunaka himself was grandson of Samika, who was the son of Kuru, who was the son of Pramati, who was the son of Chyavana. Saunaka asks to know respecting this last named. The son of Suta relates how Bhrigu’s wife, Pauloma, being advanced in pregnancy, was desired by a Rakshasa Pauloman, who, after appealing in vain to Agni in regard of a prior claim which he makes to her, attempts to carry her off in the shape of a boar, but her child Chyavana, being suddenly born, withers the demon to death by his dazzling aspect. Bhrigu was very angry with Agni for the partial information given to the demon, and “*cursed him to be the devourer of everything.*”² Agni, in turn, is incensed at this serious act. The god said :

What is this outrage, Brahman, thou hast wrought ?
I follow virtue, and I speak plain truth !
Where was thy wrong in that I answered fair
Thou absent? He who beareth witness false
And he who, knowing truths, forbeareth it,
These men shame all their ancestors in bliss
To the seventh degree, and to the seventh degree
Infect their seed. I, too, the God, might curse
Who curses me, but that I reverence
A twice-born. Hear me yet, though thou may’st know,
By yoga I divide me manifold
Dwelling in all formed things—not flame alone,

¹ लोमहर्षणपुत्र उग्रश्रवाः सौति पौराणिको नैमिषारखे ।

शौनकस्य कुलपतेद्वादशवार्षिके सचे । etc.

² शशापाग्निमतिक्रुद्धः सर्वभूतोभविष्यसि

But that which flames, the sacrifice, yea, that
Which offereth it, man's act. Therefore to me
Oblations fitly made soothe Gods and Shades,
By me their worship passeth at due times ;
At the full moon to Gods, at the new moon
To Pitris ; they are worshipped through my mouth,
And eat the offerings with it ; . . . darest thou then
Curse me to " eat of all things " ?¹

Agni withdraws from the world in anger, all sacrifices are suspended, and mankind generally distressed. The Rishis in much alarm repair to the Gods. These accompany them

¹ किमिदं साहसं ब्रह्मन् कृतवानसि मां प्रति ।
धर्मे प्रयतमानस्य सत्यञ्च वदतः समं ।
पृथोयदब्रुवं सत्यं व्यभिचारोऽत्र को मम ।
पृथोहि साची यः सात्त्यं जानानोऽप्यन्यथा वदेत् ।
स पूर्वानात्मनः सप्त कुले हन्यात्तथापरान् ।
यस्य कार्यार्थतत्त्वज्ञो जानानोऽपि नभाषेत ।
सोऽपि तेनैव पापेन लिप्यते नात्र संशयः ।
शक्तोऽहमपि शत्रुं त्वां मान्यास्तु ब्राह्मणा मम ।
जानतोऽपि च ते ब्रह्मन् कथयिष्ये निबोध तत् ।
योगेन वज्रधात्मानं कृत्वा तिष्ठामि मूर्त्तिषु ।
अग्निहोत्रेषु सत्रेषु क्रियासु च मखेषु च ।
वेदोक्तेन विधानेन मयि यद्भूयते हविः ।
देवताः पितरश्चैव तेन तृप्ता भवन्ति वै ।
आपोदेवगणाः सर्वे आपः पितृगणास्तथा ।
दर्शश्च पौर्णमासश्च देवानां पितृभिः सह ।
देवताः पितरस्तस्मात्पितरश्चापि देवताः ।
एकोभूताश्च दृश्यन्ते प्रथक्त्वेन च पर्वसु ।
देवताः पितरश्चैव भुञ्जते मयि यद्भुतं ।
देवतानां पितृणाञ्च मुखमेतदहं स्मृतं ।

अमावास्यां हि पितरः पौर्णमास्यां हि देवताः । मनुखेनैव ह्रियन्ते भुञ्जते
च ऊतं हविः । सर्वभक्षः कथं तेषां भविष्यामि मुखं त्वहं ।

to the presence of Brahma, who summons Agni, and gently admonishes that deity, as follows :

Thou art in all the dweller, of all acts
The mover, of the Three Worlds and their life
Sustainer. Thou shalt still dwell, move, sustain !
Be not unwise, being so great a God ;
Thou art the purity and strength of Earth,
Thou shalt not bear th' unlightened curse, nor eat
The belly's draff ; save as a flame eats flesh.
The Sun makes clean whate'er he shines upon,
So shall be clean whate'er thy fires consume.
Give of thy splendour what this curse demands
For necessary use, but keep thy part
Of offerings with the Gods, whose mouth thou art.¹

Agni consents amid the rejoicings of heaven and earth ; and the danger is averted.

