INTRODUCTION

The object of the present thesis is to give a clear, systematic and critical exposition of various linguistic aspects dealt with in the Nirukta of Yāska. The conception of Nirukta (etymology) is an essential part in analysing every vedic and sanskrit word as it contains the philology of the language both vedic and classical. Though it is the earliest available linguistic speculation yet it throws some new light on the avowed aim of the traditional sanskrit grammar and linguistics, i.e. 'to explain the language by a progressive analysis of words into stems and endings by reaching ultimately to the verbal roots with their meanings in juxtaposition'. The main truth lying in the Nirukta of Yāska is that it tries heart and soul in establishing the important linguistic speculation that 'all words are derived from some verbal roots'. Actually, Yāska feels the pulse in words that is why he derives all the words from the verbal roots. He feels the motion in every verbal base.

Yāska's Nirukta is not only a work on etymology but also on the most fascinating branches of philology. It also contains some meta-linguistic aspects like mythology, socio-cultural aspects, etc. It thus forms the corner-stone on
which is built the whole superstructure of Sanskrit linguistics. Hence the importance of a critical study of these various linguistic aspects cannot be denied.

Since the publication for the first time, in Europe, of the Nirukta of Yāska by Rudolf Roth, from Göttingen in 1852, much work has been done in this field with the available commentaries of Durgacarya and Skandasvami by scholars like Satyavrata Sāmasrāmi, Lakshman Sarup, Hannes Sköld, V.K. Rajavade, Siddheswar Varma, Amareshwar Thakur, Mantrini Prasad, M.A. Mehendale and others. But in spite of the admirable efforts of these scholars, much work still remains to be done.

Out of various aspects in the Nirukta only a few, mainly the linguistic aspects have been studied so far. In fact a survey of the various aspects as a whole does not seem to have been undertaken until now. The recent discoveries by various scholars in this area have brought to light considerable new material. I have utilized almost all the available materials and thus tried to give a shape on the known, important linguistic aspects in the Nirukta.

Secondly, the investigations made so far in this subject have been mostly restricted to some limited aspects of the topic. A comprehensive study embracing more or less all the linguistic aspects of the Nirukta as a whole has been a desideratum till now which I have contributed my little mite in this work.
The opinions passed so far on the linguistic value of the Nirukta are of a mixed kind. The Nirukta of Yāska is claimed to be a great landmark in the history of linguistic studies in India by some, even some modern scholars admit it; e.g. Sköld opines, "we ought rather to be astonished, because the Nirukta contains so many good and true etymologies as it does" and according to Dr. Sarup, Yāska is 'the first to claim the scientific foundation and also the first to formulate the general principles for etymology'. But another section of critics finds in it nothing; e.g. we find the adverse opinions of Rajavade - 'the Nirukta does not deserve these high compliments, it is not a science but a travesty of science' and again 'the derivations given by Yaska have nothing to do with sound laws'. Even we are astonished by observing the opinion of Dr. Mantrini Prasad, that 'there is no scope for doing a similar study in phonology, because the two phases do not differ very much in this respect'.

Apart from being based on insufficient data, such a criticism owes much to a lack of precise understanding of the etymologists' concepts of the linguistic speculations and allied matters. The present thesis, it is hoped will go some way towards throwing more light on these works and thus enabling a better understanding and appreciation of them. It aims at a critical study of some aspects of the Nirukta and not the whole. In the present study I have discussed the...
Nirukta specially from a modern outlook of various linguistic aspects.

The whole work is divided into five chapters.

Chapter I deals with the treatment of Yāśka on the evolution of language comparing with the diverse theories—ancient and modern relating to the subject.

Chapter II deals with the classified nature of Yāśka's etymologies based on various modern phonological principles of sound change of the vedic vocables. In course of discussion it has become comparative with the vocables of various I.E. languages. The morphological character of vedic language is organic (non-isolating), inflectional (amalgamating), external inflecting and synthetic. Hence it is related with Greek and Latin naturally. On the other hand, the languages of analytic structure instead of synthetic like Bengali, English etc., are also related with the Vedic. In this study, I have tried to present the affinities among the vocables of various I.E. branches of languages related with these vedic vocables as existing in the Nirukta.

Chapter III deals with the various causes of semantic changes and classifies the vocables under various heads like (i) expansion of meaning, (ii) contraction of meaning, (iii) transference of meaning, (iv) elevation of meaning, (v) pejoration of meaning etc.
Chapter IV deals with the linguistic philosophy of Yāska from the various analytical aspects of language.

Chapter V is the concluding chapter of the work.

The nature of this thesis is mainly descriptive—recording to the facts as they are, without entering into the question of their merits or otherwise. On a few occasions, I have also ventured on proposing explanation for certain modern approaches on the linguistic speculations like why the available theories on the origin of language cannot give us a full satisfaction etc. Here I have proposed some new ideas based on the origin of language relating to sound and sense.

In this study I have tried to pave the way for further investigation to be undertaken by those who wish to develop a deeper understanding of various etymologies of the vocables as existed in the Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta, with a comparative outlook of their application and relation to the Indo-European branches of languages.