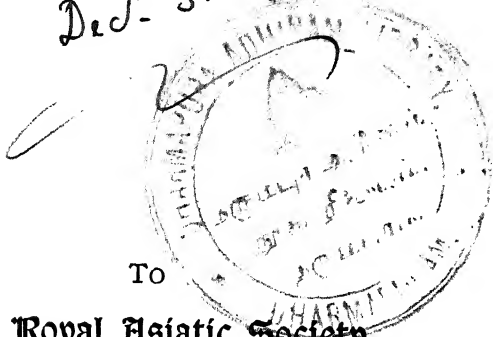


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W. L. Amanian
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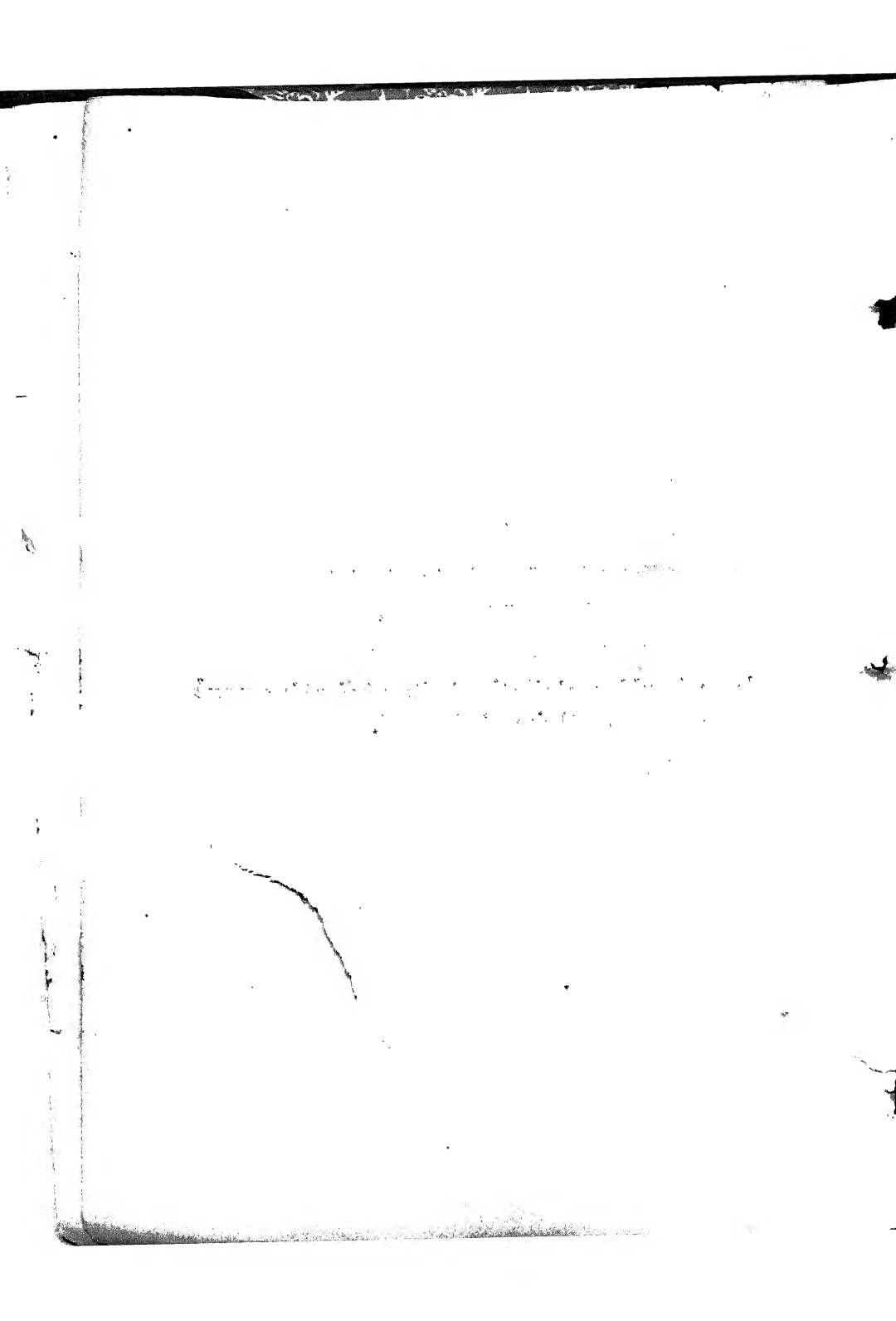


To

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*As an humble contribution to its admirable work
of Oriental Research.*



श्रीः

PREFACE.

SANSKRIT is the name given to the ancient literary language of India. In it are written the ancient scriptures of the Vedic and the Puranic religion. It occupies the same position within the bounds of the Indian continent, as Latin and Greek do in the Western world. All have been the independent fountain-heads of many later offshoots in the form of vernaculars and all have been the standards for imitation and assimilation. The sciences of Comparative Philology and Mythology owe their origin to what has been termed 'the Discovery of Sanskrit.' The affinity that exists among the various Indo-Aryan languages has greatly helped to unravel the past history of man. "To the Sanskrit, the antiquity and extent of its literary documents, the transparency of its grammatical structure, the comparatively primitive state of its accent-system and thorough grammatical treatment it has early received at the hands of native scholars, must ever secure the foremost place in the comparative study of Indo-Aryan researches."

The history of Sanskrit affords considerable scope for a study of the growth of language. It presents distinct varieties of speech which are linked together exactly as Modern English is with the Anglo-Saxon. The *most ancient form* is that composing the text of the Rig Veda Samihta. Consisting of ten books, it was the work of

different *rishis*, probably of various periods and transmitted by oral tradition in their families. Despite the minute distinctions in the language of the Rik Samhita, we may for all practical purposes treat the Vedic variety of Sanskrit as a compact dialect. Prominently, this dialect presents some peculiarities of form and usage, which we shall sum up below :—

- (i) The nominative plural of nouns ending in अ is असस् as well as असस् as देवासः or देवाः, the instrumental being देवेभिः or देवैः ;
- (ii) The nominative and the vocative dual and plural of nouns in अ not rarely end in आ as येनेमा विश्वा च्यवना कृतानि;
- (iii) The instrumental singular of feminine nouns in ई is occasionally formed by lengthening the vowel as धीती and मती;
- (iv) The locative singular termination is often elided as परमे व्योमन्;
- (v) The vowel cases of nouns in उ are formed by ordinary rules of euphonic combination as तन्वम् or तनुवम्; and the instrumental by affixing आ or या or इया as उावया or साधुया;
- (vi) The dative of the personal pronouns ends in ए as युष्मे or अस्मे
- (vii) The parasmipada first person plural termination is मसि as लमस्माकन्ववस्मसि, and of the third person plural is रे or रते as दुहै or दुहृते.
- (viii) The त् of the atmanepada terminations is often dropped as दक्षिणतश्शये; and instead of ध्व there is ध्वात्, as वारयध्वात्.

- (ix) In the place of the imperative second person plural, there are त, तन, यन and तात् as शृणोत, पचतन, यतिष्ठन and कृणुतात्
- (x) Eight different forms of the mood लोट् signifying condition, are everywhere abundant as प्रण आयूषि तारिषत्
- (xi) Roots are not restricted to particular conjugations and at the caprice of the Rishi the same comes to more than one class ;
- (xii) The infinitive suffixes are से, ध्ये, अध्ये, तवे and त्वे as वच्चे, असे, पृणध्यै, सूतवे and मादयतवे ; the accusatives of some nouns are treated as infinitives governed by शक्, as विभागं नाशकत् ; the terminations तोस् and कस् occur when combined with ईश्वर as विचरितोः or विलिखः ; the potential participles are denoted by the suffixes त्वै, ऐ, एण्य and त्व as म्लेच्छित्वै, अवगाहे, दिदक्षेण्य and कर्त्तुम् ; the indeclinable past ends in लाय as गलाय ; some forms as पीत्वी are also met with.
- (xiii) A variety of verbal derivatives as दर्शत (*handsome*), जीवस् (*life*), and जनुस् (*product*) are frequent.
- (xiv) A large number of words which have become obsolete or lost their significance in later Sanskrit are everywhere abundant as परिपन्थि, वनु and अमीवा

These peculiarities are noted because these are the most frequent and the most salient. Many others are mentioned by Panini, which the small compass of this

sketch cannot classify. Nor do they admit of any systematic arrangement. The Vedic dialect is the first record of the sanskrit tongue, from which by processes of phonetic decay and natural elision the later language has been perfected.

