CHAPTER I

THE DATE OF KURUKSHETRA WAR

THE BACKGROUND

Modern historians assign diverse reasons for the genesis and growth of hostilities between two parties, and among them, political and economic factors are frequently specified as having a very important and dominant role. Social and personal motivations are disguised under these two factors and cover diverse considerations, such as, political and economic problems. These hinder classification and correct analysis of any such occurrence as a major conflagration. For example, at times, those who are regarded as outcasts and debarred from the most honourable callings and responsibilities of the society rise up against those who deprive them, for the establishment of their own rights. Always despised, periodically plundered and in times of public calamity left to their own devises, they, the common and the ignorant mob, wield such a power as can never be demonstrated even by the most powerful and militant prince. Their need is to get an upliftment to the level of the society around them and minister to their more material necessities. But even such important socio-economic problems are known to have been used for personal considerations by giving these a colour which actually these do not have.

Also, throughout history, race and racial disunity have been ever present with all their distinctive differences and have exploded from time to time in violent paroxysms of racial hysteria. All these and such others are, however, concealed under the garb of political and economic problems. As Gibbon says, “nor has any system of secular ideas been successful in obtaining universal acceptance”. This also in some cases, caused hostilities. Gibbon goes on to say that “Europe refused to be unified by the egalitarian plan of the French Revolution”1 and as such, it was a failure and resulted

1. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire (Dell Ed. abridged)
in a fiasco and ignominy. Nepolion was the child of this Revolution, but still, in his later wars, the dominant forces were the love of conquest and a sense of ‘personal aggrandisement’ shrewdly concealed as political and economic problems arising out of the Revolution. These problems were supposed to be “extremely dangerous to the rulers, the nobles, and the clergy of all monarchies”\(^2\) as any problem arising out of socio-economic uprising would.

Also, in the first and the second world wars, the contributory perquisites were political and economic problems and, additionally, the greed to acquire power and obtain possessions. These were the primary considerations with other motivations included. Happily, however, in the heroic age, such considerations may be deemed to have been almost non-existent as the political and the economic condition of the people was not so complicated as in modern times and, it is, at least, doubtful if such lamentable condition was so glaring and acute as it is now. Consequently, other and more conspicuous reasons are required to be sought out for the correlation of a war of such great magnitude as the Kurukshetra war at such a remote date.

Notwithstanding the above generalisation, inference can safely be drawn that in the heroic age certain items essentially constituted the directing force in the causation of hostilities. These may be enumerated here: (i) social inequality resulting in the predominance of one section of the people over the other, (ii) economic subjugation or domination of a section of the people, (iii) personal aggrandisement of the chieftain, or the ruler of a community or a section, (iv) the heroic idea of showing valour in the battlefield, (v) political causes or pseudo-political considerations of various natures, (vi) war for possession of women, or, a particular woman, and lastly, (vii) (a) religious controversy between the various established faiths and beliefs and other newly oriented theories, or, (b) the opposition offered by a

---

2. The Story of the world (Cardinal Ed) : Southworth ; p. 292.
part of the people for the establishment of new ideas invented by them or their leaders. Naturally, therefore, most wars of the heroic age must have been waged for one or more of the above reasons.

The great conflagration at Kurukṣetra at the juncture of the Dwāpara and the Kṛiṣṇa era\(^8\) must, consequently, be the effect of one or more causes as set forth above. The five illustrious Pāṇḍava princes, the heroes of the Kurukṣetra war, were reportedly born and reared in the Himalayan region\(^4\). Their birth was shrouded in mystery inasmuch as their lawful father Pāṇdu was not their progenitor. He was incapable of producing any offspring. The text states that at his instance, his two wives Kunti and Mādré, got their offsprings through various deities of the Indian pantheon, viz, Dharma, Indra, Vāyu and the Aśvins\(^6\). Apparently, however, such application was not uncommon in those days, nor was such practice looked down upon. Pāṇdu himself was the child of such an union and, he was respected and accepted in the status of a prince of the famous Kuru clan without dispute. Pāṇdu was the younger brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra—the ruling chieftain of the Kuru clan. He went to live in the forest to recover from the evil effects of a curse imposed upon him\(^6\) and, there he died\(^7\). His sons, the Pāṇḍava children, were, thereafter, brought back to Hastināpur, the capital of their paternal estate\(^8\).

According to the extant custom, Mādré, the mother of the youngest twins—Nakula and Sahadeva—without any persuasion whatsoever from others and out of her own free

3. Mahābhārata, Adiparva: 5.13
4. ibid 126. 1—5
5. ibid 123. 2—4; 124.1.
6. Mahābhārata; Adiparva, 118.1
7. ibid 126.1
8. ibid 126
will followed her husband’s footsteps⁹. Kunti, the mother of the three elder Pāndava brothers, along with some mendicant residents of the same forest, where they have been living, came to Hastināpur with the princes¹⁰. Doubtless the return of these children to their paternal household was not liked by many of the Kuru clan, particularly by Dhṛtarāstra and his children, as legitimately the Pāndavas were the claimants to a portion of the lands and estate hitherto enjoyed by the chieftain and his children. The Pāndava princes were, however, received with ceremony in the royal household by Dhṛtarāstra as a necessary formality. They were accepted by grandfather Bhiṣma, their father’s uncle, who was still living and strong.

Here at Hastināpur, the Pāndavas were educated by learned preceptors as befitted the princes of royal blood along with other royal children of the Kuru clan. During training in the noble arts of warfare, in archery, mace battle and wrestling, Bhima¹¹ and the ambidextrous Arjuna excelled the other royal children causing their extreme jealousy. Although it is not known for certain, the young Pāndava princes were, presumably, ragged for the mystery surrounding their birth by the other Kaurava boys, as it is the habit of the young boys everywhere. Apparently, both the Pāndavas and the Kauravas exhibited cold indifference to each other and being confined to their respective princely habitations remained aloof from their royal cousins except on such occasions as demanded

⁹. ibid
¹⁰. ibid
¹¹. ibid

Talboys Wheeler traces this custom as of Scythian and Thracian origin and states that “two ideas are involved in the later Brahminical rite which find no expression in the early Scythic form namely, that the act was voluntary on the part of the widow, and that it was associated with a well-grounded belief in the immortality of the soul...The widow, indeed, entered the fire, with a profound conviction that she would thereby rejoin her husband in abodes of bliss.

The Thracians had a similar custom, except that the widow was not burnt, but slaughtered at the grave of her dead husband...”

Ancient Hindu India, Punthi Pustak, 1961; p. 168.
their presence. But their secret contempt, penetrated through this thin and awkward disguise found expression from time to time. This created a division never to be adjusted in the future. The evidence of their hostile intentions was manifested from their very early youth. This inseparable sense of antagonism, in course of time, developed into a mortal enmity and the final blow was inflicted at the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

This hostility between the Kaurava and the Pāṇḍava princes was further aggravated when Karṇa, Kunti’s first born and discarded child was debarred from taking part in the competition arranged for the royal children and those of princely blood. This was because of his low origin in the family of Suta Adhiratha\(^\text{12}\). Actually, however, Adhiratha was not Karṇa’s father. He only had adopted him after he was discarded by his mother just after his birth and thereby saved his life. Karṇa was ever grateful to his adoptive father Adhiratha. Duryodhana, the oldest of the Kuru princes, was naturally present in the competition. He could be generous when it suited him. Be it generosity or be it animosity towards the Pāṇḍavas, he made Karṇa the king of Anga\(^\text{13}\) then and there before the assembled princes when he was thus refused to be entered in the competition. As a sign of gratitude, Karṇa vowed eternal friendship to the elder Kaurava prince for saving his face. Karṇa since then envied Arjuna his proficiency in archery and desired to prove his superiority in the competition. But on being debarred he had no alternative but to retire. But his animosity remained although he was crowned king of Anga and was raised to the rank of a noble.

Such an immense surprise sprung upon the princes by Duryodhana was primarily motivated by his anomosity towards the Pāṇḍavas and to prove Karṇa’s superiority over Arjuna. It was also intended to bring a superior warrior like

\(^{12}\) ibid \(^{13}\) Mahabharata, Adiparva;
Karna into his own fold and to solidify friendship with him. It is uncertain, however, if Duryodhana thought of a war with the Pândavas at this juncture, but his action in winning over Karna must be regarded as a superior diplomatic maneuver when measured against future happenings although the guiding force at this period was sheer animosity towards the Pandavas.

It is easy to conceive that the treatment meted out to Karna by the Pândava princes was neither forgotten nor forgiven. He cherished an attitude of unquenchable hostility towards the Pândavas in general and Arjuna in particular throughout his life. Unhappily, this attitude of Karna, ended in death in a fight with Arjuna at the Kurukshetra battlefield. Adhering to the ancient heroic tradition, he never left the banner of Duryodhana although he received a warm persuasion from Krishna and, also, from his mother Kunti. At the same time, before the Kurukshetra war, he came to know from Krishña that he was the eldest child of Kunti, who had abandoned him soon after his birth. At this, Karna strongly felt that he had been discriminated against by his own mother. This act of informing Karna about his origin just before the war was a supreme piece of Krishña’s diplomacy. He knew that Karna was kind and generous. He also knew that his fighting capacity would be impaired if he were aware that the Pândavas were of his own blood, and then, even such a superior fighter like Karna would be perturbed in a fight with Arjuna. Karna so long believed that he was the son of Suta Adhiratha. But when he learned that he was Kunti’s son and heard about his mother’s delinquency of early youth, he was petrified with agony. He could not, however, forsake Duryodhana in the face of his early promise and for the sake of maintaining the heroic tradition. He also, could not forgive his mother the lapses connected with her early youth.

Thus, Karna may be considered to have been the butt of a social inequality. As compared with the princes of the Kuru and the Pândava clans his position was much inferior
and, always, in his social contacts he was treated as such. This made him vote for the war at a later date. This also made him abuse such stalwarts as Bhismā and Drona although otherwise he was a kind, intelligent, generous and perfectly balanced personality. It also seems probable that Bhismā and Drona knew about his bastardy, and for this, they, particularly Bhismā went out of their way to undermine his merits. These acts of Karna, altogether contrary to his nature, were probably the result of frustration and a sort of inferiority complex which grew upon him as a result of the differential treatment that he had to tolerate.

Duryodhana, on the contrary, was an ego-centric individual and doggedly intolerant. His particular enmity was centred round Bhima, the second of the Pāṇḍava brothers, who was born on the same day.14 In their early youth, when Duryodhana found that Bhima was as strong as or stronger than he, in physical prowess, he tried to poison him.16 Bhima, however, had the good fortune to survive.16 Further, the members of the Kuru clan, seeing the strength, kindness, goodness and royal bearing of the Pāṇḍava princes started praising them, and wanted Yudhisthira as their ruler.17 At this, Duryodhana apprehended danger for the future. He thought that he might be overruled for good by the will of the people. He immediately plotted against the lives of the Pāṇḍavas and sent them to Vāraṇavata.18 There he had planned to burn them to death.19 Being forewarned by Vidura20 their uncle by a Sudra wife, the Pāṇḍavas fled away from the inflammable house built beforehand for their residence, and saved their lives.21 Thus Duryodhana was

---

14. Mahābhārata; Adi. 123.3
15. ibid 128.5
16. ibid 129.2
17. ibid 145.1
18. ibid 143.1
19. ibid 144
20. ibid 145.2
21. ibid 148.2
not found to be sensible of his obligarions and was prone to
impatience and dissimulation. He was found to be plotting
against the lives of the Pāṇḍava brothers since his early youth
out of jealousy, ruthlessness, ego-centric individualism and
intolerance. He made the war inevitable.

After leaving Vāraṇavāta, the Pāṇḍavas travelled
from place to place in disguise as Brahmīns and their
mother Kuntī was all along with them. They had to move
incognito for fear of their lives as, by this time, they were
convinced that the Kauravas were bent upon killing them.
There is no doubt, however, that if their identity was dis-
closed, the Kauravas, who were famous rulers, would come to
know in a short while, and would plot to kill them again, and
then, they thought, they would have a very slender chance to
survive. On their way, they had to stay at a village Ekchakrā
by name. There being persuaded by his mother and to
save a poor family of Brahmīns, Bhima killed Vaka, a
Rākṣhasa. Prior to this Bhima had killed 'Hiḍimvo', a no-
torious tyrant of the Rākṣhasa tribe and married his sister
'Hiḍimvā', at her insistence. Ghatotkacha, the Rākṣhasa
hero, was born out of this union. The Pāṇḍavas could
secure a powerful ally in Ghatotkacha, who was destined to
play an important role for them in the battlefield of Kuru-
khsetra by saving them on various occasions. He, however,
fell fighting bravely at the battlefield of Kurukshtera on the
fourteenth day of the war.

From Ekchakrā the Pāṇḍavas started for the Pāṇchala
country. At Ekchakrā they had come to know that for the
selection of a suitable bridegroom, Yagñasena, the king of the
Pāṇchālas was about to arrange a 'svayamvara sabhā' where
kings, nobles and Brahmīns from all over the country would

22. ibid
23. Mahabharata; Adi. 156.2
24. ibid 155.1
25. ibid 155.2
26. Mahabharata; Drona; 180.2
27. Mahabharata; Adi. 168
attend. That, only those belonging to the higher caste of the society was invited to this assembly is in itself a proof that the society was also marked by a social inequality even in those days. A notable fact is that the Brahmins, though poor, were treated as on the same footing with, if not higher than, even the Kṣhatriya princes. Presumably, the earlier Vedic social structure of equality between the twice-born castes had been superceded, and a new set up, with the superiority of the Brahmins by birth was already established or was about to be established in the then social set up.