The Reciter then narrates the story of Ruru, grandson of Chyavana ; how the Sage Sthulakēśa found exposed the infant daughter of an Apsaras, by Vishāvasu, King of the Gandharvas, and reared her into wonderful virtue and beauty. Ruru sees and loves this fair Pramadvāra, who is promised as a bride to him : but, playing in the wood, she is bitten by

¹ लोकानामिह सर्वेषां त्वं कर्त्ता चान्त एव च ।
त्वं धारयसि लोकांस्त्रीन् क्रियाणाञ्च प्रवर्त्तकः ।
स तथा कुरु लोकेश नोक्त्विरन्यथा क्रियाः ।
कस्मादेवं विमूढस्त्वमीश्वरः सन् ऊताशन ।
त्वं पवित्रं सदा लोके सर्वभूतगतिश्च ह ।
न त्वं सर्वशरीरेण सर्वभक्षत्वमेष्यसि ।

अपाने ह्यर्चिषोयास्ते सर्वं भोक्ष्यन्ति ताः शिखिन् । क्रव्यादा च तनुर्या
ते सा सर्वं भक्षयिष्यति । यथा सर्वांशुभिः स्पृष्टं सर्वं
शुचि विभाव्यते ।
तथा त्वदर्चिर्भिर्दग्धं सर्वं शुचि भविष्यति ।
त्वमग्रे परमं तेजः स्वप्रभावाद्भिर्निर्गतं ।
स्वतेजसैव ते शापं कुरु सत्यमृषेर्विभो ।
देवानां चात्मनो भागं गृहाण त्वं मुखे ऊतं ।

a large snake, and falls lifeless to earth amid weeping friends. Ruru, wild with sorrow, repairs to a lonely grove and there laments :

She lies, my sweet-limbed darling, on the earth,
Grievous to see for me, kin, friends, and all.
Ah, Gods! What woe is greater?—Ah, high Gods!
If I have won, by penance, worship, works,
Grace at your hands, give me in one dear gift
All my reward, my love's life back again!
Open her eyes and let my merits go!

A heavenly messenger (देवदूत) appears and speaks :

Vainly thou weapest, Ruru! she is gone.
Tears cannot make the dead alive again; . . .
Yet the Gods keep a secret which might give
Life to Pramadvarya!

Ruru exclaims :

Oh, Angel! speak.

What must I do? What secret? tell me quick
That I may hear and try; deign to give aid.¹

¹ श्रुते सा भवि तन्वङ्गी मम शोकविवर्द्धिनी ।
बान्धवानाञ्च सर्वेषां किं नु दुःखमतः परं ।
यदि दत्तं तपस्तप्तं गुरवो वा मया यदि ।
सम्यगाराधितास्तेन सञ्जीवतु मम प्रिया ।
यथा च जन्मप्रभृति यतात्माऽहं धृतव्रतः ।
प्रमद्वरा तथाऽद्वैषा समुत्तिष्ठतु भाविनी ।
एवं लालयतस्तस्यभार्यार्यै दुःखितस्य च ॥
देवदूतस्तदाऽभ्येत्य वाक्यमाह हरुं वने ॥
देवदूत उवाच ॥ अभिधत्सहे यद्वाक्यं हरौ दुःखिन तन्मृषा ।
यतो मर्त्यस्य धर्मात्मन्नायुरस्ति गतायुषः ।
गतायुरेषा कृपणा गन्धर्वाप्सरसो सुताः ।
तस्माच्छोके मनस्तात माक्रथास्त्वं कथञ्चन ।
उपायश्चात्र विहितः पूर्वं देवैर्महात्मभिः ।
तं यदीच्छसि कर्तुं त्वं प्राप्स्यसीह प्रमद्वरां ॥
हरुं उवाच ॥ क उपायः कृतो देवैर्व्रूहि तत्त्वेन खेचर ।
करिष्येऽहं तथा श्रुत्वा चातुमर्हति मां भवान् ॥