The Brahmanas of the Rik and the Yajus present the *second stage* in the development. Many of the peculiar words had already become obsolete, the declensions had approached mostly the classical grammar. The roots have no indiscriminate conjugation. The subjunctive is almost gone out of use. The indeclinable past and the gerundial infinitive end in ल्वा and तुम्; verbal forms of all moods and tenses are seen in abundance. Still there are the touches of the vedic relationship and archaisms are not rare:—

- (i) Some feminine nouns have common forms for the dative and the genitive, *as* पृथिव्यै राजास्याः ;
- (ii) The न of the third person is often dropped as before, *as* सवतो वी प्रसवानामशि ;
- (iii) Some of the aorist forms do not follow the rules of Panini, *as* अज्ञत वा अस्य दन्ताः ;
- (iv) Some antiquated words occur *as* अनीक (a shaft) निष्ठाव (referce) भगवसु prosperous).

The Aitereya Brahmana quotes some *gathas* which are obviously more archaic than the rest of the work. Notwithstanding these irregularities, the Brahmanas are “the best representatives extant of the verbal portion of that language of which Panini writes the grammar, though he did

not mean these when he spoke of the *bhasha*." The gradual and perhaps rapid progress in the symmetry and simplicity of the language has still to be accelerated by the work of later authors and their writings furnish an ample illustration of the next stage of linguistic development.

Yaska's Nirukta forms the intermediate link between the Vedic and the non-Vedic literature. It is not devoid of archaic expression, for we meet with such phrases as 'उपदेशाय ग्लायन्तः' (*unable to teach*) and 'शिशिक्ष राज्येन' (*invested with sovereignty*). But we have no clue to the dawn of a change of style from simplicity to complexity. To the same period in the history of Sanskrit belongs *Panini*. His *Ashtadhyayi* is based on the grammar of the *bhasha*. No language has survived to us that literally represents Panini's standard of dialect. Perhaps the later Brahmanas are the only best representatives. At any rate there is no portion of the existing Sanskrit literature that accurately represents Panini's Sanskrit, as regards the verbs and the nominal derivatives. Probably his grammar had for its basis the vernacular language of his day. Yaska and Panini stand to us the authorities on record of that form of the language which immediately followed the purely Vedic stage.

Times had advanced, and with it the language. Panini's *bhasha* could no longer stand stationary. The operation of the concurrent causes of linguistic progress had by the days of Katyayana and Patanjali modified Panini's denotation and introduced new changes in the

grammar of the language or in the scope of the aphorisms. *Katyayana's Vartikas* and *Patanjalis Mahabhashya* are devoted to the proper interpretation of the sutras and to the apt introduction of the missing links. If to Katyayana's eyes 10,000 inaccuracies are discernible in Panini, the only explanation must be that to Panini they were not inaccuracies, but by Katyayana's time the language had progressed and necessitated a fresh appendix or erratum in Panini's grammatical treatise. The period of intervention must have been sufficiently long to allow old grammatical forms to become obsolete and even incorrect and words and their meanings to become antiquated and even ununderstandable. We may advantageously note a few of those prominent charges:—

- (i) Panini in a special rule says that इतर has इतरम् for its neuter in the Vedas. Obviously he intended to exhaust the list. Katyayana has to add एकतर to it;
- (ii) Panini, when he says विश्किरः शकुनिर्विकिरो वा, would imply that each form has no other sense than that of a bird; but Katyayana adds that both the forms are optional in the sense of 'birds,' while in any other sense they represent separate words;
- (iii) The vocative singular of neuter nouns ending in अन् such as ब्रह्मन् is ब्रह्मन् but Katyayana would add an optional ब्रह्म;
- (iv) Some feminine formations are not noticed by Panini, which Katyayana is forced to allow, as आर्षाणी and उपाध्यायी.

- (v) The word आश्वर्य is rendered as अनित्य by Panini; Katyayana substitutes for it अद्भुत.
- (vi) The words and meanings of words employed by Katyayana are such as we meet with in the classical period and his expressions would not invite any special attention. This cannot be said of Panini. Many of his words are antiquated in the later language as मति (*desire*), उपसंवाद (*bargain*), होत्र (*priest*).

To sum up: "In Panini's time a good many words and expressions were current which afterwards became obsolete; verbal forms were commonly used in Katyayana's time and some grammatical forms were developed in the time of the latter which did not exist in Panini." Katyayana's work therefore is founded on the basis of the classical Sanskrit, as illustrated by the epic and poetic literature, though he gives occasional sanction to the archaisms of Panini on the principle of literary tolerance. Patanjali shows but few forms varying from Katyayana and his treatise marks no stage in the growth of the language.

Here then the Sanskrit language had assumed a shape true to its name. The later epics, poems and dramas do not show any progress in the grammar, structure and signification of the language, though as regards style, they class themselves into an isolated species of literary composition. For all practical purposes, the language as perfected by the work of Katyayana and Patanjali has been the standard of later literature, and these are now the

acknowledged authorities on all points concerning the grammar or construction of the Sanskrit speech.

These two broad phases of the Sanskrit language—the Vedic and the Classical—admit of a corresponding classification in the body of the literature itself. The Vedic and the classical periods, which, as we have seen, are but the manifestation of the same language, partly overlap each other. They do not mark any strictly chronological succession. However some of the later works are assigned to the first period more for their subject-matter and their archaic style than for any just claim to a high antiquity. The classical portion is entirely a product of artificial growth in the sense that its vehicle at least after the dawn of the Christian era was not the language of the general body of the people, but of a small and educated class. This language, as constitutes the vast expanse of the Classical Sanskrit literature, is the subject of our consideration. "It would be a mistake to suppose that Sanskrit literature came into being only at the close of the Vedic period or that it merely forms its continuation and development." As a profane literature, it must in its earliest phases, which are lost, have been contemporaneous with the religious literature of the Vedas. The Rig Veda contains hymns of a narrative character. The Brahmanas have a number of short legends, partly in prose and partly in verse. The Nirukta contains many prose tales and the Brihaddevata forms the oldest existing collection of Vedic legend. Here then is the origin of Sanskrit epic poetry. At the head of the epic literature stand the Ramayana and the Mahabha-

rata. The heavy volume and diverse matter of these works have given rise to many fanciful theories among oriental scholars. Some of the most prominent will be noticed in due detail in the accompanying pages. For the present, the theory of *Prof. Holtzmann* as to the nature and origin of the Mahabharata deserves a short review : The traditional stock of legends were first worked up into a precise shape by some Buddhist poets and this version, showing a decided predilection for the Kaurava party as the representation of Buddhist principles, was afterwards revised in a contrary sense at the time of the Brahminical reaction by the votaries of Vishnu, when the Buddhistic features were generally modified into Saivite tendencies and prominence was given to the divine nature of Krishna as an incarnation. It is but right that the Brahminical priests should have deemed it desirable to subject the traditional memorials of Kshatriya chivalry and prestige to their own censorship and adapt them to their own canons of religion and civil law. This theory subverts all truth and tradition. It is not right to suppose that modifications and innovations especially in the religious character of sectarian works are so easily accomplished. No single Buddhistic record offers any ground for this theory. If such a standard work as the Mahabharata were included in the catalogue of the Buddhistic literature, certainly it cannot be dreamt that the Brahminical transformation could ever have been possible, so as to entirely erase from the huge mass all traces of the Buddhistic coloring. Clear demonstration is elsewhere made that the epic long preceded the dawn of the Buddhistic era. If any work has been the immemorial

standard of the ethics of the Vedic religion, it is pre-eminently the Mahabharata. Modern scholars see this and recognise the shallowness of Prof. Holtzmann's theory. Products of scholarly intellects, *wrongs* are honorably termed *theories* and the burden of disproving false accusations are thrown upon helpless Indian readers. But this instance is not alone ; it has its parallels. The denial of the authorship of the Malavikagnimitra to Kalidasa by Weber and the assignment of the modern Puranas to a late period of the Christian era by Wilson are other illustrations of Holtzmann's precept. India must however be grateful to European scholars for the deep interest they have evinced in oriental literature, and for the keen incentive they have given to historical investigations.