Duryodhana and his brothers were also present at the selection party as aspirants for Draupadi’s hand.\(^{28}\) King Yagñhasena or Drupada, as he was commonly known, had invented a norm to test the proficiency of the bridegroom in archery.\(^{29}\) Most of the princes tried and failed.\(^{30}\) But when Karna got up and took the bow,\(^{31}\) the bride herself protested stating that she would not select any person of lower birth as her husband.\(^{32}\) Consequently, Karna had to refrain from taking part in the competition. This clearly points to the caste-ridden nature of the society. Girls of one stratum married persons of the same stratum or of a higher one. This discrimination, presumably, was not confined to matrimonial alliances alone but had spread over in other spheres of life also. In this connection, a reference in the ‘Bhagavat Gitā’ preached by Krīṣṇa to his friend and disciple Arjuna on the eve of the war about the composition of the four ‘varnas’ or castes is noteworthy.\(^{33}\)

Arjuna, however, in the guise of a mendicant brahmin, won the bride through his skill and high proficiency

\(^{28}\) Mahabharata ; Adi. 1861.
\(^{29}\) ibid 185.1
\(^{30}\) ibid 187.1
\(^{31}\) ibid 187.1
\(^{32}\) ibid 187.1
\(^{33}\) Bhagavat Gita : 4.13

\begin{quote}
शातुर्वर्णां मया सृष्टं गुरुवर्मविभागाम:

Cāturvarṇyaṃ mayā sṛṣṭaṃ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ.
\end{quote}
in archery and outshone all the contending princes and nobles. At this, all the princes attending the ceremony were offended and wanted to fight with Drupada as he agreed to give his daughter in marriage with a poor brahmin rejecting the claims of all the princes. Apparently, therefore, after the break up of the selection party, most of the assembled princes including Karna, owing to personal or clannish animosity or to their allegiance to Duryodhana fought the Pândavas. Arjuna took the side of the Pāñchālas and fought valiantly. But this somehow did not take a grave turn at the intervention of Krīṣṇa. He was sure of their identity as his cousins. Later, when the frustrated princes came to know that these Brahmins were none other than the famous Pândava princes, their attitude of hostility towards them further increased. And this speaks of the superior diplomacy of the Kauravas, particularly of Duryodhana, who were popular enough to command such allegiance or that the Pândavas were very unpopular. On the other hand, it may be contended that on such occasions this type of fighting was the custom of the time and the action of the princes did not express any personal or clannish animosity. They joined together for this one purpose of maintaining the tradition only. But, if this is construed to be an out-come of an animosity towards the Pândavas, as this was emphatically the case with Duryodhana, it was kept in abeyance for the time being only to find its merciless expression in a more furious way in the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

The Pândavas' coming to the court of Pāñchāla calls for examination in detail. It is a fact that for fear of their lives they had been roaming about in the disguise of mendicant brahmins after the Vāranāvata episode. True, that while they were on their way to Vāranāvata they had been warned by

34. Mahābharata; Adi. 187.2
35. ibid 189.1
36. Mahābharata; Adi. 189.1
37. ibid 190.3
38. ibid 201.1
Vidura about the sinister plot hatched against their lives by Duryodhana, but still, it may be assumed that only out of fear they could not refuse to go to Vāranāvata even knowing fully well that their lives would be endangered. They were obliged to have recourse to a trick to get out of the Vāranāvata plot with their lives. All these go to show that even the immense prowess of Bhima and the unmatched ability of Arjuna in archery could not make them so confident as to challenge the Kauravas face to face or at the very least, to lodge a strong protest against the heinous plots against their own lives. On serious consideration, it seems, therefore, illogical that they should decide to attend the Pāṇḍhāla court for participation in the competition, as in any event, their identity as the Pāṇḍavas was likely to be disclosed there. Therefore, there must have been a laudable reason for their precipitate action. Possibly, out of desperation they went to the court as they had to find a strong ally for their survival and for gaining ground. No doubt, Arjuna was absolutely confident of his capability of winning over Draupadī. And this he did. Thus their action in going to the Pāṇḍhāla court out of desperation brought about the desired result. Here they got a wife, and a very powerful ally in Drupada. Here also for the first time in life they met their cousin Krīṣṇa. Thus as an event, the Pāṇḍavas' coming to the court of Pāṇḍhāla be construed as a turning point in the course of the history of the Mahabharata.

The marriage of Draupadi with the five Pāṇḍava brothers was not in conformity with the existing custom, and earlier dictums had to be invoked to solemnise the marriage. Apparently, "monogamy and polygamy seem to have been the recognised institutions in the family history of Hastināpur"39, but this is possibly the solitary instance where practice of polyandry was resorted to within the framework of patriarchal pattern of society.

At this juncture, at the 'svayamvarā sabhā' of Draupadi. Krīṣṇa, although not an aspirant for her hand, makes

his appearance for the first time. All this time he was engaged in fighting Kaṃsa of Mathurā and Jarāsandha of Magadha, Kaṃsa’s father-in-law. He was related to the Pāṇḍavas but so far it appears from the Mahābhārata text, he had no occasion to meet them earlier. Kṛiṣhṇa’s maternal uncle Kaṃsa, the king of Mathurā, was a scion of the old order and admittedly a tyrant. In his childhood, Kṛiṣhṇa’s life was threatened by this uncle. Consequently, just after his birth he was removed to Vṛindāvana, and there, he was placed under the care of a relative Nanda Gopa and his spouse Yasodā, who were ‘vrātya kṣatriyas’. They reared him like their own son. Later, Kaṃsa was killed by Kṛiṣhṇa while he was in his early teens. This made Jarāsandha very angry, and he attacked Mathurā several times. The people of Mathurā, however, implicitly believed in Kṛiṣhṇa and his capability to extricate them from the present peril, they fled to ‘Dvārakā’ near the present Arabian sea at his direction and this all out exodus was personally led by Kṛiṣhṇa. There they found a kingdom of the Yadus, Bṛisnīs, Andhakas and others.

Jarāsandha of Magadha was a very powerful king of the time and commanded respect from many for his military power. He had conquered many countries and kept many princes as his captives. Kṛiṣhṇa knew that his tribe of the Yadus and Bṛisnīs was no match for the trained and well equipped army of Jarāsandha in the event of a regular war. He was also astute enough to perceive beforehand that in any war against the Kauravas, Jarāsandha was sure to side with Duryodhana. Hence Kṛiṣhṇa managed to have Jarāsandha killed in a duel with Bhīma, and earned further enmity of many Indian satraps of the period. Further, he took Rukmini as his wife, who was betrothed to Sīśupāla of Chedī. Kṛiṣhṇa had to kill him at the Pāṇḍava court during the

40. Harivamsa: ch. 60.
41. ibid 92.
42. Mahabharata: savaparva; 23.1
43. Mahabharata: sava: 44.1
‘Rājsūya sacrifice’ held at Indraprastha at a later date for his obstinacy and arrogance. This also made him an enemy of many rulers including Duryodhana of the famous Kuru clan.

The Mahābhārata account of the early life of Kṛiṣhṇa is somewhat sketchy. It is only concerned as far as he was connected with the Pāṇḍavas or as much as he was involved in the Kurukṣetra war. The actual political background in which he found himself after he killed Kaṁsa is not fully revealed there. After this episode he placed Ugrasena, the father of Kaṁsa, as the king of Māthurā and at this, Jarasāndha became very angry and beset the town of Māthurā. Various other rulers of the period, who were either his subordinates or his friends, followed his suit. Among those who allied themselves with Jarāsandha were the kings of Kaliṅga, Chedi, Aṅga, Baṅga, Kaśi, Daśārṇa, Summa, Videha, Madra, Kaśmīr and many others. The fight did not augur well for Jarāsandha and, consequently he had to retreat. Again, on another occasion, Jarāsandha attacked Kṛiṣhṇa in the ‘Gomantha hills’ but there also his intentions were foiled. At the instance of their uncle-at-law Damaghosa, the king of Chedi and the father of Siśupāla whom Kṛiṣhṇa killed later, Kṛiṣhṇa and Baladeva went to the city of ‘Kara-vira’. But the king of Karavira, probably because of his friendship with Jarāsandha, fought with Kṛiṣhṇa but died at his hands at the battle. After this, Śalya, the king of ‘Sauva’ and a friend of Jarasandha, requested ‘Kāla-Yavana’, the king of the ‘Yavana’ country, to lead an army against Kṛiṣhṇa to which he agreed and, he also, in a fight lost his life. Hence, at the time most of the kings and rulers of India were against Kṛiṣhṇa but could not defeat him for his strength, valour and superior tactics. But, he was astute enough to be aware that

44. Harivamsa ; ch. 88
45. ibid 90
46. ibid 98
47. ibid ch. 99
48. ibid 100
49. ibid 110
his piece of fortune could not continue for long and within a short time he would be killed by fair means or foul unless he could gather round him a number of powerful friends and allies and could also somehow kill his enemies in war or otherwise. On the balance of evidende, therefore, Krīṣṇa had need of the Pāṇḍavas as they had of him and, according to some, the battle of Kurukṣetra was a piece of his diplomatic manoeuvre so that he could get rid of his enemies at the cost of other warriors of the period.

In the Mahābhārata, Krīṣṇa is found to have favoured the Pāṇḍavas and act as their chief adviser. No doubt, he had need to have a powerful group of friends and supporters with whom he could combine hands for his own safety and also for the establishment of his new religious doctrines. The Pāṇḍavas were readily available. They were his cousins and of royal extraction. They were deprived of their paternal holdidngs, and were vehemently disliked by the orthodox faction of the ruling hegemony for their physical prowess and for their religious doctrines innovated by Krīṣṇa. They further earned their enmity for winning over Draupadī but apparently, had developed a complex for their alleged mysterious birth. On the other hand, they were brave fighters, reliable and for their royal blood commanded respect from some.

The Pāṇḍavas had neither wealth nor followers and supporters except a minor section of the people. They were desperately in need of friends and supporters and got Krīṣṇa as their greatest ally. On the other hand, Krīṣṇa wanted some people from a powerful clan as his followers to thwart the combined efforts of the rulers who were against him. These rulers were after his life. They were also putting obstructions to his establishing a new religious order based on moderation and doctrine of selfless work and equality. Infact, his teachings in the Bhagavat Gītā must be regarded as a deviation from the orthodox Vedic cult of sacrifice, and were based on unselfish work, spiritual sublimation of the self and egalitarianism.
Krishna left an indelible stamp of his presence of mind in tackling intricate political problems. He stealthily paved the way of the ascendancy of the Pandavas by helping to create a body of supporters and by eliminating the most powerful of their adversaries. He, thereby, counteracted the ever increasing power of Duryodhana, who wanted to use the then rulers as his pawns for the realisation of his material interests. Krishna, however, brought a cleavage in the Kaurava camp with well calculated measures to disrupt the unity of the oligarchy, who had substantially usurped political power taking advantage of the indifference of the people and the prevalent political, social and religious conditions. Thus, notwithstanding the weakness of the Pandavas, this alliance of Krishna with them made the war a possibility.

During that calamitous period every instant of the Pandavas was marked with urgency; the approaching confusion, the scarcity of friends and supporters posed difficulties from which they could not extricate themselves easily. These were a constant source of anxiety but the long established institution of marriage, or rather political marriage came to their immediate rescue. Further powerful and political support was available to them from the institution of marriage. Arjuna contracted a political marriage by eloping with Subhadrā, the sister of Baladeva and step-sister of Krishna, and thus ensured the support of the powerful tribes of the ‘Yadus’, ‘Brihminis’ ‘Andhakas’ and others. Earlier, Bhima by marrying ‘Hirimbā’ became the father of ‘Ghatotkacha’, who, with his Rākṣhasa followers joined the Pandava side at the Kurukṣetra war. Nakula, the fourth Pandava brother, married ‘Karenumati’ sister of ‘Dhristaketu’ of Chedi. Even during the confusion of the times, the Pandavas got Abhimanuyu, the son of Arjuna and Subhadrā, married to Uttarā the princess of Matsya and daughter of Virāta and obtained the allegiance of the king and his army. But the most important was the Pandava brothers’ marriage with Draupadi. Thereby, they got the support of Drupada, king of the Panchala country, who was
one of the most important rulers of the time. He joined the Pāṇḍava side wholeheartedly, not only because they were his sons-in-law, or because he had clannish enmity with the Kurus but also because the other Indian rulers and satraps behaved ill with him after the ‘sāyamvarā sabhā of his daughter Draupadi. Thus fostered by their powerful connections and their friendly support, the ambition of the Pāṇḍavas to recover their birthright bolstered up and led to the more embittered conflict which broke out at Kurukṣetra.

The burning of the Khāṇḍava forest with the help of Kṛiṣhṇa, which rightly or wrongly some scholars ascribe to the intention for the further colonisation of the expanding Aryan race, helped the Pāṇḍavas to acquire considerable territory and to establish Indraprastha as their capital. The palace that they constructed was stated to have been a unique piece of workmanship executed by ‘Maya’,50 of the Dānava family. Duryodhana had come to the palace as an invitee to the ‘Rājsuya Yajña, that was being performed by king Yudhiṣṭhira, and though accustomed to all amenities available at the remote date, was made a fool of51. He saw water where there was no water, and solid floor where there was water, and became the object of ridicule of the assembled princes52. This made the vain prince annoyed, angry and jealous. His anger multiplied when Kṛiṣhṇa had killed Śiśupāla, one of his most powerful and staunch supporters. In the ‘Yajña’ performance, according to custom, the place of honour or the ‘argha’ was proposed to be accorded to Kṛiṣhṇa as being the most honourable personality in the assembly but Śiśupāla of Chedi, a stubborn and an old enemy of Kṛiṣhṇa objected to this. He became obnoxious and abusive, and was, consequently, killed by Kṛiṣhṇa after he was given several warnings53. This act of killing Śiśupāla, although prompted by

50. Mahabharata : savaparva : 3.3
51. ibid 46.1
52. ibid 64.
53. ibid 44.1
personal considerations was a superb piece of Krīṣṇa's diplomacy and, as a matter of fact, lessened the strength of the Kaurava supporters to a great extent. Duryodhana, though fuming at the death of Śiśupāla, could do nothing; but his losing face at the earlier palace episode and the killing of his friend and supporter made him so much enraged that this made that proud and ego-centric prince a mortal enemy of the Pāṇḍavas. This, in due course, found its expression in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

The last effrontery committed by Duryodhana on the Pāṇḍavas was when he invited and defeated Yudhiṣṭhīrīna in fraudulent dice\textsuperscript{54}. He and his younger brother Duḥśāsana, after winning over Draupadi, tried to denude her before the entire Kaurava court\textsuperscript{55}. At this act of indecency, only a mild and lip protest was vouchsed by grandfather Bhiṣma, preceptor Droṇa and the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra while Vidura strongly protested against this\textsuperscript{56}. Apparently, Duryodhana, although only a crown prince, had become so powerful and so full of arrogance that this was of no avail. He was not amenable to reason and continued with his indecent acts and gestures. Bhiṣma, labouring under extreme emotionalism, then and there pledged himself to kill and drink the heart's blood of Duḥśāsana\textsuperscript{57} and break the thigh of Duryodhana\textsuperscript{58}. This he fulfilled at a later date. Draupadi and the five Pāṇḍava brothers were, however, released from their bondage at the personal intervention of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra\textsuperscript{59}, who took Duryodhana to task for his indecent behaviour to a lady of the clan, and personally allowed Draupadi and her husbands the boon of freedom\textsuperscript{60}.