The Messenger informs the Prince that if he bestows one moiety of his remaining existence upon the dead maiden, Yama, the God of Death, may accept the price, and restore Pramadvara. Ruru joyfully consents, and his betrothed is restored to life, and married to him. But, ever after, his enmity against serpents becomes insatiable. He kills all he meets remorselessly, until, one day, in entering a forest, he sees an old Dundubha snake (डुण्डुभ) asleep and seeks to put it to death. The snake awakens up and remonstrates in a human voice, pleading that he is of a harmless kind, and has done no one any injury. Ruru, astonished, questions the reptile, and learns that it is a Rishi, named Hara, long ago changed into snake-form by a Brahman's curse. Hara had one day in sport frightened his friend the Brahman, while at sacrifice, with a wisp of straw twisted to resemble a serpent; and in his terror the angry sage had cursed him to take that shape. The curse could not be retracted, but it would pass away—said the Brahman—when its victim met with Ruru. Accordingly the Dundubha now resumes his human form, and instructs the Prince in the true duties of a Twice-Born. So far from destroying any such creatures, such a one ought to be compassionate and heedful, specially after having heard the story of Janamejaya, how he engaged to kill all the serpent-people at a sacrifice, and how they were rescued by the Brahman Astika.

Saunaka then begs the Reciter to narrate this serpent-legend. Astika's father was Jaratkaru, a great ascetic, equal in dignity and holiness to the Prajapatis. One day, "breathing with the interior breath, fasting, and keeping his eyes held from winking," he was visiting holy places. At night he came to a cave, where he beheld many figures suspended by their feet over an abyss. They were kept from falling into the pit only by one cord of fibres, which a rat was gnawing. He addressed them somewhat thus:

"Oh ye that hang heads downward in this cave,
The home of rats, held by thin threads from the pit,
Who are you?" . . .

“We are ancestors,” they said,
 “Of Jaratkáru, a most holy Sage,
 Who dooms himself and us to misery,
 Being ascetic and a celibate.
 By this thin thread of his one life we hang,
 [While Time the Rat doth nibble it a-twain,]
 Having no children of our child. But thee
 Why should this touch, O Brahman? Who art thou?”
 And Jaratkáru answered, “I am he
 Who grieves ye thus, my ancestors. Say then
 What must I do?”

“Ah, haste thee! wed! beget!”
 They cried, “that thou and we may live anew:
 A son is more than virtues or than fasts, . . .
 Marry, and breed a boy, before we fall.”¹

इतस्ततः परिचरन्दीप्तिपावकसप्रभः ।
 अटमानः कदाचित्स्वान् स ददर्श पितामहान् ।
 लम्बमानाम्महागर्ते पादैरुर्ध्वैरवाङ्मुखान् ।
 तानब्रवीत्स दृष्ट्वैव जरत्कारुः पितामहान् ।
 के भवन्तोऽवलम्बन्ते गर्ते ह्यस्मिन्नधोमुखाः । वीरणस्तम्बके लम्पाः सर्वतः
 परिभक्षिते । भूषिकेण निगूढेन गर्तेऽस्मिन्नित्यवासिना ।
 ॥ पितरञ्जुः ॥ यायावरा नाम वयमृषयः शंसितव्रताः ।
 सन्तानप्रक्षयाद्वाह्यन्नधो गच्छाम मेदिनीं ।
 अस्माकं सन्ततिस्त्वेको जरत्कारुरिति स्मृतः ।
 मन्दभाग्योऽल्पभाग्यानां तप एकं समास्थितः ।
 न स पुत्रान् जनयितुं दाराम्बूढश्चिकीर्षति ।
 तेन लम्बामहेगर्ते सन्तानस्य क्षयादिह ।
 अनाथास्तेन नाथेन यथा दुष्कृतिनस्तथा ।
 कस्त्वं बन्धुरिवास्माकमनुशोचसि सत्तम ।
 ज्ञातुमिच्छामहे ब्रह्मन् कोभवानिह नः स्थितः ।
 किमर्थञ्चैव नः शोच्याननुशोचसि सत्तम ।
 ॥ जरत्कारुवाच ॥ मम पूर्वे भवन्तो वै पितरः सपितामहाः ॥
 ब्रूत किं करवाण्यद्य जरत्कारुरहं स्वयं ।
 ॥ पितरञ्जुः ॥ यतस्व यत्नवांस्तात सन्तानाय कुलस्य नः ।