The *Kavyas* or artificial epics are modelled after the manner of the Ramayana. They are generally writings of considerable length and elaborateness of construction, indicating a narrative, the character and incidents of which are of a lofty historical or a supernatural tone or expressing a recital of the events of ordinary or domestic life generally of a contemporary character. These Poems, *Kavyas*, are the subject of the whole science of Rhetoric ; so that in the words of Mammata, a *Kavya* is thus characterised :—

“सकलप्रयोजनमौलिभूतं समनन्तरमेव रसास्वादनसमुद्भूतं विगलित-
वेद्यान्तरमानन्दं प्रमुसंमितशब्दप्रधानवेदादिशास्त्रेभ्यः सुहृत्संमितार्थता-
त्पर्यवत्पुराणादीतेहसिभ्यश्च शब्दार्थयोर्गुणभावेन रसाङ्गभूतव्यापारप्रव-
णतया विलक्षणं यत् काव्यं लोकोत्तरवर्णनानिपुणकविकर्म ।”

Thus a Kavya is that which touches the inmost chords of the human mind and diffusing itself into the crevices of the heart works up a lasting sense of delight. It is "an expression in beautiful form and melodious language of the best thoughts and noblest emotions, which the spectacle of life awakens in the finest souls. Among the authors of this artificial poetry, the names of *Kalidasa*, *Magha* and *Harsha* are advantageously noted, for in the course of these centuries, they mark the deterioration of poetic style. "While in the old epic poetry form is subordinated to matter, it is of primary importance in the Kavyas, the matter becomes more and more merely a means for the display of tricks of style. The later the author of a Kavya is, the more he seeks to win the admiration of his audience by the cleverness of his conceits and the ingenuity of his diction, appealing always to the head rather than the heart. Even the very best of the Kavyas were composed in more strict conformity with fixed rules than the poetry of any other country. For not only is the language dominated by the grammatical rules of Panini, but the style is regulated by the elaborate laws about various forms of alliteration and figures of speech laid down in the treatises on poetics." As records of Hindu manners and customs they are unrivalled for their authenticity. As works of poetic art, lyrical beauty and natural tenderness, they have no peer in the world's literary history.

The Indian drama must unhesitatingly be described as purely native in its origin. "The Muhamadans when they overran India brought no drama with them. The

Persians, the Arabs, the Greeks were without a national theatre. It would be absurd to suppose the Indian drama to have owed anything to the Chinese and their offshoots. On the other hand there is no real evidence for assuming any influence of Greek example upon the Indian drama at any stage of its progress. Finally it had passed into its decline before the dramatic literature of modern Europe had sprung into being." An enquiry into the origin of the Indian drama is but a metaphysical theorisation. For purely literary excellence it holds its own against the advanced theatrical literature of the world. However it cannot in the present state be described as national in the widest sense of the term; it is, in short, the drama of the literary class, but as such it manifests many of the noblest, most refined as well as the most characteristic features of the Hindu religion and civilization. "Clothing itself in a diction always ornate and tropical, in which the prose is the warp and the poetry the weft, in which words become allusions, allusions similes, and similes metaphors, the Indian drama essentially depended upon its literary qualities and on the familiar sanctity of its favourite themes for such effect as it was able to produce. It weaves the wreaths of idyllic fancies in an unbroken chain, adding to its favourite and familiar blossoms ever fresh blossoms from an inexhaustible garden." Nor is it unequal to depict the grandeur aspects of nature in her mighty forests and on the shores of the ocean. The full extent of the existing dramatic literature has not seen the light yet, but the existence of a considerable number of dramas can be confidently asserted. Dramatic writing has not ceased among modern

Indian scholars. Perhaps these modern plays smack more of our contemporary tastes and reflect more the influence of European literature. Living authors there are, whose works, at least some of them, rightly deserve to be named along with the ancient classic writings. *Mr. Narayana Sastriar, Bhattasri and Balasarasvati* as he has been termed, is the reputed author of *ninety-four* dramas. A wonderful feat of a literary genius!! The lack of encouragement of living authors has been the sole cause of the obscurity of his writings. Among those pieces that have seen the press are the *Mithileeyam*, the *Sarmishthavijayam* and the *Kalidvi hunanam*, of which the last is considered to be his master-piece. The style is uniformly amusing but the evils of later day poetry are not always avoided. He is a master of literary sanskrit and fancies are rich in poetic flights. Two romances in prose are yet in MSS. form, one of which describes the story and revelry of the Makhotsavam at Kumbakonam. But the prose-style requires a scholar to appreciate. The descriptions must be commented upon by the author himself and to a beginner his work would be beyond attraction. Some of the speeches are most elegantly written and the fluency of his vocabulary is unsurpassed. Among other later innovations upon the strict style of dramatic composition is the division of *acts* into *scenes*, which is obviously an imitation of western modes of composition. The *Dhruvatapas* of Mr. Padmanabhacharya, recently published in Coimbatore introduces such a division, but disregards the rhetorical precepts of dramatic construction. The language cannot be said to be easy but it is scholarly and some of ideas are an expression of the

social life of our own days. Such a device must certainly facilitate the adaptation of the Indian drama to the modern stage. Another step has been laudably adopted—the translation and adaptation of foreign plays into Sanskrit. Among these must be mentioned the *Vasantika-swapnam* of Mr. R. Krishnamachariar, which reproduces the story of the Mid-summer Night's Dream of Shakespeare. The language is lucid and simple, but the omission of the original division into scenes has not facilitated representation. Still the acts are not too long, so as to make us feel a tediousness in the dramatic construction. But as regards the practicability of the theatrical representation of the Indian dramas, there is nothing highly in its favour. They are fit for the hall not for the stage. They are superior literary compositions, not histrionic entertainments. They require a scholar for their appreciation, not the mob. The most ancient however of the Indian dramas are eminently fitted for representation, while the later suffer under the same disabilities as we have noticed in the case of the artificial poems. The same gradual deterioration in the style of the dramatic writings is observable and *Sudraka Bhavabhutui* and *Murari* are apply chosen to illustrate it.

The "Victorian Age" of English Literature is essentially an age of prose-fiction. Unfortunately this remark cannot find a parallel illustration from the whole of Sanskrit literature. The catalogue of prose romances is very thin and the very few works, that have come down to us, all belong to the later or artificial period. The groundwork, however, of this romance composition was uncon-

ciously developing in the Vedic period. The language of the Brahmanas, the Sutras, the Bhashyas, all these contributed to the formation of a suitable style for a novel kind of literary composition.

The history of literary styles of composition is indigenous in origin and inperceptible in growth. Primitive people adapt themselves to such modes of writing as are naturally fitted to their own stages of civilization. The climatic exigencies of a country, the geographical peculiarities, the fertility and richness of the soil, the nature of the government and the civilization around, all these contribute not a little towards the formation of a man. The Arcadian mountaineer, isolated from the rest of the civilized Greece by an impassable barrier of hills and inhaling the air of a swampy atmosphere, could not be expected to be of an inventive and ingenious mind. The South African savage ever on the verge of starvation, not knowing of to-morrow but half satisfied with what he chases out to-day, unaffected by the frequent climatic changes, driven through thorny woods in season and out of season, cannot be expected to boast of a literature nor of a civilization, ancestral or his own. Whereas, the ancient Hindus, long ago emigrating from the unfertile regions of the Central Asian plateau and settling themselves happily in the basin of the three rivers of Hindustan were enamoured of the beauty of the sky-clad summits of the Hymalayan mount and the fertility of the soil which the benign hand of Providence blessed with crops, timely and fruitful. All this could not but kindle, in the minds of the semi-savage

Aryan settlers, the desire to express themselves in the best language they could. "The origin of poetry," says Sayce "is from a wish to set forth in clear and distinct language the ideas which possess the mind." A sort of musical rhythm and emphasis was essential to this and this they found in poetry.

Secondly, "Ancient India," says W. W. Hunter "is essentially philosophic in its ideas and actions." The ancient sages, as we learn from a perusal of the Vedic literature, spent their lives in philosophic contemplations and their earnest endeavours have been rightly rewarded by the praises of succeeding generations. A common philosophical creed, it is the opinion of some scholars, must have prevailed in India long before the crystallisation of rationalistic inquiry into separate systems. On examination, this common creed should have descended to the Gangetic plain along with the Aryan settlers from the central Asiatic regions. To an expression of such philosophic inquiry or contemplation, they found poetry better adapted than prose. This conjecture is supported by a sentence of Emerson's: "Poetry is the perpetual endeavour to express the spirit of the thing, to search the life and reason which causes the brute body to exist or desist. All words of such inquiry are poems."

Again, "India is singularly the land of poetry." The Hindu mind, dreamy, mystic and speculative, with the imaginary side more highly developed than the active, naturally had a mania for poetry more than for anything

else. Prose is the special property of the active, as poetry is of the grave and the imaginative.

Lastly, the natural tendency of primitive compositions leaned towards poetry rather than prose. The poems of Homer, the songs of Caedmon were preserved from time immemorial by rhapsodists who earned their livelihood by singing these works and who transmitted them from age to age through blindly getting them by rote—of course with so many changes incidental to such a mode of preservation. Such was the case in India too. Therefore, in an archaic society, when writing—much less printing—was unknown, when personal communication was in its embryo, oral tradition was the only means of safeguarding their time-honoured literature and for such oral transmission, it is obvious, they found poetry preferable to prose.

