

## FOREWORD

It was but natural that, with the advance of scientific Indology, the need should have been urgently felt for a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. In a paper presented at the 11th International Congress of Orientalists held at Paris in 1897, WINTERNITZ strongly voiced this need for a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* as "a *sine qua non* for all historical and critical research regarding the great epic of India". As the result of the persistent efforts in this regard of WINTERNITZ and several other scholars, the International Union of Academies resolved in 1904 to undertake the preparation of such an edition. Funds were raised for this purpose, and a specimen of the edition prepared by LÜDERS was also published for private circulation among scholars. But then came the first world war which interrupted all scholastic activities in the West. On the other hand, during the last years of the first world war, there began to become evident in India a new spirit of independence which touched almost all spheres of national life. Accordingly, the workers of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, which was founded in 1917 to commemorate the name and work of Ramakrishna Gopal BHANDARKAR who had worthily come to be regarded as one of the leading pioneers of scientific Indology in India, decided, in their understandable enthusiasm, to venture upon the project of a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* making a fresh start, of course with the collaboration, wherever possible, of their foreign colleagues.

The first volume in the Institute's *Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata*, namely, the *Adiparvan*, edited by V. S. SUKTHANKAR, was published in 1933, and it soon evoked quite an encouraging response. The critical edition of the eighteen *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata* (extending over 13,000 demi quarto pages) was completed in 1966, and this historic event was formally announced by Rashtrapati Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN at a special function held at the Institute on September 22, 1966.

It would seem that the Editorial Board and the Board of Referees for the *Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata* had visualized it as a multifaceted project. Besides the critical edition of the 18 *parvans*, it was to have comprised also a critical edition of the *Harivaṃśa*, which is traditionally regarded as a *khilaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, (later published in two volumes containing 1,711 pages, 1969-1971), the *Pratika-Index* (6 volumes containing 4,825 pages, 1967-1972), the *Critically Constituted Text of the Great Epic and the Harivaṃśa* (5 volumes containing 3,150 pages, 1971-1976), and the *Epilogue of the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata*. This last item, namely, the *Epilogue*, has had rather a chequered career. Even at an early stage, it was thought that, as a prelude to the *Epilogue*, the Institute should publish a fairly comprehensive analytical *Cultural Index to the Critical Edition*. This latter too posed many problems, but the Institute duly overcame them. The work is now properly