Jaratkâru consents to marry, if he can find a wife of his own name, freely offered to him; which conditions are fulfilled, after much wandering, by Vasuki, a King of the Serpents, who gives his daughter—also called Jaratkâru—to the Sage. Afterwards she bears him a son, the renowned Astika, who delivers the suspended ancestors, and also saves the snake-people at the sacrifice. The history of this event is next told, beginning in “the age of the gods.” A Prajapati, named Kasyapa, had two wives, Kadru and Vinata, to whom he promised whatever each should wish. The former desired to have a thousand serpent-children, the latter to bear two sons stronger than a thousand. Kasyapa assents, and Kadru by-and-by brought forth snake-eggs ten at a time, up to a thousand, while Vinata produces two. Five hundred years elapse, and Kadru’s eggs are hatched, but not Vinata’s, who, becoming impatient, breaks one, and is reproached by the half-formed offspring within, who disappears, to become Aruna, the herald of the Dawn and charioteer of Aditya. In departing he tells his mother that she must be punished by becoming her sister’s slave, but that her other child, Garuda, shall deliver her.

Just upon the birth of Garuda, the sisters perceive Uchchaisravas, the Divine Steed, approaching, which was produced when the Gods churned the Ocean for the “Amrit.” The mention of this miraculous horse occasions a long description of the churning of the Sea of Milk with Mount Mandara for the churning-stick, and the King of Serpents for the cord, and also how there came out thence the Moon, and Srî, and the great elephant Airávaná and Dhanwantari with the nectar, and this wonderful horse Uchchaisravas. After long digression the poem comes back to its course.

आत्मनोऽर्थेऽसदर्थे च धर्म इत्येव वा विभो ।

न हि धर्मफलैस्तात न तपोभिः सुसञ्चितैः ।

तां गतिं प्राप्नुवन्तीह पुत्रिणो यां व्रजन्ति वै ।

तद्द्वारग्रहणे यत्नं सन्तत्याञ्च मनः कुरु ।

पुत्रकास्मिन्नियोगात्त्वमेतन्नः परमं हितं ।

The sisters dispute as to the colour of the horse, Kadru saying its mane and tail were black, Vinata that they were white, and they wager about it, she who is wrong to be the other's slave. Kadru employs her serpent-brood to deceive Vinata, cursing those among them who shall disobey; and thus Vinata, after seeing the horse, yields herself to servitude. At this time Garuda is hatched from her remaining egg, of such mighty size and dazzling brilliance that the beholders take him for Agni. The first act of Garuda is to bear his brother Aruna to the eastward heavens, where the Sun was preparing to consume the world in anger at what had happened during the Amrit-churning. "Thus, the Sun at his rising was covered over by Aruna, the charioteer, and Gods, men, and Lókas remained unconsumed."

A curious episode follows. Garuda, visiting his mother beside the "great ocean," finds her obeying Kadru and the serpents, who ordered the great Bird-God to carry them all to the Land of the Nagas, "in the midst of the sea." Garuda complies, but flies so near the sun on his way, that the snake-children are only saved from death by copious rains sent from Indra. After remaining some time on the Delightful Island, the Snakes demand to be carried elsewhere, and Garuda, indignant at such servitude, learns from his mother Vinata that he and she can only buy their freedom if he will bring to the serpent-people some of the Heavenly Amrit.

Garuda first needs food himself, and is sent for this by his mother to the island of the Nishadas, being warned in devouring them, not to swallow a Brahman. "They are more dreadful than fire, poison, or deadly weapons." "If he should eat one by mistake, the morsel will stick in his throat like a fish-hook, and burn like flame." Garuda lands upon the isle, driving the waves upon the land by his huge wings and feet, and devouring the Nishadas with his vast gaping beak. A Brahman and his wife are gulped up with the hapless crowd, but they stick in the vast bird's gullet and scorch like fire. Garuda cries, "Release thyself, great Brahman, and come forth," but the Brahman then begs that his Nishadi spouse may be also released, which is granted. Next

the Bird flies to his father Kasyapa, still lacking food, and is directed to the "Lake of the Elephant and Tortoise," of which a very long story is told. Garuda seizes these two monsters, one in each claw, and seeks a branch on which he may perch to devour them. He comes to a mighty sandal tree (Rauhina-padapa) and alights. The bough breaks with his weight, but he seizes it, while falling, with his beak, for it is covered with meditating sages, who must not be hurt, yet will be killed if the limb drops. From that triple and "grievous load" Garuda's name is said to be derived. Flying far to discover a spot where he could safely lay down the branch, laden with "the sages who feed on sun-beams, the Balakhilyas," he is directed by his father to Himavat, where he rids himself of his burden and devours the elephant and tortoise.