\textsuperscript{54} ibid
\textsuperscript{55} Mahabharata ; sava ; 66.3
\textsuperscript{56} ibid ch. 61, 62, 64.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid 66.5
\textsuperscript{58} ibid 69.2
\textsuperscript{59} ibid 69.3
\textsuperscript{60} ibid 69.3

—2
Whether or not Yudhishthira liked this freedom obtained through the insistence of Draupadi is uncertain. But his action in his throwing himself again into another bout of gambling may be taken as an indication of his innate desire to be relieved of the responsibilities of the kingship and its wealth and glamour. Superficial observation reveals incomprehensible stupidity in his plunging into this subsequent bout of gambling, but probably it comprised a subtlety that was ever heard of. In the core of his heart he knew that without gambling he had no other way out from the hazards that would be put on his way by Duryodhana and his followers. His heart was possibly aching at the growing feuds and animosities with other princes which was on the increase in direct proportion to his acquiring power and prestige. He, therefore, seized upon the first opportunity to accept the invitation to play dice even in the face of strong opposition from Draupadi and his brothers. This was probably the only respectable way to get rid of the kingdom, which, although acquired with great difficulty, would create more enemies for himself and his brothers than before. Besides, according to the custom of the times, refusal to take part in such gambling invitations indicated cowardice and consequently, was dishonourable for a king. So, again in another gambling bout he lost their freedom, and the five brothers with their common spouse Draupadi went to the forest for twelve years with an added year to live incognito.  

During the last year of this period, when they were living in the house of Virata of Matsya country, the Kurus came to lift his cattle wealth. But they were driven away by the

60. ibid
61. Mahabharata; sava; 75.1
extraordinary bravery and markmanship of Arjuna. After their reappearance on completion of thirteen years' exile, the Pāṇḍavas demanded their patrimony, but Duryodhana, in spite of better advice from his elders, refused to concede to their demands. He stated that he would not release even the smallest portion of land without war. Most of the older people present at the court were in favour of conciliation. But the unlimited arrogance of Duryodhana prevented him from listening to good advice offered. He would adhere to his previous statement at any cost. Later, Kṛiṣṇa went to the Kaurava court on a peace mission. He made a last attempt, although he knew it was destined to failure. Even his superb oratory nicely mingled with diplomatic subtleties failed to create any impression in the Kaurava camp. On the other hand, Duryodhana tried to make him a captive. It is with uncommon intelligence that Kṛiṣṇa managed to extricate himself from this jeopardy. And though bad, Duryodhana had the grace to accept the inevitable.

Thus, war became inevitable and against this background Kurukṣetra war has to be examined. An analysis of the facts set forth in the foregoing paragraphs reveals that social inequality based on birth and position played quite a significant part; and people belonging to higher positions and having blood connections with the elite enjoyed certain privileges that were generally denied to the mass of common people. In the background, throughout the unfolding of the story, an under-current of discord and hostility against the ruling hegemony is clearly discernible. The common people were indifferent to what the rulers engaged themselves with, and what befell them as a result of their personal feuds and the terror of arms kept them in check. As for example, the people of Mathurā and Magadhā did not concern themselves with the death of their rulers at Kṛiṣṇa's or Bhima's hands. Contrary to all expectations they, at least the people of

62. ibid virata 53-67
63. ibid udyoga 26.
64. Mahābhārata ; udyoga ; ch. 29.
Mathurā, joined hands with Krīṣṇa, the killer of their ruler. This inevitably indicates that the common people were disinterested and unhappy, and it can be surmised that they were living under a tyrannical rule. They probably wanted a change in the administrative machinery for the better, and welcomed it when it came. But, apparently, they were reluctant to take the matter into their own hands probably on religious grounds which taught them to revere their king as the incarnation of God.

Exploitation of the common people by the rulers or a privileged section cannot also be overruled. On the other hand, it may be assumed that this was the extant social custom, and to some extent slavery and free and forced labour were deemed to have been imposed upon the so-called non-Aryan or the Dāsa tribes, who had not yet been fully indoctrinated to the mysteries of the Vedic sacrificial cult. There is ample evidence in the Mahābhārata that from time to time economic crisis developed for want of food, and probably also of clothing owing to draught and famine, and the common people naturally suffered. Such conditions could only be redeemed by raids on adjoining lands or on the cattle wealth of the contiguous land-holders of the non-Aryan tribes and also on the rich Aryan tribes nearby. This always caused enmity lasting even for generations. One such example of a cattle lifting raid was that of Duryodhana, when the Kauravas went to steal the cattle wealth of Virāta, but the circumstances of the raid, that is, whether the raid was enacted to redeem the exigencies of circumstances or for sheer greed is neither known nor can be ascertained correctly.

The immense arrogance and lust for power and position as exhibited by Duryodhana only added fuel to the fire and hastened the cause of the war. Duryodhana was proud, powerful, intolerant and arrogant. But his maniacal hatred of the Pāṇḍavas probably developed after he had lost the fight in Virāta’s territory during the cattle lifting episode. There he lost the fight and had to surrender the cattle as well, which he
and his party including Bhīṣma, Karṇa and Droṇa had misappropriated. Puffed with arrogance he was also unreasonable. Reasonableness has been defined and equalised in the Scriptures as a godly quality derived from 'the wisdom from above' (James 3: 17). Basically, it indicates a fair and yielding nature, moderate and considerate, and above all, forebearing. Duryodhana had none of these qualities. He resorted to unfair means to burn the Pāṇḍavas to death at Vāranāvata, and became a party to fraudulent and unfair gambling in which the Pāṇḍavas lost their all. He was also of an unyielding nature and, in spite of recommendations from his superiors, and even from the great patriarch Bhīṣma, he did not consent to yield even a small portion of the property to the Pāṇḍavas, which by birthright was their due. Also moderation was never found to be one of the traits of his character. Despite the inevitability of the war, he acted as if he did not care and thus hastened the massacre. When Kṛiṣṇa went to the Kaurava court and failed in his peace mission, Duryodhana did not exhibit any moderation in his behaviour nor was he considerate. In fact he was inflexible. Above all, he had no forbearance. Even in the estimation of his own mother Gāndhari and his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra, he was guilty, although they can not be taken to have been influenced by prejudice. His unreasonable insistence led to a merciless attitude and his character was in stark contrast to that of Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna, both of whom were aggrieved at the thought that so many of their friends and kinsmen would have to embrace death for their clannish feud. Thus, all his actions were, more or less, guided by the motive of personal aggrandisement which none of the other characters in the entire Mahābhārata exhibited so glaringly.

On the contrary, Karṇa although at least twice insulted according to the text, was a perfectly heroic character with a considerable amount of romanticism and generosity in his make up. He was kind and generous, a hero and a romantic and was prepared to go to the limit of his resources to remove
the wants of the needy, and for the sake of maintaining his ‘dharma’. In trailing the story, it is seen that he actually gave away his natural ‘kavacha kuṇḍala’ to Indra, who in the guise of a brahmin demanded and obtained his safeguard for the safety of his son Arjuna. Instead he gave him an ‘ekāghni astra’ or one killing weapon. This he kept securely for using against Arjuna, his mortal enemy; but he had to use the same on Ghatotkacha, when, this progeny of Bhima, was creating terror and became the engine of devastation in the battlefield on the fourteenth day of the war. This he did out of sheer kindness to Duryodhana. Kindness towards others, however, is not limited to only being forgiving or to bestowing one’s resources on others. At times, one may be prone to take liberties with those very close to him but when dealing with strangers he may be quite the reverse. This is not kindness in the true sense. While Karna showed such kindness to many, he apparently, harboured a strong resentment against Arjuna and Draupadi. When Draupadi was brought to the Kaurava court, after Yudhīṣṭhira had lost her in the gambling, Karna’s speech expressed his strong animosity towards her. Perhaps he could not forgive her for insulting him in the Pāṇchāla court. He, also, has been found to have taken liberty in speech with Bhīṣma and Droṇa, but while Bhīṣma was on his death-bed he atoned for his previous lapses. Thus, he may be considered to have wanted the war with the heroic idea of showing valour in the battlefield before Arjuna and grandfather Bhīṣma. This was denied to him throughout his career, except in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, for his allegedly low origin. The rest of the kings and the rulers who joined in the war were led by various political and personal reasons of different natures.

Although obtaining the physical possession of Draupadi was not the direct cause of the war, her indirect contribution to the cause of the war was not inconsiderable. At the archery

65. Mahabharata; sava; ch. 69.
66. Mahabharata; Bhīṣma; ch. 124.
trial arranged during her ‘svayāṃvarā sabhā’, all the kings tried and failed; but Karna was insulted by her and was not even allowed to take part in the competition for reasons of his allegedly low birth. This made him self-conscious and bear an attitude of grudge towards her. Arjuna’s superb performance with comparative ease alineated most of the princes assembled at the Pāṇchāla court; they after the trial, joined together and started to fight with the king of Pāṇchāla, when Arjuna sided with the Pāṇchālas. Although at Kṛṣṇa’s intervention, the situation was not aggravated, still, many of the princes harboured a grudge which found its ultimate expression in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

Draupadi appears to have been a proud and an extremely sentimental lady; she always tried to incite Bhima by her cajoling on many occasions—when the Pandavas lost their possessions in gambling, when they were living as not much honoured members of the Virāta household, and also, later, after the war, when her five children were killed by Asvaṭṭhāmā while asleep. Doubtless there were adequate reasons for losing her temper; but the fact remains that the act of drinking the blood of Duhśāsana by Bhima, the killing of Virāta’s brother-in-law Kīchaka who tried to seduce her, and also the circumstances of Asvaṭṭhāmā’s humiliation, after he killed her five sons, were her contribution.

In history, women have been the cause of strifes and warfare on innumerable occasions directly or indirectly, as is evident from the history of the Greek Helen and the Rājput Padmini. Generally speaking, such wars have been fought for the possession of a number of women, or a particular woman, but in the Kurukṣetra war no such cause appears to have been present; no one seriously desired to take physical possession of Draupadi. Therefore, her contribution was indirect but extremely effective. True, she was much sought after before her ‘svayāṃvarā sabhā’, there was a fight after the event, Duryodhana won her in the gambling, but all these indicate hostility against the Pāṇchālas or the Pāṇdavas and not for taking
possession of her just as Paris wanted to take possession of Helen. Therefore, she remained in the background throughout but furnished incitement to the cause of the war.

The last but not the least important issue has been the religious disharmony between various sects of people. Many a time in history military strength had been displayed, as is evidenced from the crusades to the communal riots, to portray the martial and ambitious spirit and to have a share in the establishment of the superiority of one faith or another. Talboys Wheeler states that ‘the history of the people of India if considered as something distinct from the annals of conquest, is emphatically a religious history; and so closely has every act and duty been associated from time immemorial with religious belief in the mind of the Hindu, that we are enabled by means of the religious books which have been preserved, to obtain a tolerably clear insight into the important changes which have taken place at different intervals in the manners and ideas of the people at large’. These important changes necessarily permeated the entire society very slowly and within the realm of the Vedic religion which was mainly based on sacrifice offered to various deities of the then existing Vedic pantheon.

Gradually, a section of the people did not place implicit faith, as before, in the efficacy of the cult of sacrifice and in the superiority of the ruling deity Indra. Nottwithstanding his previous prominence, anti-Indra cult obtained a definite footing and crept into the sinews of the society. At first, the religion of the Vedic period consisted of offerings of food and wine accompanied by prayers to the various Vedic deities and other ‘personified abstractions’ in order to gain such material benefits and blessings as health, prosperity, long life, abundance of sons, cattle and harvests. These material munificence of the Vedic deities did not or could not satisfy the aesthetic ideology of the people. In course of time, the people in general and philosophers in particular changed their ideals and reposed

their faith in other and more modern doctrines like those found in the Upaniṣhadas.

Gradually, therefore, during the later Vedic period, when the Upaniṣhadic truths were coming into fore, quite a number of people did not like to place their implicit faith in the Vedic cult; contrarily they were more inclined to accept the modern ideas of the Upaniṣhadas. According to Heinrich Zimmer the later and the more matured Indian philosophy, ‘imparts information concerning the measurable structure of the psyche, analyses man’s intellectual faculties and operations of the mind, evaluates various theories of human understanding, establishes the methods and the laws of logic, classifies the senses and studies the process by which the experiences are apprehended and estimated, interpreted and comprehended’ .\(^68\) This stabilisation and method in the process of thinking did not come into effect within a short period and is definitely an improvement on the earlier cult and consequently, was accepted as such by many.

Originally, the Vedic pantheon with its host of gods depicted the universe as filled with projection of man’s experiences and ideas about himself .\(^69\). In consequence, the Indra of the Vedic pantheon was considered to be a superman endowed with cosmic powers and he could, it was believed, be invited as a guest to receive oblations. This Vedic pantheon of gods was, in fact, ‘invited, invoked, flattered, propitiated and pleased’. At this time the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas was a practical admission of orthodox faith in religion and presumably, those who did not do so were ostracised by the priestly order. Apparently, the ‘influence of the clergy,’ as Gibbon says in connection with a later period ‘in an age of superstition, might be usefully employed to assert the rights of mankind, but so intimate is the connection between the throne and the altar, that the banner of the church has very seldom been seen on the side of the people’ .\(^70\). This

---

69. ibid p. 353
statement of the great historian is equally true in respect of the period of antiquity, and is applicable everywhere. The body of the priests of the later Vedic times, with the aid of their ruler, were hand in glove in usurping the interests of the common people and could not be easily dominated. As is common with human nature, the people felt the need for a change, change in religious doctrines and also change in civil administration; but they were so deeply indoctrinated with the idea of 'godliness' of their priests and their rulers that, even if they desired it, they were not capable enough or tenacious enough to assert their rights against the enterprises of an aspiring prince or against a co-ordinated body of priests. They could only show their preference for a new doctrine or appalaude a new ruler if the existing one was replaced by death or by some other means and that even surreptitiously.

Trailing back the religious history of India it is found, that in the Vedic period itself, and down to the Buddhist period, there was an undercurrent of religious differences resulting in petty strifes. The circumstances of the differences between Vaśistha and Viśvāmitra may be taken for an example of such a controversy. Later, when the Upanishadic truths were being brought into the fore, there was an undercurrent of disbelief in the Vedic pantheon of gods, more particularly in Indra, the king of gods and the most powerful among them; such disensions were, however, not always silent. In a Rig Vedic hymn the composer Gritsamada states:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yāṁ Śma pṛcchānti kuha Śeti ghoram,} \\
\text{Utēmāhur naiṣo astiti ēnām.} \\
\text{So ryaḥ puṣṭir vija ivā mināti} \\
\text{Śradasmai dhatta : sa, Janāsa Indraḥ.}
\end{align*}
\]

71.R.V. 2.12.5
"Of whom the terrible, they ask, Where is He? or verily they say of him, He is not. He sweeps away, like birds, the foes possessions. Have faith in Him, for He, O men, is Indra"

(Griffith's translation)

From this, it appears that some people at least had no faith in the existence of Indra and questioned the greatness of his powers. Further in another hymn it has been stated:

"Striving for strength bring forth laud to Indra, a truthful hymn if he in truth existeth; One and another say there is no Indra. Who hath beheld Him? Whom shall we honour?"