These four causes answer the question of the scarcity of early sanskrit prose. The overthrow of the Brahminic pedantry by the teachings of Gautama and Kapila was followed by the sutra age which in its turn was supplanted by the Bhashya period. The genius of the Hindu nation had by this time eminently become practical and the immense development of ideas had tended to encourage individuality of character and to give importance to private and domestic life. As a consequence the literature of fiction showed signs of speedy progress. The names of *Dandin*, *Bana* and *Vadibhasimha* stand foremost in the list of Indian romances. The self same eye of time, that noticed the brilliant advancement of sanskrit romance for

centuries more than seven, saw the decline and downfall of such lofty poetic ideas. Modern representatives of these romances, the *Champus* of the last century, lay no claim to any elegance at all. Their authors hardly deserve the credit of an aesthetic taste. The earlier *Champus* were an amusing composition and the tempering of prose with verse was happily accomplished. The reformation has long since set in. A struggle has commenced in the land to go beyond the dead forms of literary composition and to recover what is pure, nourishing and life-giving. The translation of some of the tales of Shakespere into elegant sanskrit prose and the epitomical redaction of Bana's invaluable romance are a concrete manifestation of the imperceptible progress of literary ideas.

In this brief description of the poetry, the prose and the drama of Sanskrit, we have been speaking of a gradual deterioration in the simplicity of language and lucidity of composition. For a clear understanding of the causes of such a decline in the merit of literary writings, the history of styles had better be traced since the Vedic beginnings. The earliest literature presents a fluent and simple style of composition. The sentences are short and verbal forms are abundant. Attributive and nominal expressions do not find a place therein. This construction is facilitated by a succession of concise ideas, which gives it a sort of simple grace and fine-cut structure. This then is the form of the *Brahmana* language. It lacks not striking thoughts, bold expression and impressive reasoning. Leaving out of account the unnatural appearance of the *sutra* style—which

was not however a literary composition—we come to Yaska and his Nirukta. Scientific as it is, the language of Yaska often reminds us of the earlier writings. The frequency of verbal forms were current during the time of Panini. It was after the epoch of the Ashtadhyayi that a change had come over literary styles. Attributes attracted greater attention and compounds could alone compress long dependent sentences into the needed form. 'In argument the ablative of an abstract noun saves a long periphrasis.' The minute rules of Panini for constructing the innumerable verbal forms facilitated this mania for conciseness of expression. Thus the fluent or simple style came gradually to be displaced by the formative or attributive style. To this was added the richness and flexibility of the sanskrit language itself, which allowed any sort of twisting and punning of the literary vocabulary. The Puranas and the Itihasas were composed at the transitional stage in the history of literary styles. They present at the same time the simplicity of the earlier language and the complexity of the later composition. So do the earliest specimens of poetic and dramatic literature. Hence the natural and not improbable conclusion is that if an author shows an easy and elegant style and if the flow of his language is more natural, it must be either his taste is too æsthetic for his age or his work must be assigned to an early period in the history of literature. This artificial style was greatly developed in the field of philosophy and dialectics. Patanjali's language is most simple, lucid and impressive. The sentences are short and such as one would use in oral disputations. No tiring compounds, no

intricate constructions are to be traced therein. The ideas are easily intelligible. The forms of words are all similar to the earlier dramas or the Puranas. Sabaraswamin has a lively style, though this presents a further stage in the downward progress. Now the philosophical style sets in and continues to a degree of mischief which is now beyond all reformation. Sankara represents the middle stage. His explanations are aided by dialectic terminology. Involved construction and attributive qualification form the chief marring instruments. But his language is fluent and perspicuous, but not petrified as that of later writers. The last stage is reached in the works of the Naiyayikas. These latter hate the use of verbs. The ablative singular and the indeclinable particles play a prominent part in their composition. Nouns are abstract and even participles are rare. The style is one of solidified formulæ, rather of a varying discourse. Thus the end is that the movement which started with the simple sentence and predicative construction has run up to a stage where the original character is entirely modified and the Sanskrit language has become a language of abstract nouns and compound words.

This rapid deterioration in the style of scientific composition had a corresponding influence on the language of literary writings. The earlier works of prose or poetry are simple, natural and suggestive; the later are complex, strained and unnatural. Sri Harsha can never reflect Kalidasa, nor can Trivikrama compare with Dandin. The characteristics of this latter style are thus summarised:—

Very few verbal forms are used besides those of such tenses as the present and the future; participles are frequently met with; the verbal forms of some roots, especially of those belonging to the less comprehensive classes, have gone out of use and in their place we often have a noun expressive of the special action and a verb expressive of action generally; compound words are abnormally long and tedious poetic description obscures the thread of the narrative.

The literature of the Hindus, extensive and valuable as it is, includes scarcely any work of a historical character. The genius of the Hindu nation was from its dawn opposed to chronicles. This lack of external evidence among the authors of this vast literature seriously impedes historical research and chronological arrangement. Hence it is that the early history of India is still a mass of conjectures and inferences. The earliest landmark would naturally be the age of Buddha and his reform. Here then there is the usual uncertainty. The ground is slippery and the Buddhists among themselves are widely diverged in their views. "Among the Northern Buddhists fourteen different accounts are found, ranging from B. C. 2422 to B. C. 546; the eras of Southern Buddhists on the contrary must agree with each other and all of them start from B. C. 544. This latter chronology has been recently adopted as the correct one on the ground it accords best with these conditions." The next historical datum is afforded by the annals of the Maurya dynasty. Sir William Jones was the first to identify the Sandracotus of the Greek history with Chandragupta,

the founder of the Mauryan dynasty, whose date 315 B. C. gives us a starting point, wherefrom to reconstruct a rough outline of the history of early India between the sixth and third century B. C. The reign of Asoka forms to us an undisputed part of Indian history. His edicts are inscriptions on rocks and pillars, the most invaluable from linguistic, religious and political points of view. A word about them will not be out of place. These edicts published in the tenth and twelfth years of Asoka's reign (253 and 251 B. C.) are found in distinct places in the extreme East and West of India. As revealed in these engraved records, the spoken dialect was essentially the same throughout the wide and fertile regions lying between the Vindhya and the Himalayas and between the mouths of the Indus and the Ganges. The language appears in three varieties, which may be named the *Punjabi*, the *Ujjaini* and the *Magadhi*. These point to a transitional stage between Sanskrit and Pali. "The language of the inscriptions," says Princep "although necessarily that of their date and probably that in which the first propagators of Buddhism expounded their doctrines, seems to have been the spoken language of the people of Upper India than a form of speech peculiar to a class of religionists or a sacred language, and its use in the edicts of Piyadasi, although incompatible with their Buddhistic origin, cannot be accepted as a conclusive proof that they originated from a peculiar form of religious belief." The mention of the names of some contemporary foreign kings as Ptolemy, Antiochus and Antigonus gives strength to the chronological data afforded by independent sources. The progress-

of language, the state of religion and the contact with foreigners—these are prominently reflected in the records of Asoka.

For a few centuries after Asoka, coins and inscriptions are the only source of information. The Kushana branch of the Graeco-Bactrian race established a powerful dominion under Kazulo Kadphises. His immediate successor Kanishka forms a noteworthy personage in Indian History and his date 78 A. D. marks the beginning of an era, concurrent with the Salivahanasaka of Southern India. This limit is otherwise remarkable, as we shall see later on, as the starting point of all oriental research in Indian chronology and to it has been accorded an infallible authority ; so much so the system has obtained a prescriptive claim, too petrified to allow of any questioning demonstration. From the fourth century A. D. the copper-plate records become more numerous. Epigraphical and numismatic discoveries have likewise facilitated research. But still these have not given us any continuous history. Numerous blanks are yet to be patched up, which can only be done by means of reason or conjecture. Besides the notices of foreign writers are remarkable as furnishing authentic information regarding contemporary India. "The travels of Fa-Hian and Hiouen Thsang have supplied many important data for the periods to which they belong, while the minute and careful state records of the Chinese have not only given us valuable details as to the history of the barbarous Scythian tribes, whose movements on the northern frontier of India in the first century of the

Christian era would otherwise be so obscure, but have further preserved to us the names of numerous Sramanas who visited India in the interests of Buddhism, as well as the notices of embassies between China and India, all bearing witness to the close intercourse maintained between the two countries. The particulars of the information they have contributed to the literary history of India will be noticed in their proper places. The seventh century brings us some genuine history. It opens with the supremacy of Harshavardhana Siladitya II, the hero of Bana's romance, whose durbar was the scene of the patronage of contemporary art and literature. About the same time occurred the disruption of the early Chalukya kingdom, whose numerous dated inscriptions record many references to literary history. From the eighth century onwards, synchronisms, internal evidence and contemporary notices combine to fix with tolerably certainty the period of the more famous writers.

