

PREFACE

In 1966 the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute completed its monumental project of preparing and publishing the first ever critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*¹, a project on which three General Editors and seven *parvan*-Editors had steadily worked for nearly half a century. In continuation of this major task the Institute subsequently brought out two significant publications which went a long way in facilitating the use of the critically edited text : (1) *The Pratika-Index of the Mahābhārata*, being a comprehensive index of the verse-quarters (*ślokapādasūci*) occurring in the edition of the *Mahābhārata*, i. e. verse-quarters which are included in the critically constituted text as well as those which form part of the passages regarded as interpolations and which appear either as starred passages in the footnotes or in the appendices. This *Pratika-Index* appeared in six volumes and took as many years for its completion (1967-1972)²; and (2) A handy edition of the *Mahābhārata* giving only the critically constituted text and omitting the critical apparatus and the interpolated passages. It appeared in four volumes (1971-1975)³.

Long before the completion of the work on the critical edition in all respects in 1975, the idea of writing an Epilogue to the *Mahābhārata* had taken root. In the Annual Report of the Institute for the year 1951-52 (p. 3) we find for the first time, under the activities of the Post-graduate and Research Department of the Institute, a mention of a research project relating to the Epilogue of the *Mahābhārata* which the University of Poona had undertaken to finance with an annual grant of Rs. 3000/-.⁴

In 1951, Dr. S. K. Belvalkar, the then General Editor of the Critical Edition, published a detailed outline of the scheme of the literary and historical Epilogue to the *Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata*⁵. The Epilogue, as envisaged by him, was meant to assess "the net gain to Mahābhārata scholarship, due to the present edition, on various questions of form, matter and structure that have engaged for over a hundred years generations of scholars in and outside India ..."⁶

The Epilogue, as outlined by Dr. Belvalkar, had to deal with the following subjects : (1) Nature and characteristics of the various versions of the epic;

1. It has appeared in 19 volumes. The critical edition of the *Harivaṃśa*, which is regarded as a *kṣitiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, appeared in two volumes in 1969.
2. The *Pratika-Index* to the *Harivaṃśa* which forms part of the 6th volume of the above edition, however, does not take into account the interpolated passages but is restricted only to the critical text.
3. Similar edition of the *Harivaṃśa* appeared as volume 5 of this edition in 1976.
4. This was continued up to 1973. In the year 1969-70, Prof. Dr. K. R. Karandikar gave a generous donation of Rs. 10,000/- for the Epilogue.
5. Prospectus of the Critical and Illustrated Edition of the *Mahābhārata*, India's Greatest National Epic, including Outline Scheme for the Epilogue, Poona, October 1951, pp. 9-18.
6. Op. cit. p. 9.