(Griffith's translation)

This anti-orthodox or rather anti-Indra feeling is exposed more glaringly in the story of Kṛṣṇa's holding the 'Giri Gobardhana' in spite of heavy rain which was supposed to be one of the manifestations of Indra's supreme cosmic powers. Also, non-belief or partial belief in the Vedic cult is also expressed in the 'Bhagavat Gitā' which contains philosophical advice of Kṛṣṇa to his cousin and disciple Arjuna on the eve of the Kurukṣetra war. Kṛṣṇa states:

Yāvānarthā udapāne sarbbataḥ Sāṃplutodake
Tavaṅ sarbbeṣu vedeṣu brahmaṇasya vijānataḥ

"Whatever transitory material pleasures have been described in the Vedas are obtainable by the Brahmanas who are of one and single mind and are attached with the permanent bliss of Brahma"; also while describing the requistes of such persons as are fit enough to attain supra-consciousness or the state of perfect bliss (samadhi), he says that, those who perform sacrifices in order to obtain the pleasures of this world, are not fit to obtain perfect bliss. In the Mahābhārata itself, the Vedic sacrificial ceremonies or the 'karmakāṇḍa' has not been accorded a prominent place; but superiority of spiritual learning
has been eulogised. Further, in connection with the burning of the Khāndava forest, it is stated that ‘Hutāsana’ or ‘Agni’ (fire) was satiated with the fumes of the sacrificial ‘ghee’ or clarified butter and wanted a change of diet. This indirectly bespeaks the futility of the Vedic rites when Agni, the carrier of food to the gods was himself disgusted with the futility of sacrificial rites.

No doubt, during the later Vedic period of the Mahābhārata, there was an under current of anti-Vedic feeling. Kṛiṣṇa, although exceptionally well versed in the Vedic literature and the Vedic cult was aware of the futility of the sacrificial doctrine, and consequently, did not place implicit faith in the Vedic religious beliefs; whereas, the orthodox group of rulers headed by Jarāsandha and later by Duryodhana were firm adherents of the orthodox idealism. Headed by Kṛiṣṇa, therefore, the Pāṇdavas were included in the fold of a party of dissentors who did not believe in the orthodox idealism. They did not believe in the sacrificial cult; they were unattached workers and they worked for the sake work only and did not crave for the result.

This ushering in of a new faith, while the Vedic cult was holding sway, required courage and foresight. The coming into existence of such a state of affairs depended partly on favourable circumstances and partly on the capacity of the reformer. Considering the circumstances, although favourable to some extent, this was not a mean achievement. The country was in the throes of potential disunity among the rulers, the society was caste ridden, priesthood was predominant, and consequently, the lower strata of the society was aggrieved. The people looked forward with eager anticipation to the prospect of a favourable change in the circumstances. They wanted peace and security and were aware that this could come only through completely different ideologies and social systems. They could not expect this change from the political government. Such governments use religion for their selfish purposes, but, at a later stage, they would tire of religious interferences in their own functions and become apprehensive of
influence of the priesthood. Their normal work would be interrupted and their normal functions would be usurped, and naturally, they would, instead of the people, come into conflict with the priestly order. In course of time, the priestly brotherhood would lose their value for which they were created. Also, while stamping out these old and consequently, impoverished doctrines, they were sure to be involved in new and fresh feuds making life intolerable to the people in general. Krishṇa, taking advantage of this situation, preached his new doctrine of selfless work and established the same.

Thus looking briefly at the background of the Kurukṣetra war, it is found that all the necessary elements detailed at paragraph 4 above are present except possibly one, and that is the item under (vi), war for possession of women. The social inequality resulting in the predominance of one section of the people over the other is one of the evils which arise naturally out of the institution of kingship and cannot be averted. Social difference between persons of different strata of the society is palpably evident from the story, of Karṇa, who on account of his alleged low birth, was denied many privileges automatically vested in his social superiors. Economic subjugation is also an allied evil resulting out of the socio-political nature of the government and the existence of the priestly brotherhood, which usurped the rights of the common mass of the people to maintain their superiority and splendour. Personal aggrandisement was the primary motivation of Duryodhana but the heroic idea of showing valour in the battlefield, as discussed before, was present in Karṇa for various reasons. The last but not the least important item, viz, religious differences between various established faiths and other newly formed theories are clearly manifest in the then transitory period of the religious ideals. Thus, in conclusion it may be asserted that most of the factors enumerated previously have contributed, directly or indirectly to the outbreak of the Kurukṣetra war.
CHAPTER II

THE ANTIQUITY OF INDIAN CHRONOLOGY:
THE HELIACAL RISING OF THE ASVINS.

Doubtless, it would be improper to make an attempt to ascertain the date of the Kurukṣhethra war before solving the question that has been raised by many oriental and occidental scholars. This question concerns whether the event has any historical truth; or the events incorporated in the Mahābhārata text are to be treated only as myths. The same question was also raised in connection with the truth and the venue of the Trojan war. Fortunately, the site of the city of Troy was unearthed, after diligent search, by Heinrich Schliemann in the year 18711; and hence the Homeric statement was vindicated. Recently, however, Prof. B. B. Lal of the Kurukṣhethra University has, after preliminary excavation at an area near the present Kurukṣhethra in the Punjab, and also elsewhere, unearthed some sites; these he identifies with the Puranic cities of Kaushāmibi and Hastināpur and has partially confirmed the Mahābhārata accounts of these two cities. No doubt, the balance of probability precludes the discovery of any epigraphic or numismatic evidences of so remote a period. Besides, the geo-physical condition of India, with its humidity and its living matters in the soil ill favours the discovery of any such evidences and such physical evidences, therefore, can hardly be expected. Hence, till such evidences are available, all approach to date the period of the Kurukṣhethra war must be undertaken from the Puranic records only. Incidentally, from the excavation reports of Prof. Lal and also from other Puranic documents, scholars find that "the totality of the available evidences makes a reasonable case for the historicity of the Mahābhārata war"2.

Notwithstanding the fact that some scholars place their faith in the historicity of the Kurukṣhethra war, the time element

2. Dr. L. Gopal : quoted from ‘The Statesman’ dated 3.11.74.
of the advent of the Kali era and, consequently, the date of the battle has been the subject matter of controversy; and various dates ranging from 800 B.C. to about 5100 B.C. have been proposed for the period of the battle. Such a wide gulf of variation between these dates for the period of the war, does not help in any way to re-construct the history, nor does this throw any light on the proto-history of India. Recently, various eminent scholars have expressed their opinion in regard to the approximate date of the event. The most popular among these dates are enumerated below under four headings from the earliest to the more modern dates:

(i) the date of war at about 5100 B.C.
(ii) " " " 3100 B.C.
(iii) " " " 1400 B.C.
(iv) " " " 900-800 B.C.

All these dates, however, can not be correct. The time periods (i) and (iv) above, neither conform to the traditions extant in the country nor are these acceptable with reference to the available Puranic data; nor even does the calculated date obtained from the Astronomical data preserved in the Vedas and the Mahābhārata itself conform to these dates. The remaining two categories for the period of the war, viz, (ii) at about 3100 B.C. and, (iii) at about 1400 B.C. mentioned above need, therefore, thorough examination to ascertain their actual feasibility.

Before any endeavour is made to fix a date line to the Kurukṣhetra war, say before 1400 B.C, it becomes incumbent to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the Indian civilisation, i.e. the Vedic civilisation in India, belonged to such an early period. Since, neither the Vedas nor any of the Purāṇas contain, or can contain, any absolute time period, any such attempt is likely to be fraught with unsurmountable difficulties. Reasonably, therefore, in such cases, only the balance of probability should be taken to construe the feasibility of the case presented. Prof: Max Mueller, the great Indologist, has arrived, from literary evidences at a period of about 1200
B. C. as the latest date "at which we may suppose the Vedic hymns to have been composed"\(^8\). This conjecture, although opposed by other renowned scholars, albeit places the time element of the Kurukshetra war to period much later than 1200 B. C. But from the Astronomical references in the Vedas, as far as it can be ascertained or surmised, a far anterior date is arrived at. This method of calculation, although precise and correct if proper and unambiguous data are available, also forms the basis of controversy among the renowned orientalists\(^4\).

It has been argued by Jacobi\(^5\) "on the strength of two hymns in the Rig Veda that the year began with the summer solstice, and that at the solstice, the sun was in conjunction with the lunar mansion Phālguni" and "given this datum, the precession of the Equinoxes allows us to calculate that the beginning of the year with the summer solstice in Phālguni took place about 4000 B. C."\(^6\). This date arrived at from the data supplied by Jacobi, is in conformity with the date arrived at by Tilak\(^7\) from another source. It is, however, contended that the argument preferred by Jacobi "must be considered further in connection with the dating of the next period of the Indian history, but for the dating of the Rig Veda it is certain that no help can be obtained from it\(^8\). It is further contended that the above premises of Jacobi "rests

   Non supporters of Astronomical theory :
   Supporters of the Astronomical theory :
   Jacobi, ZDMG, vol. XLIX, pp. 218, L. 69 ; JRAS. 1909, pp. 721-26; 1910, pp. 460-64 ; Tilak, The Orion ; The Arctic home in the Vedas.
upon two wholly improbable assumptions, first, that the hymns really assert that the year began at the summer solstice, and, second, that the sun was then brought into any connection at all with the *Nakṣatras* for which there is no evidence whatever. The *Nakṣatras* are, as their name indicates and as all the evidence of the later *Samhitās* shows, lunar mansions pure and simple". And on these grounds, Jacobi's findings have been considered as improbable and, consequentely, rejected. If, however, Jacobi's above statement is taken as correct, and is further examined with reference to the positions as on 1st January, 1976, it is found that when the sun was at 'Uttar Phālguni', i.e. β Leonis, whose tropical longitude on the 1st January, 1976 was 171° 17' 2''.8, the four cardinal points were as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal Points</th>
<th>Tropical Longitude</th>
<th>Near Star Group</th>
<th>Tropical Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vernal Equinox</td>
<td>81° 17' 2''.8</td>
<td>λ Orionis</td>
<td>83° 22' 16''.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Mṛgśirās</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Solstice</td>
<td>171° 17' 2''.8</td>
<td>β Leonis</td>
<td>171° 17' 2''.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Uttar Ph.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumnal Equinox-261°</td>
<td>17' 2''.8</td>
<td>λ Scorpii</td>
<td>264° 15' 0''.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Mulā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Solstice</td>
<td>351° 17' 2''.8</td>
<td>α Pegasi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or P' Bhādrapada</td>
<td>353° 9' 3''.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the Vernal Equinox was near the Star group λ Orionis or Mṛgśirās whose tropical celestial longitude on 1st January, 1976, was 83° 22' 16'' and the time elapsed since the period referred to by Jacobi to 1976 is about 6000 years, or, in other words, the epoch was at about 4000 B.C. This time period is the same as that obtained with reference to the time of heliacal rising of the star group 'Aśvinas' or

9 *ibid*, p. 99;
Arietis with the advent of the spring season. It is well known that the season of spring played an important role in connection with the sacrificial cult of Vedic India. Whether the sun in vernal equinox was the beginning of the sacrificial year or not is controversial but, that at one time ‘Uttarāyana’ or the winter solstice was considered as the beginning of the year is a certainty. The circumstances leading to the change over of the beginning of the year, consequently, the sacrificial year, from the vernal equinox to the winter solstice, if it at all happened, is not known, but presumably the shifting from the winter solstice to the beginning of the spring full moon was on account of metereological considerations. The beginning of the year at the winter solstice has been described as ‘distressed’ part of the year. It was ordained by sacrificial law that those who commence their sacrifice on the ‘Ekāstakā day’, i.e., the 8th day of Magha, do it at the beginning of the year, but this day falls on the ‘distressed’ (आर्ता ārta) period of the year. Shabara and other commentators are of the opinion that people are likely to be distressed by cold at this time of the year. Hence, to take the sacrificial bath and to prepare for the sacrificial rites with their diverse paraphernalia became too difficult at the Kurukṣetra latitude at Punjab. Also the middle of the year at the summer solstice fell during the rainy season which rendered the half-year ending sacrificial preparations extremely difficult. Therefore, the beginning of the year was

10. The Orion, Tilak; Tilak was opinion that at one time vernal equinox was the beginning of the sacrificial year.

11. Shabara on Jaim: vi. 5. 37:

(Ārtā—yasminkāle bhavanti sa ārtaḥ kālaḥ śītena ca ārtā bhavanti).

Sayana:

आर्तमभिविनाशमभिलखय दीखने | (Ārtambhināśamabhilakṣya dikṣyante.)
changed from the winter solstice to the Chitra full moon and this course ‘was open to no objection’ whatsoever. Then again, the beginning of the sacrificial year was changed to Phalguni full moon with the change of the spring season due to solstitial shifting. Consequently, the advent of the spring season had to be watched with due care so that the sacrifice could begin at the proper season.

That the spring season or ‘vasanta’ was taken as the beginning of the year is amply justified by various references in the Vedic literature. In ancient times sacrifice and the year were also considered as synonymous terms as throughout the year sacrificial rites continued to be performed and the various rites probably formed the basis of the Vedic calendar. Thus to observe these rites in their proper sequence, the period when

12. Sayana’s commentary on Tait. Sam. vii. 4.8

While commenting on फल्गुनीपूर्णमास (phalgunipūrṇamāsa), he states तत्त्र च प्राविष्णवारोपणमदन्तिस्तव्भूत | एतदेवाभिप्रेत्यवधान-श्राहणे समामनात्तम | उत्तरयोगार्थों | एषा वै प्रथमा रात्रि: संवस्तस्या यदृच्छरे फल्गुनोति। (Tatsya ca bhavisamvatsaropakramadinatvāt | Etadevābhipretyādhānbrahmane samāmnātām uttarayoradadhita | Eṣā vai prathamā ratriḥ samvatsarasāya yaduttare phalgnitī)

while on विष्णुपूर्णमास (Citrāpūrṇmāsa) he observes सोपि बस्ततु मथ्यपतित्वात्सम्बस्तरस्य मुखमेव (Sopī vasamtatu-rmadhyapātītvāt samvatsarasasya mukhameva)

13. Ait. Br. ii. 17 says:

संवस्तर: प्रजापति: | (Samvatsaraḥ Prajāpatīḥ) | प्रजापतियज्ञ: | (Prajapatiyajñḥ)
Taitt. Sam, ii. 5.7.3 & vii. 5.7.4
यज्ञो वै प्रजापति: | (Yajño vai Prajāpatīḥ)
Taitt. Sam, vii. 2.10.3
संवस्तर: प्रजापति: | (Samvatsaraḥ Prajāpatīḥ)
also Taitt. Br. i. 2,6.
मुख वा एतदस्तुन्ता यवसंस:। (Mukham vā etadṛtunāṁ yadvasomtaḥ)
the year should begin had to be ascertained correctly and adjusted so that the middle of the year, consequently, the middle of the sacrifice fell on the 'visuvan' day, i.e., either at the solstitial or the equinoctial day, or very near\(^1\). That the year, or the sacrificial year began from the spring season at Phalguni Full Moon can also be surmised from various later references in the Brāhmaṇas and from the sequence of the months of the later Vedic period\(^2\) in which it was ordained that the year begins with the spring season. Many other references in the Vedic literature also confirm this. Certain Rig Vedic references lend support to the view that the heliacal rising of the 'Aśvins' or the star group Arietis was connected with the advent of the spring. Prof. Max Mueller has, however, taken the Aśvins to be mixed up with the 'daily adventures of the Sun and the Dawn'\(^3\) and has further stated that

14. Vishuvan actually means the vernal or Aut. Equinox but generally, middle of sacrificial year was commonly known as the visuvan.