By this time prodigies have warned the Gods that the colossal Bird is coming to seize their Amrit. There is emotion and even fear in the Indian Olympus, for, strong with the austerities of sages, "nothing," Vrihaspati declares, "will be impossible to Garuda." All this danger is due "to a previous act of pride on the part of Indra." The fault of the Deity (whose behaviour is discussed with curious freedom) is thus recited:

When Kasyapa performed sacrifice for a son, all the gods assisted, and they, as well as Indra and the Balakhilyas, were sent by Kasyapa to bring wood for the sacrifice.

Indra, according to his strength, easily brought a bundle of wood as big as a mountain. He, on his way to the sacrifice, saw some little lean starveling sages, half a thumb high, all together carrying a single tiny stick, under the weight of which they had tumbled into a cow's foot-print full of water, where they remained, struggling to get out. Proud Indra, contemptuously laughing, went up, and lifted them out with disrespect. At this they grew indignant and indeed extremely enraged, so that they "began a mighty deed, terrible to Indra." They sacrificed with special rites and repeated solemn prayers (or Mantras) with a loud voice, what they prayed for being this:—"Let another terrible Indra be born, the fruit of our Tapasya, who shall have whatever power he requires, and go

where he pleases, rule over the gods, be the dread of Indra, and a hundred times more strong and valiant."

Indra, much alarmed at this strong prayer, begs the intercession of Kasyapa, who persuades the angry little Saints to be satisfied with the creation of a Garuda. He was to be, as before said, one of the two egg-born children of Vinata, but Kasyapa warned the God thus:—"Never again slight the sages (Brahmavadis), nor proudly contemn those, whose every word, when angered, is as a thunderbolt."

The story now resumes its course, with an account of Garuda's attack upon the Gods. He overcomes Viswakarma, keeper of the nectar, and bewilders or defeats the other Deities, including even Agni. He then became small that he might pass within the whirling golden discus and the fiery snakes guarding the Amrit, which he seizes and carries off, not, however, tasting it. Indra hurls a thunderbolt at the vast Bird while escaping, but it affects him so little that Garuda voluntarily drops a wing-feather in order that he may seem to have been struck, and that Indra may not be altogether shamed. Astonished at such grace and power, Indra asks friendship and explanations from the Bird, who says:

"I can carry on my wings the earth and its forests and mountains, its lakes and seas. I can carry all its regions, creatures and products, without weariness."

Indra begs that the Amrita may be restored, since it will be fatal to the Gods that any others should possess it. Garuda accordingly promises that, as he has only undertaken to *fetch*, but not to *deliver*, the Nectar of immortality, he will lay it down where Indra may recover it. In return for this complaisance, he receives immortality and control over the Serpents, whom he deceives by placing the Amrit in their sight, but persuading them first to bathe and pray, and deck themselves before they eat. Indra meanwhile carries off the prize, and the Snake-folk, mournfully licking the Kusa-grass where it had been deposited, cut their tongues. Hence, all serpents—says the narrative—have become double-tongued.

The next chapter recounts the names of the principal chiefs among the Serpents.

The head of all these, Śesha, dreading the curse laid on his kind by their mother, set himself to fast, and stood meditating, "till his hair grew long, and his flesh, sinews and skin dried up." Brahma, observing this, pitied him, and offered a boon, "since thy thoughts are always virtuous." Śesha asked that he might ever delight in virtue, and also escape the fate of the Snakes; which Brahma grants, appointing him at the same time the Sustainer of the earth. "Beneath the world evermore sits the mighty Snake, and singly supports it." Meantime the other serpents hold assemblies to discuss the means of averting the maternal curse. Various proposals are put forward. One snake suggests they shall become Brahmans; another that they should get elected as Janamejaya's ministers; a third to try force; a fourth to defile the sacrifice, and thus render it null; a fifth to seize the king while still young. None of these projects please; but Elapatra, a wise serpent, relates how, when the curse was pronounced, it was also fated that Astika should be born and deliver all the virtuous snakes. So it was that the Serpent-King's sister, Jaratkáru, married the Sage of that name, and bore the Rishi Astika. The story thus comes round again.