Of the *quasi-historical works* we have known a few. Most important are the *Satrunjaya-Mahatmya* of *Dhananjay*, the *Harshacharita* of *Bana*, the *Vikramankadeva-charita* of *Bilhana* and the *Taranginis* of *Kalhana*, *Srivara* and *Jonaraja*.

Kalhana's Rajatarangini attracts our closest attention. As a chronicle of Kashmirian annals, it is perhaps a true representation. Its importance in literary history is founded on the variety and completeness of traditional information it gives of past history comprising a long

period of about 3500 years. Kalhana was the son of Champaka and was by birth a brahmin of Kashmir. His father was a fervent worshipper of the Tirthas of Nandikshetra and was in life a loyal official of the court of King Harsha. He wrote the introduction to his work in 1148 A. D. Kalhana's account of Kashmir begins in 628 of the Laukika era and ends with 4203. The first book forms the narrative of the Gonanda dynasty and embraces an interval of 2233 years and the rest of the work describes the history of five successive dynasties ending with the reign of Jayasimha. Kalhana's account is a purely poetical amplification of the text of the *Nilamata*. In judging of the story of Gonanda and his descendants as told in the latter, there is a deliberate attempt made to connect special Kashmirian legends with those of India proper and particularly the Mahabharata. The true value of the alleged connection between the story of Gonanda and the Great War can thus be easily estimated. Yet it is the imaginary synchronism with a legendary event, which Kalhana has chosen as the fundamental datum for his chronological system. For he derives 653 Kali as the initial year of Gonanda rule from the traditional date of the coronation of Yudhisthira.

It cannot be disputed that Kalhana's work has in it many stories of a legendary character and the basis of his chronology is founded on slippery tradition. The radical Indian scholar, however, argues for Kalhana and the authenticity of his record. He says, modern scholars start with the axiom that Kanishka ruled about 78 A. D.,

but Kalhana's Kanishka can by no means be assigned to that date. The Rajatarangini gives after Kanishka a long line of kings whose reigns make up more than 2330 years to the date of its own composition. If Kanishka were placed in 78 A. D., then Kalhana will go up to 2408 A. D. and we are only in the beginning of the 20th century. The *History of the Advaitacharyas* invariably furnishes us with the exact dates of birth and death of a long succession of priests and so do the *Guruparampara* stories of the Dravidian saints of Southern India. It is unfortunate, therefore, that if an ancient record conflicts with our conclusions, the record comes to be misinterpreted or discredited, rather than our conclusions are altered by a scrutinising demonstration.

Apart from the plausibility of these arguments, Indian tradition is not free from all taint of mythological uncertainty. It requires time before the elements of traditional chronology can be sifted and arranged to keep correspondence with the accepted system of literary dates. To the eye of a rationalistic observer, the data of the *Yuga* calculation cannot be acceptable. A scholar of Madras has recently proved that the historical Kaliyuga could not be traced further back than 1500 B. C. In this unsettled condition of literary opinion, we leave the question again open for a scientific and critical examination.

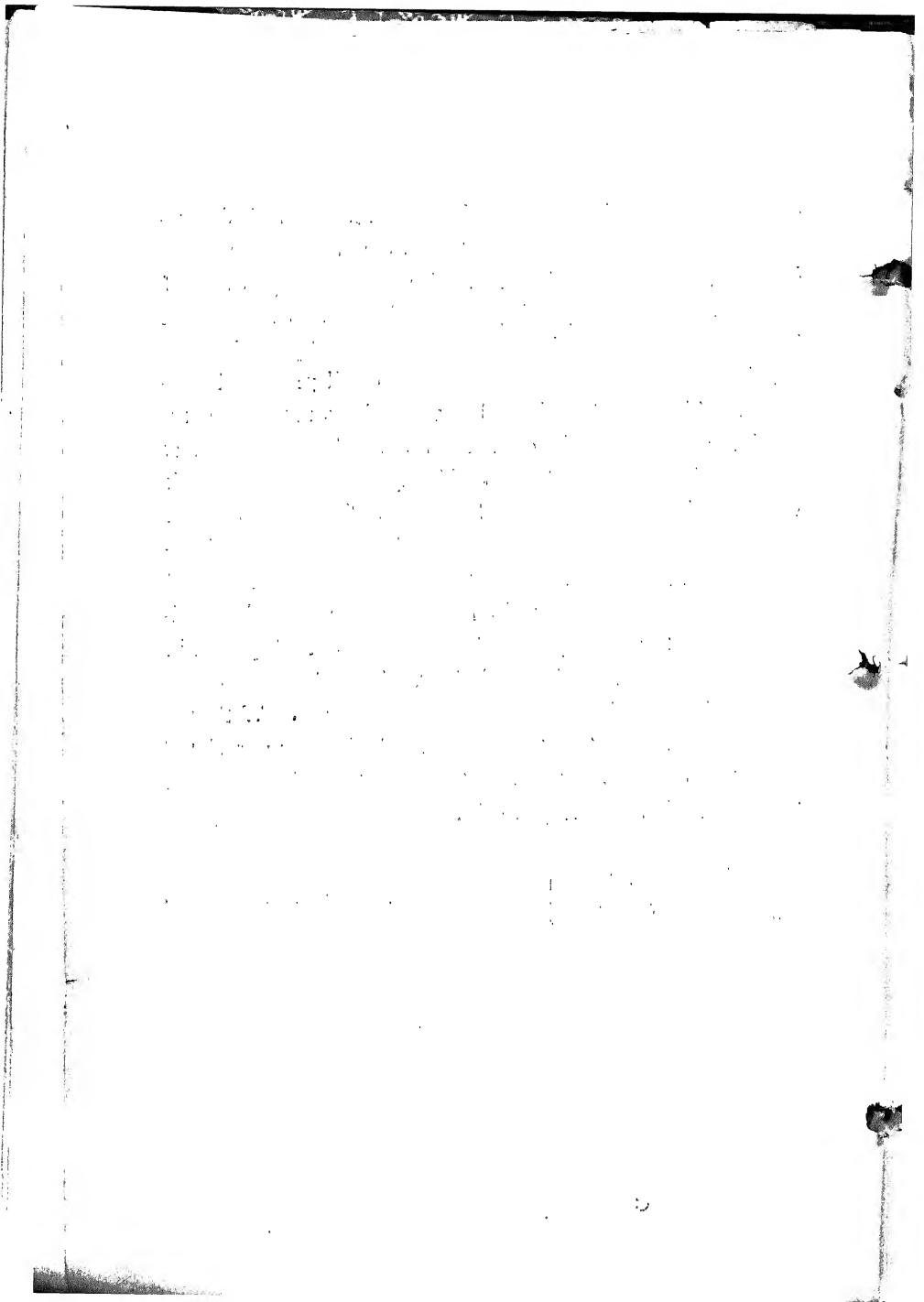
These prefatory pages will now introduce the reader to a study of the Classical Sanskrit literature. Amidst other work of a student's life, I had but a short leisure for this

compilation. This must sufficiently account for all defects of composition or arrangement. I do not profess to pass any of the views herein set forth purely as my own. I do not claim any originality or excellence to these pages. The scheme of oriental research as perfected by the learned scholars of Europe has been the cause of all progress in the literary history of India. I have endeavoured to summarise within a small compass the results of the latest inquiries into Indian studies. If any credit is due to this work, it is because at its foundation lie the admirable fruits of Indian scholarship. Most important of all, I express my sincere indebtedness to my own countrymen R. C. Dutt, Bhandarkar and R. L. Mitra for their grand contributions to the history of Indian civilization. My thanks are due to the Proprietor of the Vaijayanti Press for his sincere interest in the success of my labours. With the strong hope, then, that the matter will be better appreciated than the manner, I venture to present the book to the judgment of the literary world.