15. Taitt. Br. i. 1.2.1—

सुखं बा एतानंत्राणां || यत्कृतिका: || (Mnkham vā etanna-kṣatrapān yatkṛttikāh) ||
and also Taitt Br. i. 1.3.6—

मुखं बा एतदूतं यदुसंतः || (Mukham va etadṛtunam yadvasamtaḥ) ||

Sat. Br. vi 2.2.8:

एष ए सबवसरस्य प्रधमा राहियंत्कालगुणी धौरामानी || (Eṣā ha sāṃvatsarasasya prathamā ratri-r-yatphalguniḥ paunṛpamasāt) ||

Taitt Br. i 1.2.8:

एष वै प्रधमा राज्ञि: सबवसरस्य यहुतरे कालगुणी || (Eṣā vai prathmā rātriḥ sāṃvatsarasasya yaduttare phalguni) ||

सुखं एव सबवसरस्यप्रिमामा वसीयान् भवति || (Mukhata eva sāṃvatsarasāgnimadhāya vasīyaḥ bhavati) ||

Sankhuyana Br. iv 4

मुखं बा एतसंवसरस्यप्रिमामा धौरामानो || (Mukham vā etatsamvatsarasasyayatphalguni paunṛpamasāt) ||


RV. 111.20.1.
‘the Dawn is born when the Āsvins have harnessed their chariots’\(^{17}\) while Macdonell considers that ‘they are more closely associated with honey (मधु, Madhu) than any of the other gods’\(^{18}\) and their ‘car is honey bearing’\(^{19}\).

Prof. P. C. Sengupta of the Calcutta University has interpreted the word मधु विद्या (madhu vidyā) as the science of spring, i.e., the indication of the advent of the spring\(^{20}\). It may be objected that ‘madhu vidyā’ may not be interpreted as the ‘science of spring’, but since ‘madhu’ and ‘mādhava’ comprised the months of spring\(^{21}\) of the Vedic tropical year, this objection is not tenable. Further the following Rig-Vedic hymn is well known to all Indians as this is read on all auspicious occasions\(^{22}\):

```irish
मधुबासा जहूतात्यते मधुशक्षरित सिन्ध्व: ।
मधुवने सतोष्पथ: ।
मधुनक्तनिर्दोषया मधुसपति पाबिं रजः ।
मधुकौरसुतु: पिता ।
मधुमानो बनस्पतिमधुमानो अस्तु सूर्यः ।
माधवीर्गावो भवन: ।
Madhuvatā । tāyate madhukṣaranti sindavaḥ ।
Madvirnah Santvoṣadhih ।
Madhunaktautoṣasi Madhumaṭ pārthivam rāiaḥ ।
Madhdaurastu naḥpitā ।
Madhumānno vanaspatiḥ inadhumaṃ astu sūryaḥ ।
Madhirgāvo bhavantu naḥ ।
```

The hymn indicates: “The winds waft sweets, the rivers pour sweets for the man who keeps the Law: So may the plants be sweet for us. Sweet be the night and sweet the dawns, sweet the terrestrial atmosphere; Sweet be our father heaven to us;”

17. ibid, RV. X. 39.12.
19. ibid, p. 129.
21. Taittiriya Samhita, 4.4.11.
22. RV. 1.90.6-8; Griffith’s translation.
May the tall tree be full of sweets for us, and full of sweets the sun: May our milch kine be sweet for us". And this cannot mean anything but the sweetness of nature attributable to the spring season.

Further, in Brhd Āranyaka Upanishada²³, all the further elements bringing sweetness have been emphasised. All these qualities are, however, indicative of the spring season and, therefore, these hymns of the Rig Veda and the statements in the Upanishadas suggest that 'madhu vidya' or the 'science of spring' is nothing but, 'the celestial signal of the advent of the spring season' and, as it will be seen, these are connected with the 'Āśvins'. Macdonell concludes that the 'Āśvins are typically succouring divinities', ‘they are characteristically divine physicians’, ‘healing diseases with their remedies, restore sight, cure the sick and the maimed’²⁴. In case, the 'Āśvins' are identified with the Sun and the Dawn, as has been done by Prof: Max Mueller, the above qualities cannot be attributed to them. But, if they are identified with the advent of spring or rather the spring season, the reference to 'madhu' in the Rig-Vedic hymns quoted above and their healing and other beneficial qualities are confirmed. As particularly, after a severe winter in the Punjab and further north-west, the advent of spring is always welcome; then the old are cured of their diverse ailments and the young are healthy and happy. Taking the above into account, therefore, it seems apt to identify the rising of the 'Āśvins' with the advent of the 'spring' than simply with the 'Sun and the Dawn'.

The 'Āśvins' are generally referred to in 'dual number' in the Vedic literature. This is possibly because the composers of the hymns identified them with the stars α and β Arietis, the prominent stars of the Nakṣatra group Āśvini. The presiding deity of the 'Āświni' are still considered to be the 'Āśvins'. The three stars of this group α, β and γ Arietis, i.e., the ‘Āśvins’, are found to form a constellation which is likened

23. Brhd. Ar. 11.5.1-14
to the 'head of a horse'. In the various hymns of the Rig Vedas, the Āśvins are spoken of many times as riding in the heavens in their 'triangular', 'three wheeled', 'honey bearing' chariot. Some of the hymns appended below will elucidate the statement:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{नयः पवयो मधुवाहने रथे सोमस्य बेनामनुविभ्यं हदू विषुः |} \\
\text{Trayaḥ pavayo madhuvāhane rathe somasya} \\
\text{venāmanuviśma iḍvidhuh |}
\end{align*} \]

"Three are the fellies in your honey bearing car, that travels after Soma's loved one as all know". Griffith here has translated 'madhu vāhane' as honey bearing, but this adjective is only applied to the car of the 'Āśvins', and 'to the car of no other god in the Rig Veda'. In the next portion of the hymn the composer states that 'three are the pillars set upon it for support'.

Another hymn, describes the car of the 'Āśvins'

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{क्वौ त्रिक्रेत्रा त्रिवर्ती रथस्य क्वौ त्रयो बन्धुरो ये सनीलाः |} \\
\text{Kva tricakra trivartha rathasya kva trayo} \\
\text{vandhuro ye sanilah |}
\end{align*} \]

"Where are the three wheels of your triple chariot, where are the three seats firmly fastened?" (Griffith) but Wilson translates: "Where Nasatyas, are the three wheels of your triangular car? Where the three fastenings and props (of the awning)?". In another hymn, according to Wilson, the composer invites the 'Āśvins' to come in their 'three columned triangular car', but Griffith translates: "Come, 0 ye Āśvins, mounted on your triple car, three seated, beautiful of form".

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{त्रिवर्तेण त्रिबृंजः त्रिपेतः रथेनायातमथिविनाः} \\
\text{Trivandhureṇa trivṛtā supeṣasā rathenāyatamaśvinā |}
\end{align*} \]

That the car of the Āśvins, in addition to being 'tri-columnar',

26. RV. M.1.34.2
27. RV. M.1.34.9
28. RV. M.1.47.2
three wheeled' and 'triangular' was 'well constructed' is evident from another hymn:\n
त्रिवर्षारूपं त्रिवृत्ता रथेन त्रिकरणं सुभूतायात्मविन्योः

Trivandhureṇa trivṛtā rathena tricakreṇa
suvṛtāyātmarvāk

Wilson translates: "Come to us with your tri-columnar, triangular, three wheeled and well constructed car".

Further qualities of this car of the 'Aśvins' are described in a hymn\(^9\), wherein the composer states:

अवाहः विस्फोत रथवहने रथो जीरायते अभिवृहत्तु सुधुतः

Trivardhoro mahavyāhano ratho jīraśvo Aśvinoryātu
suvṛtataḥ

Arvāṅg trirakro madhuvāhano ratho jīraśvo Aśvinyātu

Trivaandhuro magHAVā viśvasaubhāṣa śaṃ na ābaksad

Griffith translates: "Nigh to us come the Aśvins' lauded three wheeled car, the car laden with meath and drawn by fleet footed steeds, Three seated, opulent, bestowing all delight: may it bring weal to us, to cattle and to men". Here also मधुवाहनो ('madhu vāhano') has been translated as 'laden with meath', but from all the qualities of the car, it indicates 'spring bearing' chariot. Another hymn specifies that the car of the Aśvins is 'harnessed at dawn' and 'set in motion at dawn'\(^{10,11}\).

Pratyayuṣmā nāsatyaśadhiṣṭathāḥ pratyayavānām
madhuvāhanaṃ rathāṃ

"Ye, O Nasatyas, mount that early harnessed car, that travels early, laden with its freight of balm".

29. RV. M.1.118.2
30. RV. M.1.157.3
31. RV. M.X.41.2
All the above references describe the appearance, nature and qualities of the *Asvins*’ car. From the foregoing, it is seen that the *Asvins* had three wheeled (त्रिकाक्रोः), ‘madhu vāhanam’ or ‘madhu vāhano’ (मधुवाहां or मधुवाहानो), i.e., ‘spring bearing’ chariot. If the word ‘madhu bāhanam’ is taken to mean ‘laden with honey’, certain anomalies arise. Notwithstanding the derivative meaning of the word ‘मधु’ as honey, why should the car of the ‘*Asvins*’, which has so many qualities would have to bring honey to the Vedic composers of the hymns, when this object, as can be easily surmised, was available in quantities here itself? Not only that, but the adjective of the car is ‘madhu vāhane’, i.e., bearing or carrying ‘madhu’ or ‘honey’. Therefore, taking into account the later version of the month of the ‘spring’ as ‘madhu’, it seems justified that the word ‘madhu vāhanam’ should be interpreted as ‘spring bearing’ and not ‘honey bearing, or ‘laden with meath’. Further, this car or the *Asvins* was drawn by ‘swift horses’, had ‘three canopies’, ‘filled with treasure’, auspicious and brought prosperity to the people and to the cattle. And this spring bearing chariot of the *Asvins* was ‘harnessed at dawn’ and ‘set in motion at dawn’ and was ‘well constructed’, ‘tri-columnar’, triangular and had ‘three wheels’. All these references are reminiscent of the *α, β* and *γ Arletis*, which form the Nakṣatra group *Aświni* and as already stated, these are ‘likened to the head of a horse’.

32. Sakalya Samhita, 11.162 (Anc. Ind. Cr. p. 62)

Reference to the head of a horse is also found in Brihad Devata iii, 16-23; the story of Dadhyanc in quoted in Nitimanjari on RV. 1116.12; Wilson in his note on RV.1.84.13 states ‘Indra having taught the sciences called Pravargyavidya and Madhuvidya to Dadhyanch, threatened that he would cut off his head if ever he taught them to any one else. The Asvins prevailed upon him to teach them the prohibited knowledge, and to evade Indra’s threat, took off the head of the sage, replacing it by that of a horse.********
Whether or not the star $\alpha$ Triangulum was included in this group to form a 'broad' and a 'solid' triangle is conjectural, but in reality the stars $\alpha$, $\beta$ and $\lambda$ Arletis also form a 'tri-columnar' 'triangle' having 'three wheels'. These might have been observed in the heavens by the Vedic composers and referred to in their hymns; and since this car was like the group of stars 'Aśvins' and was 'madhu' or 'spring' bearing, it indicated the advent of the spring, when the entire nature turned sweet as honey or 'madhu'. Therefore, this car of the Aśvins was, naturally, not honey bearing but 'spring' bearing. The figures of the Aśvins' three wheeled chariot including and excluding the star $\alpha$ Triangulum are shown below for comparison:

**Aśvins' Car with Triangulum.**

**Aśvins' Car without Triangulum.**

Notwithstanding diverse interpretations of the word 'madhu vāhanam', the car of the Aśvins, which was har-
nessed and set in motion at dawn was ‘spring bearing’ or in other words the ‘harbinger of the spring’; and since this car was harnessed at dawn, it indicates that it appeared at dawn with the advent of the spring season and also the same car was set in motion at dawn, meaning that it moved in horizon with the advent of the dawn. This leads to the conjecture that the car of the ‘Aśvins’ was composed of the constellation ‘Aświni’ comprising of the stars α, β and γ Arieties. And since these stars or rather the star α Arietis, the prominent star of this group, when became first visible at dawn, the season of spring came into being at the place of observation where the hymns were composed. This for obvious reasons, as explained later, may be taken to be that of Kurukṣhetra latitude in the Punjab.

Several Rig Vedic hymns assert that Aśvins rose first and then came the dawn and then rose the Sun. Wilson infers from this that the ‘Aśvins’ were the ‘precursors of the dawn, at which season they ought to be worshipped with libation of soma juice’. From the above it can not but be assumed that at the time when the Aśvins rose before the dawn and the sun, it was spring season at the place of the observer or in other words the heliacal rising of the ‘Aśvins’ indicated the advent of the spring season at the place of observation. This was, therefore, the jealously guarded secret of the ‘madhu vidyā’ told to Dadhyānc, the son of Atharvan, by Indra and was nothing but the ‘science of spring’ at the time of the heliacal rising of the stars α, β, γ Arieties. Since α

33. RV. 1/7/4/10:

युवोहिषुन्बर सवितोषसो रथम् क्रताथ बिं घृतवस्तमिष्यति। (Yuvorhi pūrbbam savitoṣaso ratham rtaya cim ghṛtavantamiṣyatī)
‘before the dawn even, Savitri sends to brings you to the rite, your wounderful car shining with clarified butter’.

RV. 111.5.5.1

उष्यः स्तोयो अविशानावजीनः। (Ūsakyaḥ stomo Aśvināvajīgaḥ)
‘the praiser awakes to glorify the Aśvins before the dawn’. Also other references: RV. 1.5.5 ; 1.6.7 ; 1.9.31.4 ; etc.

34. Anc. Ind. Chr., Sengupta, p. 64.
Arietis rises last, with the rising of the star, the Asvins rose in the horizon completely. The dawn begins when the sun is 18° below the horizon. When the star < Arietis rose before the dawn, it may be properly assumed that the Sun was 18° below the star or the star was 18° ahead of the Sun; and then was the beginning of the of the spring season at the latitude of Kurukshetra, which is 30° N.