This happened at the time of King Parikshita of the Kaurava race; and it is related how, while hunting one day, this monarch came upon a Brahman engaged in devotion, who did not answer when the King asked for water. Parikshita, in hasty pique, put a dead snake round his neck, still unnoticed by the Sage; but his young son, learning the affront thus offered, cursed the Royal offender to die by the bite of a snake. A curious passage ensues, wherein the fulfilment of this curse is depicted, although the Brahman had endeavoured to avert the effect of his son's words. Parikshita perishes, and his infant son Janamejaya is proclaimed successor, being betrothed to the daughter of the King of Káśi.

In the ensuing chapter the story of Jaratkáru's ancestors, hanging by their heels in the cave, is told over anew, with fresh details, until the marriage of that sage is again reached. Here occurs a remarkable passage, illustrating the deep subjection of the wife of such a Rishi as Jaratkáru.

It chanced he laid his head upon her lap,
 Sleeping so long the sun came near to sink ;
 And she did dread lest it should sink and leave
 His sunset-prayers unsaid. But almost more
 Feared she to anger him, awakening him.
 Yet at the last this seemed the lesser ill,
 To vex him for his good.¹ So, with soft breath,
 She whispered in his ear, " Arise, my Lord !
 The sun is setting, make thine evening prayer
 After thy wont ; the sacred fire shines low,
 And in the west the shades of twilight spread."

Uprose he from his slumber wrathfully,
 With lips in anger quivering, and he cried,
 " O Daughter of the Snake ! obeyest thou thus ?
 Is this thy rev'rence ? I will not abide
 Beside thee any more. ' The Sun,' sayest thou ?
 I think he dared not set until I woke ;
 The meanest will not live where he is scorned,
 Much less a Sage like me."

Murmured the wife,
 " I did it not in scorn, dear Lord ! but lest
 Thou shouldst omit thy duty, being a Sage."

¹ उवाचेदं वचः स्रक्ष्यं ततो मधुरभाषिणा ।
 उत्तिष्ठ त्वं महाभाहू सूर्योऽस्तमुपगच्छति ।
 सन्ध्यामुपास्व भगवन्नपः स्पृष्ट्वा यतव्रत ।
 प्रादुष्कृताग्निहोत्रोऽयं मुञ्चन्तो रम्यदारुणः ।
 सन्ध्या प्रवर्त्तते चेयं पश्चिमां दिशि प्रभो ।
 एवमुक्तः स भगवान् जरत्कार्मुर्महातपा ।
 भार्यां प्रस्फुरमाणौष्ठ इदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
 अवमानः प्रयुक्तोऽयं त्वया ममा भुजङ्गमे ।
 समीपे ते नवत्स्यामि गमिष्यामि यथागतं ।
 शक्तिरस्ति न वामोऽहं मयि मुग्धे विभावसोः ।
 अस्तं गन्त यथाकालमिति मे हृदि वर्त्तते ।
 न वाऽप्यवमतस्त्रेह वासो रोचेत कस्यचित् ।
 किं पुनर्द्धर्मशीलस्य मम वा मद्विधस्य वा । etc.

But the harsh Rishi is implacable, and only vouchsafes to console his abandoned wife by telling her that as to her unborn offspring, *Asti* "he is." Hence when she gives birth to a son, he was called *Astika*.

After a repetition of the story of *Parikshita* and his death by the serpent's bite, the narrative relates how *Janamejaya* prepared the great sacrifice for the destruction of the Snakes. The officiating priests, of whom a list is given, make ready the ground and the "house," and a guard is set round because it has been predicted that a Brahman shall stay the rites. "The officiating ministers took their stations. They wore black garments and muttered the charms as they threw the scented wood upon the fire, striking terror into the minds of the serpents at a distance. These, calling in a bewildered way on each other, rushed into the flames, hissing, twisting, and entwining their bodies. They were innumerable and of various shapes. They dropped in myriads into the flames; limbs, bones, and marrow were mingled together, and the roasting flesh sent forth a dreadful smell. Dismal cries were heard of the snake-folk, flying into the air and falling into the sacrifice." Even the serpent kings *Takshaka* and *Vasuki* were terrified and drawn by the sacred and dreadful spell.