TRIPPLICANE,
Madras, 26th Oct. 1906. }

M. KRISHNAMACHARYA.

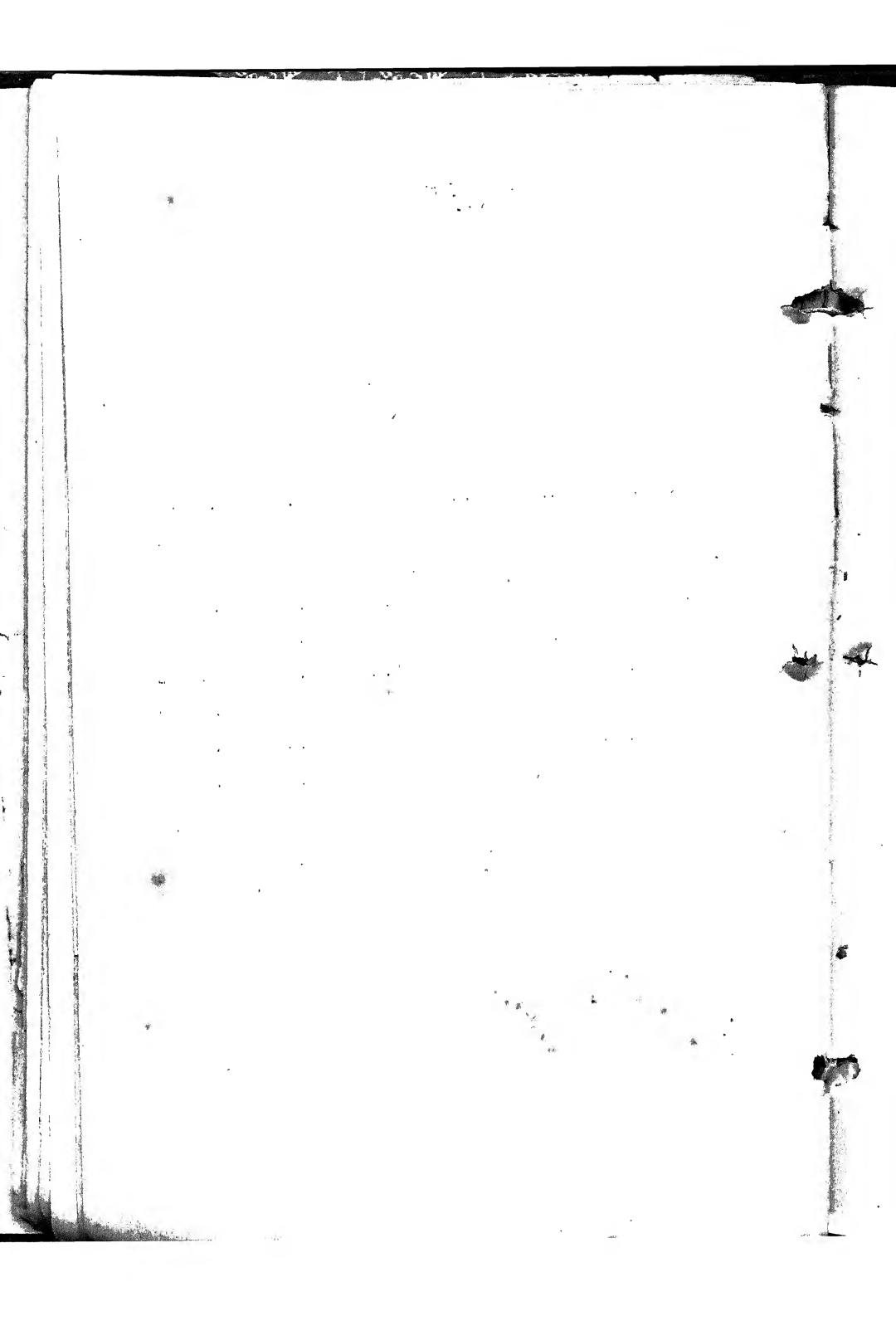




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THE CLASSICAL PERIOD
OF
SANSKRIT LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.
THE ANTIQUITY OF SANSKRIT
LITERATURE.

THE sacred literature of India, inferior to none in variety or extent, is superior to all others in nobility of thought, in sanctity of spirit and in generality of comprehension. In beauty or prolixity, it can vie with any other literature ancient or modern. Despite the various impediments to the steady development of the language, despite the successive disturbances, internal and external, which India had to encounter ever since the dawn of history, she has successfully held up to the world her archaic literary map, which meagre outline alone favourably compares with the literature of any other nation of the globe. The keenest researches of modern scholars have not enlightened the dark recesses of India's early literary history. The beginnings of her civilization are yet in obscurity. Relatively to any other language of the ancient world, the antiquity of Sanskrit has an unquestioned priority.

“The literature of India passes generally for the most ancient literature of which we possess written records and justly so”:*—For, it was argued that,

- (i) Astronomical data could be appealed to, according to which the Vedas would date from about 1400 B. C.;
- (ii) One of the Buddhistic eras could be relied upon, according to which a reformer was supposed to have arisen in the sixth century B. C. in opposition to Brahminical hierarchy ;
- (iii) The period when Panini flourished had been referred to the 4th century B. C., and from this, as a starting point, conclusions as to the period of literary development before him could be deduced.

These reasons recent research has proved to be baseless and the conclusion itself may be grounded on the accompanying data :—

- (i) In the more ancient parts of the Rig Veda, the Aryans appear to have dwelt in the North Western frontiers of India and thence gradually advanced farther eastward. The writings of the following period treat of accounts of internal conflict with the aboriginal races. If these are compared and connected with the accounts by Megasthenes, it is clear that at his time the Brahmanisation of Hindustan was already complete.
- (ii) In the songs of the Rik, the robust spirit of the people gives expression to the feeling of its relation to nature with a spontaneous freshness and simplicity. Beginning with this nature worship, we trace

* The first two chapters are based on Weber and Mac Donell.

in Indian literature the gradual progress of Hindu religious ideas through all their phases which development must have taken time abnormally long, enough to bring the earliest skirts of Indian literature to an archaic age.

- (iii) Prof. Max Muller's earliest estimate of 1200 B. C., appears to be much near the mark. A lapse of three centuries from 1300 to 1000 B. C. amply accounts for the difference between what is oldest and newest in Vedic Hymn poetry.
- (iv) The recent theory of Prof. Jacobi of Bonn. fixes the date back to at least 4000 B. C. The theory is based on astronomical calculations connected with a change in the beginning of the seasons, which he supposes had taken place since the time of the Rig Veda. But this estimate is falsified by the assumption of a doubtful and improbable meaning in a Vedic word, which forms the very starting point of the theory.

CHAPTER II.

The history of Indian literature falls into two periods : the Vedic and the Classical.

I. The Vedic period 1500—200 B. C.

The Vedic literature comprises the four Vedas : the Rik, the Yajus, the Saman and the Atharvan. Each of these has three forms or parts, the Samhita, the Brahmana and the Upanishad portions.

The Samhita of the Rik is purely a lyrical collection, forming the immediate source of the other three. The next

two are made up of verses and ritual formulæ, meant to be recited at Sacrifices. The Atharva Samhita resembles the Rik in that it forms a store of songs, devoted to sacrifices mostly in connection with incantations and magical charms.

The Brahmanic period comprehends "the first establishment of the three-fold ceremonial, the composition of the individual Brahmanas and the formation of the Charanas." They connect the sacrificial songs and formulas with the sacrificial rite by pointing out on the one hand their direct relation, and on the other their symbolical connection with each other. The general nature of these works is marked by shallow but masterly grandiloquence, by prepossessed conceit but antiquarian sincerity. In the words of Prof. Eggeling, these works deserve to be studied as a physician studies the twaddle of idiots or the raving of mad men. With all this, the composition lacks not striking thoughts, bold expression and logical reasoning. The Brahmanas of the Rik generally refer to the duties of the Hotr; of the Saman, to those of Udgatr; of the Yajus, to the actual performance of the sacrifice. They are valuable to us as the earliest records of Sanskrit prose.

The Sutra literature has its claim to our attention, in that it forms a connecting link between the Vedic and the later Sanskrit. The Sutras themselves are most artificial, most enigmatical. 'Sutra' means a 'string' and compatibly with this sense, all works of this style are nothing but one uninterrupted chain of short sentences linked together in a most concise form. "Even the apparent simplicity" says Colebrooke, "vanishes in the perplexity of structure. The endless pursuit of exceptions and limitations so disjoins the general precepts, that the reader cannot keep in view their intended

connection. He wanders in an intricate maze and the clew of the labyrinth is continually slipping from his hands." Though not very valuable from an artistic point of view, they from a literary composition, the most curious and the most ingenious the history of literature has ever seen.

II. The Classical Period.

The direct data attesting the posteriority of this period consist in these facts :—

- (i) That its opening phases everywhere presuppose the Vedic period as entirely closed ;
- (ii) That its oldest portions are regularly based on the Vedic literature;
- (iii) That the relations of life have now all arrived at a stage of development of which in the first period we can only trace the germs and the beginning.

The distinction between the periods is also by changes in language and subject matter.

First, as regards language:—

1. The special characteristics in the second period are so significant, that it appropriately furnishes the name for the period, whereas the Vedic period receives its designation from the works composing it.

2. Among the various dialects of the different Indo-aryau tribes, a greater unity had been established after their emigration into India, as the natural result of their intermingling in their new home. The grammatical study of the Vedas fixed the frame of the language so that the generally recognised *Bhasha* had arisen. The estrangement of the civic language

from that of the mass accelerated by the assimilation of the aboriginal races resulted in the formation of the popular dialects, the *prakrits*—proceeding from the original *Bhasha* by the assimilation of consonants and by the curtailment or loss of termination.

