

INTRODUCTION

The scene of the delivery of the *Bhagavadgītā* (*The Song Divine*), also known briefly as the *Gītā*, by Shri Krishna to Arjuna is laid on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where the Pandavas and the Kauravas had assembled their armies for war. Scholars differ as regards the date of this battle, though they are inclined to think that it was a historical event. According to tradition, the battle was fought at the end of the Dvāpara-yuga. The next yuga, namely the Kali-yuga, is believed to have started on 18 February 3102 BC, when Parīksit, grandson of Arjuna, ascended the throne of the Kauravas at Hastināpura. (1) (*The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Vol. 1, p. 308.) Karandikar says that the battle was fought in 1931 BC, while Prof. Sengupta argues that it was fought in 2566 BC. C. V. Vaidya holds that the war was fought in 3102 BC.

As Dhritarashtra was born blind, he could not rule the kingdom. So his younger brother Pandu became the Ruler. When Pandu died his sons were too young as also were Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarashtra, and his younger brothers. Hence Bhishma, the oldest member of the family, managed the affairs of the State. When the young boys came of age Duryodhana wanted to become the King by ousting Yudhishtira through foul means. But public opinion was in favour of Yudhishtira. So, in order not to antagonize the officials and the people, Bhishma advised Dhritarashtra to divide the kingdom between his sons, referred to as the Kauravas, and Pandu's sons called the Pandavas. This advice was followed. Accordingly the former ruled from Hastināpura and the latter from Indraprastha for thirty-six years. But Duryodhana was jealous of the prosperity of the Pandavas, and to ruin them he invited Yudhishtira to a game of dice, which resulted in the banishment of the Pandavas under the condition of living in the forest for twelve years and one year