Thus, from the above data the following conclusions can be drawn:

i) that the star < Arietis, the largest star of the group, rose in the east just prior to dawn, and then rose the Sun,

ii) that this indicated the heliacal rising of the star < Arietis, and hence, the Sun was 18° or so behind the star, and

iii) that the spring season began with this phenomenon at the latitude of the observer, which is taken to be that of Kurukshetra, i.e. 30° N.

Without going into complicated mathematical details, the above data may be examined to find out the total shifting of the equinoctial point up to the present time. The tropical longitude of the star < Arietis was 37° 19' 35''.8 on the 1st January, 1976. Other factors have been taken to remain as constant. At a rough estimation the Sun’s tropical longitude must be somewhere near 55° 19' 35''.8, i.e., 18° below the star at the time of its probable heliacal rising in the year 1976 and also for the advent of the spring season at the time according to the position of 1.1.76. Indian spring begins when the Sun is at the tropical longitude of 330° at a place in Punjab where the latitude is the same as that of Kurukshetra. Hence, according to the above figures, the total shifting of the equinoctial point, till the end of 1975, works out to about 85° 19' 35''.8 (55° 19' 35''.8 plus 360° minus 330°) which represents a lapse of about 6120 years at 72 years for each degree of shifting and the period comes to about 4100 B.C. Prof: P. C. Sengupta has found the period, after detailed calculation, to be at 4000 B.C. (calculations at Annexure A) **.

33. Anc. Ind. Chr, Sengupta, p. 67.
Accepting the above premises regarding the time factor of the Vedic antiquity to be correct, it appears, that at the time when the Aśvins heliacally rose in the east the position of Vernal Equinox was at 85° 19' 35".8 (i.e., the position of the Sun at spring = 55° 19' 35".8 plus 30°) according to the position of 1976. Taking this into consideration, the four Cardinal points would be as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardinal points (Approximate position)</th>
<th>1976 Longitude as obtained from the above data.</th>
<th>Near Star group</th>
<th>1976 Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vernal Equinox</td>
<td>85° 19' 35&quot;.8 λ Orionis or Mrgsiras</td>
<td></td>
<td>83° 22' 16&quot;8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Solstice</td>
<td>175° 19' 35&quot;.8 β Leonis or U. Phalguni</td>
<td></td>
<td>171° 17' 2&quot;.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumnal Equinox</td>
<td>265° 19' 35&quot;.8 λ Scorpii or Mula</td>
<td></td>
<td>264° 15' 0&quot;.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Solstice</td>
<td>355° 19' 35&quot;.8 α Pegasi or P. Bhaprapada</td>
<td></td>
<td>353° 9' 3&quot;.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above reveals that the various positions of the stars and the cardinal points were almost similar to those obtained by Jacobi from different data. This lends support to his findings that the Sun was in conjunction with the lunar mansion Phālguni at Summer solstice and that the epoch took place at about 4000 B.C.

In the course of examination of some Vedic hymns it is observed that in the Vedic literature 'Indra' has been described as the lord of the rains, wielder of thunder-bolts and killer of Vritra or Ahi. In some Rig Vedic hymns, his earlier famous performances have been detailed. Wilson and Griffith translate these as under:
RV. M.1.32.1:  

हन्दस्य नूं शीर्यःं प्रस्तोतं यानि चकार प्रस्तमानि ब्रजी।  
अहन्नाहिमत्वपस्ततिर्वृढ्या प्रवणणा अभिन्नां पवर्त्तानां।।  

Indrasya nu viryāni prābocām yāni cakāra prathamāni vajrī।  
Ahhannahimavanapastatarda pravakṣāṇā abhina ṭparbatānāṁ।।  

‘I declare the former valorous deeds of Indra, which  
the Thunderer has achieved; he clove the cloud; he cast  
the waters down (to earth) he broke (a way) for the torrents  
of the mountain’ (Wilson)

RV. M. 1.32.2:  

अहन्नाहिमपर्वतेषु शिशिराःं स्वष्टास्मै ब्रजस्य स्वयंं तत्काः।  
वाभापञ्जेन-स्वयमानाःसेजं समुद्रमवज्जुराः।।  

Ahhannāhin pravate śiśriyāṇaṁ tvāstāsmai  
vajraṁ svaryyaṁ tatakṣa।।  

Vāśrājiva dhenavaḥ syandamānāsamanjaḥ  
samudramavajagmurāpaḥ।।

‘He slew the Dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly  
bolt of thunder Tvashtar fashioned. Like lowing kine in  
rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the  
ocean’ (Griffith)

RV. M. 1.32.3:  

भृष्णायमाणो वर्णिन सीमं त्रिकुरकेर्विनिवर्तत सूतस्य।  
आसायं मधवादत्तं भृष्णामेन प्रस्तमानहोनाम।।  

Vṛṣāyamaṇaḥ vṛṣita somam trikādrukeṣvapibat sutasya।  
Āsayakam maghavādattavajramahannenaṁ  
prathamajāmahinām।।

‘…………Maghavan grasped the thunder for his weapon, and  
smote to death this firstborn of the dragons’ (Griffith)

RV. M. 1.32.8:  

नदं नं भिन्नममृयं शयां मनोहरां अभिन्नाः।।  
वाहिब्रह्माध्येन महिना पर्य्यतिद्वितसमहि। पत्तुतं: शीर्षभुव | |  

Nadam na bhinnamamuyāḥ sayānām  
manorūhāṇā-atiyānyāpah।।  

Yāścidvyātro mahinā paryatiśthattasāmahih  
paṭsutaḥ śīrbarbhuva।।
There as he like a bank-bursting river, the waters taking courage flow above him. The Dragon lies beneath the feet of torrents which Vṛtra with his greatness had encompassed. (Griffith)

RV. M.1.32.12:
अश्वयोवारो अभवस्तदिन्द्र सुकैश कति प्रश्याहं देव एकः।
अजयोमाः अधय: भुरसोममबासुज: सतेवे सप्तसिन्धुः॥
Aśvayovāros abhavastadindra sṛkeyatvā pratyahāṃ deva ekaḥ।
Ajayogāḥ ajayaḥ surasomavārsṛjāḥ sartave saptasindhūḥ॥

'When the single resplendent Vṛtra returned the blow (which had been inflicted), Indra, by the thunder-bolt, thou becomest (furious) like a horse's tail. Thou hast rescued the kine: thou hast won, Hero, the somajuice; thou hast let loose the seven rivers to flow' (Wilson).

Most Vedic scholars agree that Vṛtra has been taken to mean the cloud, and these clouds are represented as demons. They are unwilling to shed the rains and bring prosperity to the people. Therefore, they had to be killed, in due time by the thunderbolt of Indra, so that they may part with their watery stores to enable the Vedic Indians to cultivate and produce crops. Wilson explains the fight between Indra and Vṛtra or Ahi as that 'the cloud, personified as a demon named Ahi or Vṛtra, is represented as combating Indra with all the attributes of a personal enemy, and as suffering in the battle mutilation, wounds and death'. He further states that 'Vṛtra, sometimes also named Ahi, is nothing more than the accumulation of vapour, condensed or figuratively shut up in, or obstructed by, a cloud. Indra, with his thunderbolt, or atmospheric or electrical influence, divides the aggregated mass, and vent is given to the rain which then descends upon the earth'. Since Indian monsoon starts with the summer solstice and since Indra fought with

34. Wilson's introduction to his Rig Vedas.
35. Wilson in Griffiths, F. N. under RV. 1.32.
the demon Ahi or Vṛtra to bring monsoon, he becomes the god of summer solstice, or at least in this particular case he is attributed with the qualities. Thus, his fight with Vṛtra or the monsoon clouds is an annual affair at the summer solstice.

Another hymn in the Rig Veda⁶⁶, specifies how Indra became the possessor of 'Maghā' and thereby the killer of Vṛtra. The word 'Maghavā' (मघवा) indicates 'one who possesses Magha' and the word 'Maghā' means the constellation 'Maghās' consisting of the stars of the Leonis group. Another important deed of Indra was that "Indra hath raised the Sun on high in heaven, that he may see afar: He burst the mountains for the kine" (Griffith) ḍṛṇo दीघाय स्थित्वम् आसुत्स्वत् रोहयाप्रिव (Indro dirghāya cakṣase āśūryya rohayaddivi)⁶⁷. Thus, Indra kills Vṛtra and brings rain. Indra, by the possessions of the 'Maghās' or the star group Leonis becomes 'Maghavan' and by this act 'hath raised the Sun on high in heaven'. Therefore, at the period when the hymns were composed, summer solstice began with the heliacal rising of the star group Maghā or the Leonis. As such, it can be inferred that when <Leonis, the most prominent star of this group, became first visible in the east at dawn, the Sun reached Indra's place at the summer solstice. The interpretation of the word 'Maghā' is controversial. Prof. Sengupta states that if Indrā is a 'personification of a phenomenon of the firmament, and the and the word 'Vṛtrā' or cloud is another phenomenon of the firmament, the word 'Maghā' must also mean another phenomenon of the same firmament, viz, the constellation 'Maghās'⁶⁸. If, however, Maghā is interpreted to mean wealth, as has been done by some, it may be contended that its acquisi-

36. RV. X. 23.2:
   "इन्द्रो मर्यमयि बृहदगुपत"  
   "Indro maghavāḥ vṛtrahābhuvat"  
37. RV. M. 1.7.3.  
38. Anc. Ind. Chr, Sengupta, p. 76.
tion can not possibly increase the fighting capability of this Indra'. Besides, at many places in the Sanskrit literature, the word 'Maghā' has been used to mean 'Maghā', the tenth lunar constellation counting from the Asvins

From the above, two aspects come into the fore: first, that the Sun was in conjunction with the Maghās at the time of the summer solstice and, second, the Maghās heliacally rose at the time of the summer solstice. As the first is taken to mean the conjunction of the Sun with the Maghās and the summer solstice, the date for this event comes to about 2350 B. C. The composer of the hymn X. 23.2 is Rishi Vimadā who was reputed to be the son of Indra or Prajapati and was much anterior in date to that of the Pāṇḍavas who flourished at the junction of the Dwāpara and the Kali era. His statement that Indra became 'मर्च्छति′ (Maghai-r-Maghavā) can not, therefore, mean the conjunction of the Sun with the Maghās if the period of the Pandavas is taken to be earlier. Thus, taking the time of the hymns composed before the Pandavas, the summer solstice occurred with the heliacal rising of the star α Leonis, which is the most prominent star of this group.

In considering the above, it is found that the tropical longitude of the star α Leonis on 1.1.76 at 10.8 hrs. I. S. T. was 149° 29' 42". Therefore, at the time of its heliacal rising the tropical longitude of the Sun was 167° 29' 42". 8, of the time in review in 1976. It was then summer solstice. Taking the Indian summer solstice to occur at that period when the Sun was at the tropical longitude of 90° the total shifting at a rough calculation has been 77° 29' 42". 8, representing a lapse of about 5600 years and bring the period to about 3624 B. C.; but from actual calculation. Prof. Sengupta has found the date to be at about 4170 B. C. (Annexure B), and if the Sun's depression is taken to be 17° below the horizon, the date comes to 4000 B. C.

39. ibid, p. 76.
40. Lahiri's Indian Ephimeries; 1976, p. 41.
Taking into account Prof. Sengupta’s calculation, one finds that here also, the Vernal Equinox was near the star \( \lambda \) Orionis or Mrgśiras, Summer solstice near \( \beta \) Leonies or Uttar Phālguni, Autumnal Equinox near \( \lambda \) Scorpii or Mula, and Winter Solstice near \( \alpha \) Pegasi or Purva Vādrapada. Thus, from all the factors considered above, it is found that at about the period the Vernal Equinox was in Mrgśiras, which is also the findings of Tilak, Jacobi and Sengupta. This is sufficient proof to indicate that the Indian culture was quite mature at that remote date and the people were quite capable of observing the Astronomical phenomenon of the heliacal rising of the Aśvins or the Maghās at different time and space.

Two related matters need elucidation at this stage. These are, first, why Kurukṣetra latitude has been adopted for Astronomical calculation, and, second, whether the Vedic Indians were capable enough to record the heavens and record the rising and the setting of any particular star or any star group.

As regards the first, a verse in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa states that “the gods Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha, Vishṇu and the Viswadevas, except the two Aśvins performed a sacrificial session. Their place of divine worship was Kurukṣetra. Therefore, people say that Kurukṣetra is the gods’ place of divine worship”\(^{41}\).

Devā ha vai satram niṣeduh. Agnirindra somo makho vishṇuḥ visvedeva anyatarivāśvibhyām | Teṣām kurukṣetram devayajanamāsa | Tasmādāhuh kurukṣetram devānām devaya-janamiti tasmādyadatra kva ca kurukṣetrasya nigacchati tadevamanvatah im devayajanam iti tathā devānaṁ devayajñanum.

Again, in another verse, a similar statement\(^{42}\) that ‘those gods are performing the sacrifice at kurukshetra, is noticed.

\(^{41}\) Sat. Br. XIV. 1; Eggeling's translation;
\(^{42}\) Sat. Br. 1 15.13.
THE HELIACAL RISING OF THE ASVINS

κουρκχετρε|| deva ya|| nam tanvate |

Kurnksetre|mi deva yajnam tanvate |

In the Maitrayani Sanhita it is recorded that "the gods performed sacrifice at Kurukhetra"

 debilitating

deva vai satramasata kuruksetre |

Manu Samhita states that Kurukhetra, the Matsyas, the Panchalas and Surasenas constitute the land of the Brahmavarta

kouksetre v ch manuvasha pa|chavala: surasekas: |

sjathar|devosi v sa|amvartadantara: ||

Kuruksetram ca matsyasca panchalaha Surasenaaka ah |

Esa Brahma|rshi — deso vai Brahmavartadanantara ah ||

Thus, all through, Kuruksetra was the centre of Vedic culture, and, consequently, justifies acceptance of this latitude for the calculation of the Vedic antiquity.

