

incognito. After the stipulated period Yudhishtira claimed his portion of the kingdom, but Duryodhana refused, and this led to the battle of Kurukshetra. Yudhishtira had four brothers—Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Arjuna was considered the mightiest among the contemporary warriors. Shri Krishna, though Himself formidable warrior and regarded as an Incarnation of Bhagavān, vowed not to take up arms on either side, but agreed to become the charioteer of Arjuna. Through the political sagacity and able advice of Shri Krishna the result of the battle went in favour of Yudhishtira, who ascended the throne.

The battle is described in all its details in the great epic *Mahābhārata*. And the *Gītā* which forms chapters 23 to 40 of the Bhishmaparva of this epic must be as old; Radhakrishnan points out that the *Mahābhārata* contains references to the *Gītā*. (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 523.) Scholars are at variance about the date of this voluminous epic. They ascribe to it a date much later than that of the battle, and opine that it underwent many additions and alterations in subsequent ages. According to them *Gītā* also suffered the same fate. R C Dutta thinks that the *Mahābhārata* was first written in the twelfth century BC. Bühler and Kriste in their book, *Contributions to the Study of the Mahābhārata* assign the present form of the epic to the third century AD. But according to Radhakrishnan the epic took its present form at least in the fifth century BC, whereas it might have been first written in the eleventh century BC. (Ibid p. 480.)

Some of the western thinkers were of the opinion that the *Gītā* was written after Jesus Christ and the idea of devotion was borrowed from him. But the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* remarks, 'It is now certain that portions of this poem, in which the doctrine of *bhakti*, or fervent faith, is taught, are pre-Christian, and therefore itself is of indigenous Indian origin.' (Vol. 6, p. 696.) Not merely the devotional portions but the book as a whole is not only pre-Christian, it is pre-Buddhistic as well.