At this juncture *Vasuki* calls upon *Astika*, his daughter's child by *Jaratkâru*, to save the snake-people. *Astika* consents, and approaches the place of sacrifice, which he finds guarded. He endeavours to gain admittance by loud felicitations of the King and his priests, which are heard with astonishment and pleasure by *Janamejaya*, since *Astika* is so youthful. The King is inclined to offer the young Brahman whatever he wishes as a boon, but *Takshaka* the Snake-Lord has not yet been brought to the flames, so the *Hotra* must continue. Presently *Indra* appears in the air with the Great Snake coiling round him for protection, but the King cries, "If *Takshaka* takes refuge with *Indra*, hurl him and the God together into the flames." At this command the officiating priest devotes both the snake and his divine protector to the fire, and *Indra*, greatly alarmed, flies with his chariot of clouds to heaven, while *Takshaka* "helplessly approached the

flames." The priests exclaimed, "The sacrifice goes well, King! You can now grant the young Brahman a boon." The King cries out, "I grant it," and Astika immediately demands that the sacrifice be stayed. The King is in consternation at this sudden turn; he offers gold, cattle, anything instead of this; but Astika insists upon the salvation of his mother's race, and the priests themselves say, "the Brahman must have his boon." The sacrifice is thus stayed.

The serpents are very grateful. They cry aloud :

. . . "Oh, Astika! accept some gift from us
Whom thou hast saved." . . .

Answer made Astika,
"Let him who is a Brahman, priest or lay,
Or one, not twice-born, who shall read this tale
Of what I did, at sunrise and sunset
Go free from peril of your poison-fangs."
Eager the Snake-folk gave consent, and framed
A charm of subtle meaning, *Asitam*
Chartimantañcha Sun-itham. So rolled
The potent syllables, which whoso saith
By day or night he walks fearless of fangs.
Also if one be threatened by a snake,
This must he cry, "Oh Snake! calling to mind
Astika—Jaratkâru's son by her
Like-named—who saved the Serpents from the flames,
Thou shouldst not harm me. Be it well with thee
Deadly and excellent! as thou recall'st
Astika's words, which stayed the sacrifice."
And if a Snake turns not abashed at this,
Shattered be hood and head a hundred-fold.¹

¹ ॥ सौतिरुवाच ॥ एतच्छ्रुत्वा प्रीयमाणाः समेता ये तत्रासन्पन्नगा वीत-
मोहाः । आस्तीके वै प्रीतिमन्तो बभूवुरुचुश्चिनं वरमिष्टं वृणीष्व ।
भूयोभुयः सर्वशस्तेऽब्रुवन्तं किं ते प्रियं करवामाद्य विद्वन् । प्रीता वयं
मोक्षिताश्चैव सर्वं कामं किं ते करवामाद्य वत्स ।
॥ आस्तीक उवाच ॥ सायं प्रातर्यै प्रसन्नात्मरूपा लोके विप्रा मानवा ये
परेऽपि । धर्माख्यानं ये पठेयुर्ममेदं तेषां युष्मन्नैव किञ्चिद्वयं
स्यात् ।

Fanciful genealogies and fantastic stories ensue, having for object to link these mythical legends with the Paṇḍu and Kuru Princes; and the main argument afterwards is related how the Brahmans cleared the land of male Kshatryas, and begot a better race upon the females of that sort; and how the earth was plagued with Daityas, etc., to rid her of which the Gods and Apsarases came down incarnated.

A strange episode ensues, beginning with mention of the marriage of Yayati to Devayani. The Gods and Demons had quarrelled, and, in the conflict which followed, Sukra, the Brahmana of the Demons, restored to life such as fell by his magic art of *Sanjivini* or "Enlivening." Angiras, the Purohit of the Gods, could not emulate this, so the Gods sent Kacha, the son of Vrihaspati, to offer himself as pupil to the great Rishi, and thus learn the secret. Kacha presents himself at the abode of the Sage, saying,

"Kacha am I, son of Vrihaspati.
Master, admit me near thee; I will live
The life of Brahmacharya, studious
Of wisdom, tho' I wait a thousand years."
And the Sage answered, "Welcome art thou, Son;
I will admit thee, for I honour thee,
Being the son of good Vrihaspati."