Further, from the fact that the Vedic Indians raised up Indra, the god of summer solstice or in other words the rain producing deity, at a bamboo pole, Prof. Sengupta concludes that the Vedic Indians could not have lived much further north than about 26° N. There is also another statement in the Rig Veda, to the effect that the planet ‘Jupiter being first born in the highest heaven of supreme light’. Jupiter could not have a celestial latitude exceeding about 1° 45'; hence its greatest north

43. Mait. Sam. 11.1.4 ; IV. 59.
44. Manu. Sam.
45. RV. M. 1.3.1 ;
46. Anc. Ind. Chr ; Sengupta ; p. 71.
47. RV. M. IV. 50. 4

brahma|stvam sataratra u|vamsamiva ye|ire |

Brahma|astvam Satakrata udvamsamiva ye|ire |

48.
declination could not exceed 26° and if at the land of the Vedic Indians, this planet was discovered in the high heaven, the latitude of the place could not exceed 30°N. Since, Kurukṣetra is placed at the same or nearly the same latitude, acceptance of this latitude for the place of observation of the Vedic Indians seems to be justified. As regards the second point, that is, whether the Vedic Indians of that antiquity could observe the positions of the stars in the heaven, a statement of the Taittariya Brāhmaṇa speaks for itself. Another statement of the same Brāhmaṇa speaks of Krittikās as the mouth of the Nakṣatras and that the Nakṣatras are the house of gods. This leads to the conclusion that “the early observers of heavens, whose only method of determining the position of the Sun in the ecliptic was to observe every morning the fixed stars nearest that luminary”.

And according to this “the year would naturally be said to be complete when the sun returned to the same fixed star”. Prof: Whitney states that the same system was followed at the time of the Surya Siddhanta. He has, explained that “it is, however, not the tropical solar

48 Anc Ind. Chr ; p. 71 ;
49. Taitt. Br. i. 5.2.1 : यत्पुष्यं नक्षत्रं तद्दक्षिण तोष्पथश्च। यदा वै सूर्यं उदेति। अथ नक्षत्रं नैति... (Yatpūṣyaṁ nakṣatram tadṛddakuvītopabyuṣaṁ yadā vai sūrya udeī! Atha nakṣṭraṁ naiṁ)

ibid ; i. 5.2.2

या वै नक्षत्रोऽयः प्रजयति वेद । (Yā vai nakṣatrīyam praJayatīm veda)।

ibid ; i. 5.2.7.

मुखं वा एतन्नक्षत्रायाम । यक्कृतिका : ( Mukham vā etan-nakṣatrāṇam | Yaṭkṛttikāḥ | )

देवग्रहं वै नक्षत्राणि... कृतिका: प्रथमं... (Devagrha vai nakṣatrāṇi... Kṛttikāḥ prathamam...)

51. The Orion, Tilak, p. 18.
year which we employ, but the sidereal no account being made of the precession of the equinoxes". Garga informs us that when the sun turns north without reaching Dhanīṣṭa, it is the indication of great calamity.

From all the above references, it appears that the Vedic Indians were quite capable of observing the star that rises in the east and hence, undoubtedly the observers could find out the heliacal rising of the stars α Arietis and λ Leonis with the advent of the spring and the rainy season, which happened at about 4000 B.C. or thereabouts. Therefore, the theory that the Vedic Indians entered India at about 1500 B.C. is not only not tenable but quite unacceptable.

52. Surya Sid; Whitney, i. 13, note.
53. Garga quoted by Bhattotpala in Brihat Samhita, iii. 1. :

वशा नितर्याणप्राप्तः अभविद्यामुस्तरायणे।
ब्रह्मेन दक्षिणप्राप्तः स्वयं विद्यामहामयम्।

Yadā nivartate prāptaḥ Śravistamuttarāyaṇe
Āsaśām dakaśīne prāptatadā vidyāmohābhayam
CHAPTER III

ANTIQUITY OF THE MAHABHARATA AND LATER INTERPOLATIONS.

Most Western scholars of the nineteenth century were inclined to assign the date of the Mahābhārata recension to a less remote period than what is accepted by the scholars of the east. Prof: Weber, in his History of Sanskrit Literature, states that 'since Megasthenes says nothing of this epic, it is not an improbable hypothesis that its origin is to be placed in the interval between his time and that of Chrysostom; for what ignorant sailors took note of would hardly have escaped his observation'. This statement of Prof: Weber seeks to assign the period of the Mahābhārata recension to a modern period, but this seems to be a misrepresentation of the actual facts, or rather, his logic is fallacious on a very important consideration. The fallacy in his logic is that, the original travelogue of Megasthenes is not available now. The modern compilation, which at present is known as the Megasthenes’ accounts of India, was made by Dr. Schwanbeck from the quotations of Megasthenes obtained from the books of various Greek historians. No record of his original writings is available. Therefore, it cannot be stated with fairness that Megasthenes actually did not refer to the Mahābhārata or to any of the characters included therein. Considering these, Prof: Weber’s above statement is neither tenable nor acceptable.

Others also hold various views on the subject. One group asserts that although the Mahābhārata is a comparatively old compilation, its existence, at least its modern recension, cannot be dated back to any period anterior to 4th or 5th century B.C.; and before that there could have been no such compilation in existence; while another group

professes that the original version of the Mahābhārata might have been in existence, but this did not contain any reference to the Pāndavas or to Kiśṇa. These, they say, are modern interpolations in the body of the existing Mahābhārata. Both these contentions seem to be incorrect. It can be proved from early Sanskrit literature and from early Sanskrit grammar that, 'Mahābhārata' existed prior to the above mentioned period and references to the Pāndavas and to Kiśṇa date back to further antiquity.

Still another group, in fact, those who do not believe in the historicity of the Pāndavas and Kiśṇa, hold the view that Kurukṣetra war was fought between the Kurus and the Pāṇcālas and not between the Kurus and the Pāndavas as obtaining in the Mahābhārata. Actually, however, the Pāṇchālas were the neighbours of the Kurus and in earlier times, both these clans were prosperous. Probably, at one time they lived together. In course of time they had separated and, as is common in the early period, engaged themselves in clannish feuds from time to time. Drupada, the king of the Pāṇchālas, had previously fought the Kurus many times when the Pāndava brothers sided with the Kuru clan. So far there is no controversy. The Pāṇchālas, however, joined the Pāndava side during the Kurukṣetra war through the medium and on account of the institution of marriage. The daughter of the Pāṇchāla king Drupada was married to the five Pāndava brothers, who actually belonged to the Kuru clan; the prince of the Pāṇchāla country Dhṛiṣṭadyumna, was instrumental in the death of Drona; and Śīkhandi, another prince of the Pāṇchālas was responsible for the death of the great patriarch Bhīṣma. Since, in fact, the Pāṇḍavas were another branch of the Kuru family, the Kurukṣetra war may rightly be termed as the war between the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas backed by the Pāṇchālas. And, all the time, in this war the Pāṇchālas helped the Pāṇḍavas for their victorious emergence and did not engage themselves to take revenge for their clannish enmity.
On a review of the various chieftains and the countries involved in the Kurukshetra war, it is seen that Duryadhona commanded the allegiance of eleven 'aksauhini'8 of soldiers out of eighteen, while the Pāṇḍavas had, on their side, only seven. These seven 'aksauhins' consisted of the five Pāṇḍava brothers with their several children, the Kekayas, the king of Kāshi, Dhristaketau of Chedi, Pravira of the Pāṇḍyas, and Virāta of the Matsya country. And above all, they had king Drupada of the Pāṇchala country, who himself and his sons fought valiantly for the Pāṇḍavas and ultimately fell at the battlefield. Among some of the other famous warriors, there were Chetikan and Sātyaki of the Briśni tribe, Ghatotkacha, the Rākṣasas hero, and Irāvan of the Naga tribe, a progeny of Arjuna and a Naga princess. On the Kaurava side, however, almost the whole of ancient India was represented. They had on their side the kings of Magadha, Balhika, Bhoja, Madra, Sindhu, Mahisvati, Avanti, Kośala, Aṅga, Prayagotishapura, Kaliṅga, Trigartha, Sauvira, Gāndhara and many other hill and barbarian tribes including the Yavanas, Tusharas, Śakas, Niśādas and others. They also had on their side two famous warriors in Bhīsma and Droṇa and also Aswathāmā, while Krīṣṇa on the Pāṇḍava side was a non-combatant charioteer of Arjuna. Thus the feud or the war, was too elaborate an affair and represented almost the whole of India and cannot be described as a clannish feud between the Kurus and the Pāṇchālas. Some are of opinion that the Pāṇḍavas did not exist or could not have existed and they have analysed the reasons. They have concluded that they did not exist from the fact that the name of the 'Pāṇḍavas' is not found in any contemporary literature. This reason is, however, far from convincing. In the Mahābhārata itself, the children of 'Pāṇdu' have been called the 'Pāṇḍavas' and they were the heroes of this early Purāṇa. With-

3. One 'aksauhini' of soldiers consist of: (i) infantry — 1,09,350. (ii) cavalry—65,610, (iii) elephants—11,870 and (iv) chariots 21,870 plus 9,600 other personnel; this seems to be exaggerated in view of the time and period.
out them, there could have been no existence of the ‘Mahābhārata’. Prof: Weber, however, states that in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, the name ‘Arjuna’ is found, but there, the name has been used as synonymous with ‘Indra’ and does not refer to ‘Arjuna’, the third Pāṇḍava brother. Actually, in Satapatha Brahmana⁴, both the names ‘Arjuna’ and ‘Phālguni’ have been used. Just as ‘Arjuna’ may indicate both ‘Indra’ and ‘Arjuna’ the third Pāṇḍava brother, similarly, ‘Phālguni’ also indicates ‘Indra’ and ‘Arjuna’ the third Pāṇḍava brother. ‘Indra’ is called ‘Phālguni’ because he is the presiding deity of the star ‘Phālguni’, and ‘Arjuna’ is called ‘Phālguni’, as he was born under this star. Thus, both ‘Indra’ and ‘Phālguni’ are synonymous terms and may mean either. And this connection with the star ‘Phālguni’, whose presiding deity is ‘Indra’ might have given rise to the myth that ‘Arjuna’ was Indra’s son.

The Buddhist literature, however, mentions a hill tribe called the ‘Pāṇḍavas’; these Pāṇḍavas were the enemies of the people of Kośhala and Ujjain, and further, they were reared in the Himalayas⁵. Pliny and Solinos are of opinion that a township north of Sogdiana, north-west of Balkh country⁶, was called ‘Pāṇḍya’. Ptolemy considers that the ‘Pāṇḍya’ people lived near the river ‘Bidaspes’ or ‘Vitasta’⁷, and Kātyāna has derived ‘Pāṇḍya’ from ‘Pāṇḍu’ in

4. Satapatha Br. 2.1.2.11
6. ‘Sarabo and Eratosthenes regarded the Indus as the western boundary of India, but Ptolemy extends it to the Hindukush and includes modern Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Kandahar within India. Sogdiana lay to the north of Bactria, and Sakai were located to the east of the Sogdians’ ( Ptolemy in Classical Accounts of India, Mazumdar, p. 371 and FN 46 at p. 380).
7. Ptolemy states that ‘around the Bidaspes; is the country of the Pandououoi and ‘the reference to the country Pandououoi indicates that a portion of the Punjab was still known as the Pandu country, named after the Pandavas; and this name was transferred to the Pandya country in the south’— Ptolemy in Classical Accounts of India, ed. R.C. Mazumdar; p. 371 and FN. 46 at p. 380.
his commentary (Vārtika) of Pāṇini Sutras. Wilson thinks that the ‘Pāṇḍya’ people were the original residents of Sogdiana and, in course of time, came to Hastināpur, and then again went south and established the ‘Pāṇḍya’ kingdom. Talboys Wheeler states that ‘the adventures of the Pāṇḍavas in the jungle, and their encounters with Asuras and the Rākṣhasas are all palpable fictions, still they are valuable as traces which have been left in the minds of the people of the primitive wars of the Aryans against the aborigines’. All these, however, though interesting, confuse the issue. Therefore, to determine the antiquity of the Mahābhārata characters, only the references obtained in the early Indian literatures and early Indian grammars should be accepted.

Specific reference to the name ‘Māhābhārata’ is found in the ‘Āśvalayana Grihya Sutra’ wherein it has been stated ‘Sumantu, Jaimini, Vaiśampāyana, Paila, the Sutras, the Bhasyas, the Bhārata, the Mahābhārata, the teachers of law …’ . Thus even before the Sutra era, which some scholars place before the Buddhist period, two religious works ‘Bharata’ and ‘Māhabhārata’ were known to have been in existence. Therefore, whatever might be the period of the modern recension, two compilations known as ‘Bhārata’ and ‘Mahābhārata’ were in existence during the pre-Buddhist period. Further, Pāṇini the great grammarian in his Sutras states: महान्वृळ्य-पराह्मृळ्य-श्रीबहरात्र-प्रबृद्धेशु (Mohan Vrihyaparāhṇagrśtisvāsajāvalbhārathailihila raurava prabṛdhesu)

8. पाण्डोर्धयं बक्तय (Pāṇḍordyam vaktyabya) — Vartika
9. Asiatic Researches; vol. XV, pp. 95-96
10. Quoted from ‘Krishna Charitra’ (in Bengali) ; Bankim Chandra.
11. Āśvalayana Grihya Sutra, ch. 3, k4, sutra 4;
   सुमन्तु-जैमिनि-वैशम्पायन-पालसुत्र-भारत-भारत-भवयाद्या
   जानति। (Sumantu - jaimini - vaiśampāyana - pailasūtra
   -vāshya-bhārata-mahābhārata-dharmācāryaḥ jānanti.
12. Translated by Hermann Oldenberg, in the Sacred Books of the East series.
13. Panini ; 6.2.38.
i.e., before the words ‘brihi’, ‘parahīa’, and others the term ‘mahāna’ is applied and among such words ‘bhārarata’ is one. From this, Māhabhārata is derived. But, Prof : Weber contends that here the word ‘Mahābhārata’ means the famous tribe of the ‘Bhārata’ and not the text ‘Mahābhārata’, which apparently, is somewhat farfetched, inasmuch as the tribe has always been referred to as Bhārata tribe and not ‘Mahābhārata’ tribe.

In examining another Sūtra of Panini¹⁴, it is found stated that when the word ‘sthira’ स्थिर is used after ‘gabi’ गबि and ‘Yudhi’ युधि the letter ‘s’ स of sthira स्थिर becomes ‘tha’ ठ and from this ‘gavisthira’ and ‘yudhisthira’ are obtained. Again, in another sūtra the word ‘Kunti’ is found¹⁵. It has been further stated¹⁶ that after ‘Vāsudeva’ and ‘Arjuna’ the ‘pratyay’ प्रत्यय ‘boon’ बूँ is applied for the 6th case-ending ; and two words, viz, ‘Vāsudevaka’ and and ‘Arjunaka’ which means the followers of Vasudeva, ie, Kṛishṇa, and Arjuna are derived. The word ‘Nakula’, the name of the fourth Pāndava brother, is obtained from another Sūtra¹⁷. The word ‘Draunayana’ is derived from ‘Drona’ in another sūtra¹⁸ and this can only refer to ‘Asvathhāma’ the son of ‘Drona’, and none else.