3. The phonetic condition of Sanskrit remains almost exactly the same as that of the earliest Vedic. In the matter of grammatical forms, the language shows itself almost stationary. Hardly any new formations or inflexions make their appearance yet. The most notable of these grammatical changes were the disappearance of the subjunctive mood and the reduction of a dozen infinitives to a single one. In declension the change consisted chiefly in the dropping of a number of synonymous forms.

4. The vocabulary of the language has undergone the greatest modifications. It has been extended by derivation and composition according to recognised types. Numerous words though old seem to be new, because they happen by accident not to occur in the Vedic literature. Many new words have come in through continental borrowings from a lower stratum of language, while already existing words have undergone great changes of meaning.

Secondly, as regards the subject matter:—

1. The Vedic literature handles its various subjects only in their details and almost solely in their relation to sacrifice, whereas the classical discusses them in their general relations.

2. In the former a simple and compact prose had gradually been developed, but in the latter this form is abandoned

and a rhythmic one adopted in its stead, which is employed exclusively even for strictly scientific exposition.

During the classical epoch, Brahmanic culture was introduced into and overspread the southern portion of the continent. This period, embracing in general secular subjects, achieved distinction in many branches of literature, in national as well as Court Epic, in lyric, especially didactic poetry, in the drama, in the fairy tales, fables and romances. Everywhere, we find much true beauty, which is however marred by obscurity of style and the ever increasing taint of artificiality. These works are in no way dominated by a sense of harmony and proportion. The tendency has been towards exaggeration manifesting in all directions. Among these are :—

- (i) The almost incredible development of detail in ritual observance ;
- (ii) The extraordinary excesses of asceticism ;
- (iii) The grotesque representations of mythology in art ;
- (iv) The frequent employment of vast numbers in description ;
- (v) The immense bulk of the epics ;
- (vi) The unparalleled conciseness of one of the forms of prose ;
- (vii) The huge compounds employed in later prose romances.

The total lack of historical sense is so characteristic that there appears an entire lack of chronology. Two causes account for this :—

- (i) Early India wrote no history, because it never made any. Ancient India never went through a struggle for life like the Greeks and the Romans in the

Persian and the Punic wars, such as would have welded the isolated tribes and developed political genius.

- (ii) The Brahmins, the dominant learned class, had early embraced the doctrine that all action and existence are a positive evil and could therefore have felt little inclination to chronicle historical events.

CHAPTER III.

EPIC POETRY.

Epic poetry, as distinguished from lyrical, has this principal characteristic, that it should confine itself more to external action than to internal feelings. Hence Epos is a natural expression of national life. When nations begin to grow up in ideas and civilization and consequently to reason and to speculate, their minds are turned inwards. Then the spontaneous outburst of epic song ceases and other kinds of refined poetry have their origin.

From the earliest times songs in celebration of great heroes were current in India, handed down by rhapsody and tradition. Ancient Vedic legends name not a few of such heroes and even the later epic personages are found to act in the same Vedic cycles in which the vedic poetry moves. The Vedic traditions were not yet obliterated from the recollections of the people, when the epic poems began to be written, nor did they lose their currency when by the efforts of the Brahmin priests all the remains of epic songs were collected into a large body in the form of the Mahabharata. In the songs of praise to the Vedic deities we have the beginnings of

epic poetry. The age of the Grihya Sutras testifies to the use of the Itihasas at sacrifices and many of the Brahmanas themselves have some passages called Itihasas and Akhyayikas. When compared with the later forms, the Vedic legends put on a primitive air and their style and mode are rude and simple.

Thus we have to look to the Vedas themselves for the source of Epic poetry. Epic literature, then, with its only representatives, the two leading epics, must have had its earliest composition in the pre-buddhistic era, at a period not later than the 5th century B. C. For,

1. The Ramayana records no case of Sati. Except in the single instance of Madri, Pandu's wife, none of the widows of slain heroes immolate themselves with their husbands. This proves the beginning of the practice of Sati. This rare and no reference to such an important custom in the earliest literary records of poetry leads to the assignment of both these compositions to a period before the third century B.C., when Megasthenes found it well prevalent as far east as Magadha.

2. The first construction of the poems must have been anterior to the actual establishment of Buddhism. Only one direct mention of Buddha occurs in the Ramayana and the context there proves that it must be an unmistakable interpolation. Nor does the Mahabharata make any such direct reference, though it must be admitted that there are allusions to the development of rationalistic inquiry and sceptic materialism.

3. The evidence of the Asoka inscriptions proves that by the 3rd century B. C. the provincial *prakrit* dialects had

already become the vernaculars. If the first redaction of the epic poems had not been considerably earlier, we could not have expected the language to be unalloyed by the influence of the vernacular tongues.

4. Dion Chrysostomos, a Greek writer of the first century, records the existence in his time of Indian epic poetry, indicating their resemblance to the Homeric poems and their currency in India long before the fourth century B. C.

Epic poetry, then, which forms the starting point of the classical Sanskrit literature, falls into two classes, the *Itihasa-puranas* and the *Kavyas*.

SECTION I.

The Mahabharata represents the Itihasa group. It weaves into it epic and didactic matter, divided into 18 books called *parvans*, with the Harivamsa as a supplement. The extant recension may be regarded under a three-fold aspect—as a work relating events of an historic character as a record of mythological and legendary lore, as the source whence specially the military caste was to obtain its instruction in all matters concerning their welfare in this and their bliss in future life. In one sense this work is the source of all the Puranas and as a document for antiquity, unrivalled for religious statesmanship.

Prof. Mac Donell discovers three distinct stages in the augmentation of the text:—

- (i) The disconnected battle-songs, originally current as immemorial folklore, were worked up into a connected epic plot with the history of the Kuru race

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II

as its basis. This period makes Brahma, the highest God. This must therefore have preceded the Buddha era.

- (ii) Handed down by rhapsodists, the body of the epic got unusually swelled up. The two Gods, Siva and Vishnu are introduced on a level with Brahma, and Krishna appears as a Vaishnavite incarnation.
- (iii) The sectarian division was already prominent by the time of Megasthenes and mention is made of Hindu temples and Buddhistic mounds. The reference to the Yavanas and the Pahlavas makes also probable an extension of the epic just after 300 B. C.

This epic is a traditional record of an early period of Hindu history, compiled and modelled by them to suit a special purpose of their own, that of imposing their own law on the Kshatriyas. "The fabric of this voluminous epos was not built in a day. Different times supplied different materials for it and with the importance of the object the greatness of the task increased."

In dealing with this traditional lore of the military caste, the authors would have to meet three categories of facts:— facts which were more or less in accordance with the religious and political system to be established and consolidated by them ; facts, if not in harmony, yet not antagonistic ; and facts entirely opposed to it. Of these the first would be lauded, the second tolerated and so the third could only be explained away, because they could not be suppressed, as being too deeply rooted in tradition and consequently as having the strongest presumption in favour of their authenticity, *e.g.*, five-maled marriage of Draupadi.

- (i) Polyandry never found any place in the Brahminical Code or in the habits of the Hindu and if in spite of its thorough offensiveness it was imputed to the very heroes of the great Epos, there seems to have been no alternative but to admit it as a historic fact. If this marriage was a real event, it throws at once the fight of the Pandavas to such a remote antiquity as to leave behind, not only Manu, but even those Vedic writings of Aswalayana and others on whose writings the ancient law of India is based.
- (ii) The institution of caste did not exist in the Vedic period. It was however fully recognised by Manu's time. During the Vedic age a warrior like Viswamitra could aspire to be a Brahmin or a brahmin like Vasista could be a warrior, but Manu does not allow such a confusion of occupations. It recurs only at the latest period of Hinduism. The "disguise of the Pandavas" must have been highly objectionable after the foundation of caste. "False boasting of a higher caste," is an offence according to Manu, ranked along with the murder of a brahmin.
- (iii) The Law of Marriage and Inheritance. There are passages where their contents and the law-book differ considerably. It is impossible to assume the occurrences mentioned are innovations on Manu :—
- (a) Vichitra-viryā died childless and Vyasa begot two sons on his widows. Manu allows it only in the case of Sudras. Even there the procreation is limited to a single offspring. Both these must have been unknown to Vyasa, for the other was a Kshatriya and Vyasa being a Brahmin procreated not only

more than one child for the benefit of his relative, but so far as his belief went there.

- (b) Bhishma, making mention of the marriage notions of his time when choosing the daughters of Banares to wife to his brother, differs from Manu. He says "Men of military caste exalt and practise the self-choice mode and the law-giver calls the choicest of all wives, her, who has been carried off by force."