Kacha therefore undertakes the vows, and serving about the person of his Teacher, soon ingratiates himself with his

तैश्चाप्युक्तो भागिनेय प्रसन्नैरेतत्सत्त्वं काममेवं वरं ते । प्रीत्या युक्ताः कामितं सर्वशस्त्रे कर्त्तार स्म प्रवणा भागिनेय ।

असितं चार्त्तिमन्तश्च सुनीथं चापि यः स्मरेत् ।

दिवावा यदि रात्रौ नास्यसर्पभयं भवेत् ।

यो जरत्कारुणा जातो जरत्कारौ महायशः । आस्तीकः सर्पसन्ने वः पन्नगान्योऽभ्यरक्षत । तं स्मरन्तं महाभागा न मां हिंसितुमर्हथ ।

सर्पापसर्पभद्रं ते गच्छ सर्प महाविष ।

जनमेजयस्य यज्ञान्ते आस्तीकवचनं स्मर ।

आस्तीकस्य वचः श्रुत्वा यः सर्पो न निवर्त्तते ।

शतधा भिद्यते मूर्द्ध्नि शिश्वृक्षफलं यथा ।

daughter Devayani. In this manner he passes a long time, till the Asuras, knowing Kacha, determine to make an end of him to spite Vrihaspati, and to preserve on their own side the art of reviving the dead. They kill him and cut him into pieces, which they give to dogs. The verse proceeds :

The cows came back that night without a guide,
And Devayani, seeing them alone,
Spake to the Sage, " Father, the sun is set,
The Agnihotra offered ; but the cows
Return untended. Where is Kacha, then ?
I see not Kacha ! Is he hurt or slain ?
I cannot live without him. I shall die."

" If Kacha hath been slain," replied the Sage,
" He shall return alive, when I say ' Come ! ' "

Then, having recourse to his art, he summons Kacha, and all the portions of his body at once emerge from the maws of the dogs, and are reunited in living form. Devayani asks why he has stayed away so long ; and he relates how the Asuras killed and mutilated him when he was bringing Samidh wood and Kuśa grass. " Now, however," adds Kacha, " I am somehow restored."

Again he is sent for flowers by Devayani, and the Asuras catch and kill him, this time reducing his body to a paste, which they throw in the sea. The lady missés him, invokes her father's aid, and Kacha is restored. The third time the demons slay him, and then burn his body, afterwards giving its ashes in wine to the Rishi. Devayani is in despair, she declares that he was her only beloved, and threatens to die if he be not revived. Kacha suddenly speaks to the Sage from his own inside, explaining what has been done, and that the Asuras hope either to put an end to him, or to make him kill his preceptor (a mortal sin) in being brought forth to life. The only solution of the difficulty is that the sage should teach the art of *Sanjivini* to the imprisoned pupil, in order that when he has emerged alive (by the enforced destruction of his master) he may exercise the art, and in turn restore the Sage himself to existence ; Devayani having dutifully pro-

tested that she can survive neither the one nor the other. Accordingly the arrangement is carried out. Kacha comes forth, to the destruction of his Teacher's body, and then revivifies the august corpse. Restored to life, the Sage solemnly curses wine, which had betrayed him, and prohibits its use in future by all Brahmanical persons. Devayani afterwards offers herself as wife to Kacha, but he excuses himself in a very ungrateful manner, by pretending that having inhabited the body of her father, they are now brother and sister. Incensed at this, Devayani curses him: "his acquired gift shall be fruitless to himself." But he takes its knowledge in triumph to the Gods.

A long episode follows about the lives and fortunes of Yayati and his brides Devayani and Samistha. Their offspring bring the poem down to the Paṇḍava and Kaurava families, and to the real narrative of the Mahābhārata, all this lengthy introduction—with much other unnoticed matter—serving apparently to dignify the Brahmans, defame the "Snake-peoples," glorify Royal pedigrees, and to blend existing legends and beliefs with the real and eminently beautiful ancient Epic, of which the action may be said to begin with the death of King Paṇḍu.