Apparently, therefore, during Panini’s time these names were so very famous that the renowned grammarian had to include them in his commentary to explain their derivations. All these names belong to the characters of the Mahābhārata and cannot be construed to mean any other

14. Panini ; 8.3.15. गबियुधिव्यां स्थिर:। (Gaviyudhivyām sthīrah)।
15. Panini ; 4.1.176. बासुदेवार्जूनायां बूँ। (Vāsudevārjuna ‘vīy ām vuṇ)।
16. Panini ; 4.3.98. बासुदेवार्जूनायां बूँ। (Vāsudevārjuna ‘vīy ām vuṇ)।
17. Panini ; 6.3.75. ड्रोणपार्वताजीवंताद्यतरस्याभ। (Dronaparvatajīvantaadanyata- rasyām।
18. Panini ; 6.3.75. ड्रोणपार्वताजीवंताद्यतरस्याभ। (Dronaparvatajīvantaadanyata- rasyām।
people or persons. Had Pāṇini referred to only one or two names, which casually referred to any of the characters of the Mahābhārata, it could have been inferred that the names might not mean the persons appearing in the Mahābhārata text; but he has derived the names of some of the Pāṇḍava brothers, their mother ‘Kunti’, referred to ‘Vāsudeva’ and ‘Arjuna’ and also to ‘Drona’, the preceptor of the famous Pāṇḍavas. These are too many for a coincidence. And as such the question of coincidence may be ruled out. It can, therefore, be positively inferred that the names were very famous during Pāṇini’s time, and as a corollary it can be assumed that the text Mahābhārata was in existence with all these characters and was widely read by the scholars of that period.

There is, however, controversy about Pāṇini’s time. Prof: Goldstuker was of opinion that Buddha was not even born when the Pāṇini sutras were compiled. Not only that, but some of the Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣhadas and other ancillary components of the Vedic literature were also not composed. Even the Āśvalāyana Grihya Sutras or the Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa19 were not in existence. According to Max Mueller, however, the Brāhmaṇas had began to be compiled from about 1000 B.C. Whereas, Haug says that by this period the compilation of these was complete and had began to be compiled from about 1400 B.C. Consequently, therefore, Pāṇini’s time, if this is before the compilation of Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa, can be placed at about 1000 B.C. but some oriental scholars are inclined to fix the period of Panini at about 65 - 70 B.C.

Thus, since the name of the Mahābhārata is found in the Āśvalāyana Grihya sutra and in the Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa and also in the sutras compiled by Pāṇini, it is evident that the text was in existence at that remote period.

19. From certain Astronomical references obtaining in the Sāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa, ch. 1, Br. 3, Prof : Sengupta has found out the date of this Bra. to be at about 1000 B.C. Anc. Ind. Chr ; Sengupta ; p. 197.
Since two books, viz, ‘Bhārata’ and ‘Mahābhārata’ were in existence during the time when Āśvalāyana Grihya Sutras were put on record, it is quite possible, in fact it is certain, that the body of the ‘Mahābhārata’ as it was then, was much shorter than at present; but still the fact remains that both were in existence and the names of some of the characters as we find in the modern recension, had been derived by the eminent grammarian Pāṇini. Without doubt, this speaks volumes for the antiquity of the book itself and the characters.

Krīṣṇa is an inseparable character from the Mahābhārata. Without him, the Mahābhārata remains incomplete. He was the friend, cousin and the adviser of the Pāṇḍavas throughout the text\(^{20}\) although they met him for the first time at the ‘swayamvara sabhā’ of Draupadī; he went to Hastinapura on a peace mission on their behalf\(^{21}\). He advised the Pāṇḍavas to fight. He became Arjuna’s charioteer on the battlefield; he allowed his step-sister Suvaḍrā to marry Arjuna, his friend. Earlier, he had fought with Kaṃsa and Jarāsandha, and killed Śiśupāla of Chedi at the Pāṇḍava court\(^{22}\). He agreed to have his nephew Abhimanyu married to Uttarā, the princess of Matsya\(^{23}\) and, later, their progeny Parikṣhit, who was Krishna’s grand-nephew, became the king of the famous Bhārata clan. Actually, throughout the text, his well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigour, his judicious dispensation of advice to Arjuna, his friend, and to the Pāṇḍava brothers in general, are felt inspite of his intention to remain in obscurity. He was also Draupadī’s personal friend and had saved her many times from difficult situations. Thus, Krīṣṇa can, on no account, be eliminated from the dramatis personae of the Mahābhārata.

20. Mahabharata, Udyoga; ch. 71,
21. ibid ch. 82.
22. M. Bh; Sava; ch. 44.
23. M. Bh; Virata; ch. 72.
The earliest reference to the name 'Krīṣṇa' is found several times in the Vedic literature. In a hymn of the Rig Veda, it has been stated that the 'Aśvins' allowed 'Viśwaka', son of 'Krīṣṇa', to look at his dead child 'Viṣṇapu'; in another hymn the same is reiterated. In several other hymns of the Rig Veda, the composer is Rṣi Krīṣṇa, a son or a disciple of Aṅgiras; his son 'Viswaka' is also the composer of a hymn. Again in another three hymns, the composer is Krīṣṇa, son of Aṅgiras. In another hymn, the word 'Krīṣṇa' has been used in the sense of a bird of prey. In the Atharva Veda and in Sānkhyāyana Āraṇyaka, the word 'Krīṣṇa' has also been used in the same sense.

In the Chhyāndogyā Upaniṣhada, a verse confirms that Ghora of the Aṅgiras family speaks to Krīṣṇa son of Devaki. There is, therefore, no doubt that this Krīṣṇa is the same as found in the Mahābhārata. We find that Ghora of the Aṅgiras family had a son 'Kanva' who was also a composer of Vedic hymns. His two sons 'Prakāṇva' and 'Medhātithi' were also the composers of some other hymns. Therefore, Krīṣṇa Kanva, Prakāṇva, Medhātithi were all the sons and disciples of Ghora of the Aṅgiras family and all of them, including Krīṣṇa, composed Rig Vedic hymns. And since Vedic division was made by 'Vyāsa' after the hymns were composed, Krīṣṇa must be a contemporary or a predecessor of Vyāsa. From the Mahābhārata text it is found that Vyāsa is a contemporary of Krīṣṇa. Krīṣṇa is also found mentioned in the Taittariya Āraṇyaka, a branch of the Krīṣṇa

25. R.V. 1.117.7.
27. R.V. 10 42/44
28. R.V. 10.94.5.
29. A.V. 11.2.2.
31. R.V. 1 36.43.
32. R.V. 1.12.23 & 1.44.50.
Yajurveda. In Pāṇini Krishṇa has been referred to in connection with 'gāṇḍa' (गाण्ड). In that sūtra, ‘Kārnāyana’ and ‘Rañāyana’ gotras have been derived from ‘Kriṣṇa’ and ‘Raṇa’. These two gotras are respectively Brahmans within the Vāsishtha group. In the Buddhist literature, the name Kriṣṇa has been transformed into ‘Kanha’. In the ‘Digghya Nikāya’, the story of Kriṣṇa has been told in a distorted fashion. In this text, belonging to about 5th century B.C. the story is that Kāṃsa had a sister named ‘Devagavva’. Possibly, this is a distorted version of ‘Devaki’, Kriṣṇa’s mother. Her husband was known a ‘Upasāgara’ and they had two sons : ‘Bāsudeva’ and ‘Baladeva’. These two sons were sent to ‘Andhakbenhu’ and his wife ‘Nandagopa’. This ‘Andhakbenhu’ appears to be a distorted form of the two tribes ‘Andhak’ and ‘Bṛśni’. Bāsudeva had two other names : ‘Kesava’ and ‘Kanha’. He has been referred to as belonging to ‘Kanhayana’ gotra. In ‘Mahāummaga Jataka’, Bāsudeva Kanha’s wife was known as ‘Jombovat’, while Kriṣṇa of the Sanskrit literature was married to ‘Jāmvabati’. In the ‘Mahābhāṣya’ of Patañjali, there is a reference to ‘Vasudeva Kṛṣṇa’. It has been stated there that everyone knew about the death of Kāṃsa and also that Kriṣṇa was the instrument of his death. At this time, the life and deeds of Kriṣṇa were dramatised and enacted before the public. Poet Vṛṣṇa, who was a contemporary of Chāṇayaka, has referred to ‘Sṛi Kṛṣṇa’, ‘Gopal Kṛṣṇa’, ‘Nanda’, ‘Yasoda’ and others and he has deified ‘Gopal Kṛṣṇa’. From all the above, there appears to be a continuity in the references to Kṛṣṇa and leaves no doubt that this was the same Kriṣṇa who was involved in the Kurukṣetra war.

Another question that is generally raised is that whether the Kriṣṇa of ‘Vṛindāvana’ is the same as that appearing in the Mahābhārata. It is a well known fact that Kriṣṇa was born in the prison of Kāṃsa of Mathurā his maternal uncle.

33. Panini; 4.1.99.
34. Ibid;
35. Quoted from Jamuna, Jaistha, 1330, B.S. 
He was sent immediately by his father Bāsudeva to Nanda Gopa and his wife Yaśodā, who were Bāsudeva’s distant relatives. He grew up at Vrindāvana and, later, in his early youth, went back to Mathurā and killed Kaṃsa. This is also supported by commentator Patanjali. The idea of the Kṛiṣhṇa of Vrindāvana, the prince charmer of the Gopa girls, originated from the Vaiṣṇava literature backed by Vishnupurāṇa, Brahma-vaivartapurāṇa and to some extent by Bhāgavatapurāṇa. In the Mahābhārata, the first appearance of Kṛiṣhṇa was at the ‘swayamvarā sabhā of Draupadī and since then he was found to be a supporter of the Pāndavas and acted as their adviser. In the Mahābhārata text, there are several instances which prove beyond doubt that the two Kṛiṣhṇas are one and the same. As for example, when Draupadī was brought to the Kaurava court, after Yudhisthira had lost her in fraudulent gambling, and was at the point of being denuded by Duśāsana, she prayed to Kṛiṣhṇa: she said, ‘O Govinda, O Kṛiṣhṇa, you who live at Dwārakā, O favourite of the gopa girls,—come and save me; being insulted, I am being drowned in the ocean of the Kauravas’. This clearly indicates that at one time Kṛiṣhṇa lived with the gopas. Again, the most important event was when Śiśupāla abused Kṛiṣhṇa at the Pandava court when grandfather Bhīṣma proposed the ‘argha’ or the place of honour to be given to Kṛiṣhṇa. Śiśupāla objected to this and became abusive. An important point to be considered is that persons like Bhīṣma and Droṇa would not have proposed the ‘argha’ to be given to Kṛiṣhṇa had his moral character been questionable, or in any way fit for condemnation, as implied by some. Thus, it may be taken that his life with the gopa tribe was beyond reproach. Śiśupāla was Kṛiṣhṇa’s cousin, just as the Pāndavas were; and he was also his arch enemy. Being frustrated to obtain Rukminī as his wife, whom Kṛiṣhṇa ultimately eloped with according to the extant custom, and then married her, his conduct may be considered to have been induced by bias. Therefore, it is expected that he would leave no stone unturned to disclose all the known and imaginary faults of Kṛiṣhṇa’s.
character. But although he went to a desperate extremity, even he, never said that Kiรรฉษรña was a man of questionable moral character. Among other expletives, he reproved him with being a coward and called him a ‘dəsa’. He invited Kiรรฉษรña to fight with him. He further referred to his killing of ‘тrinavarta’, ‘пutana’ and others and also his holding the ‘гobardhana’ for a week and all these he referred to as minor affairs. He further reproved him with having eaten an enormous quantity of food from the gopas, who were not high caste kшhatriyas. Thus it is seen that Kiรรฉษรña of the Mahйбhйrйrта had lived at some time at Vridйvana with the gopas, had eaten their food, and had performed some miracles. It is quite natural also that he should be a favourite with the gopas, men and women, boys and girls for his charming character and for the interest he had taken in their welfare. Since he left Vrйndйvana for Мathurй when he was in his teens, the period when he lived with the gopas can only be when he was very young.

Before entering into the question of interpolation in the Mahйbхйrйrта, it needs mentioning that scholars are almost unanimous in their opinion that some verses in the Mahйbхйrйrта have been inserted later. They further state that there are three stages of interpolation, but at this distant date, except a very few, it is difficult to find out these from the original verses. In examining the number of verses included in the Āдipava, Anukramanikй adhйya36 of the available recension of the Mahйbхйrйrта37, with those actually existing in the text, it appears that there are some discrepancies, and these are enumerated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parva</th>
<th>No. of verses as mentioned in Āдiparva.</th>
<th>No. of verses as actually found in the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Āдiparva</td>
<td>8884</td>
<td>8479</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36. Mahйbхйrйrта; Āдiparva: ch. 2
### Table: \(\text{Parva}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parva</th>
<th>No. of verses as mentioned in Adiparva</th>
<th>No. of verses as actually found in the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savāparva</td>
<td>2511</td>
<td>2709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanaparva</td>
<td>11664</td>
<td>17478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virataparva</td>
<td>2050</td>
<td>2376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udyogaparva</td>
<td>6698</td>
<td>7656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhiṣmaparva</td>
<td>5884</td>
<td>5856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Droṇaparva</td>
<td>8909</td>
<td>9649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnaṇaparva</td>
<td>4964</td>
<td>5046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śalvaparva</td>
<td>3220</td>
<td>3671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauptikparva</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strīparva</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śintiparva</td>
<td>14707</td>
<td>10943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuśāsanaparva</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>7796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asvamedhikaparva</td>
<td>3320</td>
<td>2900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āshramavāsikaparva</td>
<td>1506</td>
<td>1105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauśalaparva</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahaprasthānikāparva</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swargārohanaparva</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84748</strong></td>
<td><strong>91015</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harivaṃsa</strong></td>
<td><strong>16374</strong></td>
<td><strong>16374</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Parva)</strong></td>
<td><strong>101122</strong></td>
<td><strong>107339</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, although it has been mentioned in the Anukramanikā Adhāya that the Mahābhārata is comprised of one hundred thousand verses, it is not actually found to be so. In actual fact, including Harivaṃsa the contents consist of 7389 verses extra. Therefore, even taking that the original text consisted of one hundred thousand verses, there seems to have been interpolations in the text itself from time to time. At the present stage, it has become very difficult to...

---

38. The date of Harivamsa seems to be much later than that of Mahabharata and Horace Hayman Wilson states in his essays: 'The internal evidence is strongly indicative of a date considerably subsequent to that of the major portion of Mahabharata.'
sort out the original ones from those inserted at a later date. For the purpose of this paper, however, it is desirable that the facts and events connected with certain personages in the text should be considered for further examination; and they are the Pandavas, the Kauravas, Krishna, Balarāma. Bhīṣma, Dhṛtarāstra, Vyasa, or, in other words, those round whom the events revolve. The war should be taken to have occurred at some time or other which should be determined on the basis of the happenings recorded in the Mahābhārata itself and in other relevant documents.