Preface

The *Mahābhārata* remains as one of the most resourceful sources of knowledge to the human world, especially in the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years. Several attempts have been made from time to time to explore the magnitude of the great epic from different point of view. As a treasure house of knowledge it contains all those subjects essential for the development of the society. In this endeavour, the *Mahābhārata* has been searched from the environmental point of view. Here an attempt has been made to collect the environmental concepts available in the *Mahābhārata* and their relevance in the modern world. The environmental concepts available in this epic have been incorporated in eight different chapters, where the concepts like conservation of natural resources, sustainable development, natural justice and environmental ethics, interdependence and interrelation, environmental problems and environmental management, etc. have been presented. These concepts are also equally important in present environmental studies. It may be the fact that these concepts of the environment are not systematically presented in the *Mahābhārata*, but there is enough scope to retrospect.

Human beings have been making relentless efforts for improving their standard of living since time immemorial. Advancement in the field of science and technology as well as the incorporation of a host of new branches of knowledge for the betterment of the society is worth mentioning. But, it has been observed a vast gap between the perception and application of the knowledge of the past and present. Unfortunately after applying the advanced scientific knowledge, the human society have failed to achieve the desired output, i.e., peace, progress and prosperity in real sense of the term, as people being overwhelmed with the affluence of the so-called modernity have failed to give sufficient justice to nature. As a result the environmental problems have become hazards to the health of the people of the whole world. So, it has become imperative to take care of nature and in this respect the *Mahābhārata* may throw some light as Vedavyāsa has condemned the atrocities
of the human beings on various objects of nature. He has also encouraged people to follow certain codes of conduct like *Ahimsā*, i.e., non-violence to maintain the sanctity of the environment.

Modern technological advancement has no doubt extended the horizon of human knowledge, but the outlook of the human beings towards preservation of the environment has not been equally expanded. If human society wants real development, it has to protect the productive quality of the Earth that prolongs the sustainability of the living beings. In this respect the *Mahābhārata* is till relevant, as it has given stress on the preservation of natural resources for the benefit of today and the days yet to come.

Environment is equally important as one's mother. Mother gives birth to a child and environment nurtures it. It is the environment that supports both the mother and the child. Earlier people used to live in proximity with nature. So, they remained happy with the blessings of nature. But at present, the human beings try to dominate nature. Therefore, time and again nature expresses its fury and gives some negative responses. To minimise these unwanted situations, the *Mahābhārata* may be retrospected, which educate us to respect nature that is the spirit of the environmental studies till today.

Considering the voluminous nature of the *Mahābhārata*, the numbering of its chapters is being made as per popular numerical mode instead of Roman numbers. Here an endeavour has been made to include the English translations of the Sanskrit verses and texts for those who do not know Sanskrit. In this thesis most of the English translations have been taken from the translations of M. N. Dutt, Kisari Mohan Ganguli and the rests have been constructed in consultation with the Bengali translation of the epic available in the *Āryaśāstra* series.

Mausumi Bhattacharjee
11.06.2012
(Mausumi Bhattacharjee)
### Scheme of Transliteration

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