PREFACE

This dissertation aims at finding out the period of the Kurukṣetra war. Since no Archaeological, Numismatic or Epigraphic evidences of the war period have been unearthed or found till now, only the records of the Greek classical historians, traditional references as obtaining in the various literatures and the astronomical references found in the Mahābhārata have been made use of. So long, some of the western Indologists were inclined to think that the ‘war’ was a ‘myth’ without any historical background whatsoever; others found similarity of western or Babylonian folk tales in the story as found in the Mahābhārata. Many Indian historians also had nursed the same idea. But now, after the excavation carried out at several sites, the excavators-in-charge have found townships bearing resemblances to the Mahābhārata townships of Hastināpur and Kausambi. The excavator at the Hastināpur site is, however, inclined to put a date of about 800 B.C. to his ‘finds’. These excavations have led the serious and unbiased historians of all countries to review the matter in the light of recent discovery. Now-a-days many historians are of opinion that the Kurukṣetra war had a historical background (Annexures D to G). The present treatise tries to find out the period when the war actually took place.

So long, those western Indologists, who believed in the historicity of the war, merely thought that it was a locally oriented clannish affair, and they termed it Kuru-Pāṇchāla war. But from a study of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, it is evident that almost the whole of India and some border tribes also were involved in this warfare. It would, therefore, be naive to treat the battle as a mere clannish affair. The finding of the cities due to excavation as well as its connecting link with the Purāṇic and the Mahābhārata township has broadened the dim horizon of the scholars to some extent. They have started to take active interest in the matter in all seriousness. In this country, at the Vidwā-Sevā Abhāram at Bijnor, a seminar
was held in this connection at which many scholars took part. At Calcutta, a table talk was arranged by the Indo-German Association at the Max Mueller Bhavan on 11. 12.1975 and the matter was discussed from all angles by the present author. A paper in connection with the dating of the Bhārata War was read at the XXXVI session of the Indian History Congress at Aligarh in December, 1975 also by the author. The task undertaken in the present treatise is to present the various references obtaining in the texts and literatures regarding Kurukṣhetra war and to analyse them through literary and astronomical methods.

As to the subject contents of this work, Chapter I covers the background of the war. It has been aimed at preparing the readers to understand the socio-economic, political, personal and religious factors involved, which ultimately culminated in such an extensive warfare. It has been unravelled that the character of Krīṣṇa was unique and perhaps the most interesting one in the then India. He was a seasoned politician and a religious reformer. His help to the Pāṇḍava brothers led to their victory at the end. Many are of opinion that Karṇa was a greater hero than Arjuna, but he was more of an idealist than a politician. Yudhiṣṭhira was cool tempered and great, whereas Dūryodhana was vindictive and aggressive. Yudhiṣṭhira’s subtlety in plunging in the second bout of fraudulent and unsuccessful gambling made him lose his kingdom. Apparently, this was foolhardy on his part to stake his wife and kingdom in a crude gambling. Closer reflexion, however, points to a shrewd and sagacious bid of Yudhishthira, by which he averted the impending war for which neither the Pandavas nor Krīṣṇa were then prepared. Yudhiṣṭhira thereby saved the situation for the time being but the war became inevitable in the long run.

In Chapter II, entitled “The Antiquity of Indian Chronology” the heliacal rising of the Aśvin and the Maghaś have been discussed. The object has been to find out the Rg Vedic antiquity for certain special events. These events, as determined, relate to a period of about 4000 B.C. It may be mentioned that Tilak, from evidences in the Vedic literatures
that the vernal equinox once began with the *Orientis* or the *Mrgśirās*, had arrived at same date of 4000 B.C. for vedic antiquity for that period. So also had Jacobi, who found out from two hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* that at summer solstice, the sun was in conjunction with the lunar mansion *Phālguni*. His period also came to 4000 B.C. This chapter, although redundant in the context of finding out the time period of the *Kurukṣēṭra* war, is necessary to show that the Indian or the Vedic civilisation in India, was quite mature at that period of antiquity. Hence the *Mahābhārata* period, being later in date, inherited this mature culture and development in all the spheres. Later, it has been found out through diverse methods that *the war was fought at or about 3137 B.C.* If the antiquity of the vedic culture and also the period of the *Kurukṣēṭra* war at 3137 B.C. is accepted, the 'Aryan' invasion theory does not have any legs to stand on.

In Chapter III, the literary antiquity of the *Mahābhārata* and that of *Krīṣṇa* has been traced. It has been shown that the name of *Krīṣṇa* has been continuously in use since *Ṛg Vedic* times. In the later period of the *Upaniṣadas*, *Krīṣṇa* has been referred to as 'Devakīputra' who can be identified with none other that the *Krīṣṇa* of *Mahābhārata*. Some early epigraphic evidences of the 'Vaishnava' cult since the pre-Christian era have also been discussed in Chapter VIII-Epilogue.

In Chapters IV, V, VI and VII, attempts have been made to find out the time period of the *Kurukṣēṭra* war from (i) writings of classical Greek historians, (ii) traditional references, (iii) *Purānic* documents, and (iv) astronomical data found in the *Mahābhārata*. From all these a common date at near about 3137 B.C. has been arrived at, and this date has been accepted as the date of the *Kurukṣēṭra* war.

In the last Chapter entitled 'Epilogue' some relevant matters pertaining to the previous chapters have been elaborated, and conclusions have been drawn. *The final conclusion is that the Kurukṣēṭra war was fought at about 3137 B.C.*

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to those who have helped me through
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It is regretted that notwithstanding my best endeavour in proof correction, a few errors have crept in and I crave the indulgence of the readers for this.

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A. N. CHANDRA.