In the Mahabharata, therefore, a state of society is depicted, that is anterior to the Code of Manu and an investigation of those portions would show that this society differs from the society mirrored by the ancient Code not only in regard to positive law but in customs and morality.

Further testimonies as to the age of the Mahabharata :—

1. Panini teaches us the accent of *Maha* in Mahabharata and that the termination *Aka* must be applied to Vasudeva and Arjuna to form derivatives. There is a subtlety, which however shows that the epic characters had come to be regarded as demi-gods. But it is not unlikely that Panini was led to put them together because they were always associated together in the minds of the people as they are in this epic. In a third Sutra we have Yudhistira.

2. In Patanjali's work, we have the names of Bhima, Sahadeva and Nakula mentioned as descendants of Kuru. In another place, where Patanjali comments on Panini III, ii, 122. "Dharmena sma Kuravo Yudhyante" it appears, that the war was considered as having taken place at a very remote time.

3. The Brahmanas must have gone before the Sutras. Aitereya mentions Janamejaya and Bharata as powerful kings.

4. Aswalayana (about 350 B. C.) names Bharata and Mahabharata in his Grihya Sutras.

5. About A. D. 80, Dion Chrysostom writes " Even among the Indians, they say, Homer's poetry is sung, having been translated by them in their own dialect and tongue and the Indians are well-acquainted in the sufferings of Piani, the lamentations of Andromache and the prowess of Achilles and Hector." These allusions keep close correspondence with leading incidents in our epic.

6. "It has as its basis a war waged on the soil of Hindustan between Aryan tribes and therefore properly belonging to a time when their settlement in India and the subjugation and brahminisation of the native inhabitants had already been accomplished. Of the epic in its extant form only about one-fourth relates to this conflict and the myths that have been associated with it, while the elements composing the remainder do not belong to it at all and have only the loosest possible connection therewith as well as with each other.Even at the portion, which is recognisable as the original basis—that relating to war—many generations must have laboured, before the text attained to an approximately settled shape."— *Weber*.

7. In one of the Nasik inscriptions dated 394 A. D., Gokarniputra's prowess is compared to that of Bhima and Arjuna. Another inscription of Dharwar bears 3730 in the era of the Mahabharata War corresponding to Saka 560 or

A. D. 638. It thus appears that about the 6th century, the war which forms the theme of the epic was considered to have taken place 4000 years before.

The Mahabharata is not so much a poem as an encyclopædia of Hindu law, ethics and mythology. Indian tradition assigns the authorship of this vast poem to Vyasa, to whom also is attributed the arrangement of the Puranas. The principal story occupies little more than a fifth of the whole, but this lowest layer is overlaid by successive incrustations so as to obscure the very recognition of the substratum.

The poem relates the story of the great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, both descendants of the lunar race, concluding in the victory of the former and the installation of King Yudhistira on the throne of Hastinapura. But the Great Epic stops not here, but it responds most truly to the deeper emotions of Hinduism. "It instils a more sublime moral that all who desire rest must aim at union with the Infinite." The concluding chapters lead us to the sublime description of the renunciation of their kingdom by the Pandava princes, prior to their ascent to the celestial world.

Commentaries.—"The best known commentator of the Mahabharata is Nilakanta, who lived at Kurupara to the West of Godavari in Maharashtra and according to Burnell belongs to the sixteenth century. Older is Arjuna Misra, whose commentary appears in the Calcutta edition of 1875. The earlier commentator is Sarvagna Narayana, large fragments of whose notes have been preserved and who cannot have written later than the 2nd half of the 14th century, but may be somewhat older."—*Mac Donell*.

SECTION II.

The Ramayana.—The immortal epic of Valmiki is undoubtedly one of the gems of literature—indeed some considering it as the Kohinoor of the literary region, which has, for centuries and from time immemorial, shedding unparalleled and undying halo upon the domain presided over by “the vision and faculty divine.” The author is regarded a *rishi* or a seer and he says he was a contemporary of Rama. His hermitage lay on the banks of the Ganges, and there Sita was delivered of her twin sons, whose foster-father he was. “It is quite possible that, as the Ramayana is said to have arisen in the race of the Ikshvakus, many legends were afloat at the royal court, which were woven together in a poetic form, in conformity to the rules of rhetoric by Valmiki, the first poet.”

The age of the Ramayana has been already proved to be pre-buddhistic, as is also of all the epic poetry of India. Modern research has proved that the epic kernel of the Ramayana must have been completed before the 5th century B.C., and the present recensions assumed this form three centuries before the christian era. *The accompanying data of date determination are discernible:—*

1. The *Dasaratha Jataka* contains the story of Rama in one of the *Pali Jataka-tales* in a somewhat altered form. “While Valmiki’s poem concludes with the reunion of Rama and Sita, the *Jataka* is made to end with the marriage of the couple after the manner of the Fairy tales, there being at the same time traces that they were wedded all along in the original source of the legend.” The *Jataka* moreover has

imbedded into it a verse from the Ramayana in a slightly vernacular form. Hence our poem precedes the Jataka age.

2. The Greeks are mentioned only twice and that under the vague name of Yavanas, which word embraces not only the Greeks but many of those alien races that had from time to time made inroads on N. W. India. The theory of the translation of the Greek poems into the Indian epics has no standing ground. So our epic composition must have preceded the Greek invasions.

3. The city of Pataliputra was built about 400 B. C. under Kalasoka and which about 350 B. C. became the capital of an empire. While the Ramayana refers to cities of Eastern Hindustan, it makes no mention of this important city. The only deduction is that the composition of the poem preceded the foundation of the city.

4. The capital of the Kosala Kingdom is called *Ayodhya* in the poem, whereas the name *Saketa* is given to it by the Buddhists and the Jains. It is said that Lava fixed his seat of Government at Sravasti. Our poem must have been composed when the old capital Ayodhya was not yet deserted and by Buddha's time the Kosala capital was under King Prasenajit of Sravasti.

5. The Ramayana speaks of Mithila and Visala as two independent principalities, whereas by Buddha's time they were united into the single city of Vaisali under an oligarchical Government.

6. The patriarchal form of Government as depicted in the

Ramayana does not contemplate the existence of complex states, while by the end of the fifth century B. C. we hear of powerful kingdoms set up in Hindustan.

7. The conquest of Ceylon by Vijaya took place in the 5th century B. C. Even before this the island was darkly known and the popular belief was that monsters and giants infested the country. The Ramayana, therefore, which makes no reference to Vijaya's conquest and represents the ruler thereof as a ten-headed monster must be as signed to an age far early in the centuries before Christ.

8. "The whole of India south of the Vindhya chain is described as one interminable forest inhabited by barbarous aborigines who are described as monkeys and bears of different kinds. The banks of the Godavari and the Krishna river were colonised by the Aryans early in the Rationalistic period and great empires like that of the Andhras rose to power and started new schools of science and learning several centuries before Christ. The Ramayana in its original shape must therefore be referred to a period long anterior to the Aryan subjugation of Southern India."—*Dutt*.

Regarding the authenticity and signification of the narrative itself, various theories have been advanced, of which the most important are summarised below :—

I. *Prof. Weber*.—"In the Ramayana we find ourselves from the very outset in the region of allegory and we only move upon historical ground in so far as the allegory is applied to an historical fact, *viz.*, to the spread of Aryan civilization to the south more especially to Ceylon. The characters are not

historical figures but merely personifications of certain occurrences and situations. Sita, in the first place, whose abduction by a giant demon and her subsequent recovery by her husband Rama, constitute the plot of the entire poem, is but the field-furrow to whom divine honors were paid in the songs of the Rik and in the Grihya ritual. She accordingly represents Aryan husbandry, which has to be protected by Rama—whom I regard as originally indetical with Balarama '*halabrit*' '*the plough-bearer*,' though the two were afterwards separated—against the attacks of the predatory aborigines. These latter appear to be demons and giants; whereas those natives who were well-disposed towards the Aryan civilization are represented as monkeys—a comparison which was doubtless not exactly intended to be flattering and which rests on the striking ugliness of the Indian aborigines as compared with the Aryan race."

II. *R. C. Dutt*.—"The Ramáyana is utterly valueless as a narrative of historical events and incidents. The heroes are myths, pure and simple. Sita, the field-furrow, had received divine honors from the time of the Rig Veda and had been worshipped as a goddess. When cultivation gradually spread towards Southern India, it was not difficult to invent a poetical myth that Sita was carried to the south. And when this goddess and woman—the noblest creation of human imagination—had acquired a distinct and lovely individuality, she was naturally described as the daughter of the holiest and most learned King on record, Janaka of the Videhas !

"But who is Rama, described as Sita's husband and King of the Kosalas? The later Puranas tell us he was an incarnation of Vishnu—but Vishnu himself had not risen to prominence.

at the time at which we are speaking! Indra was the chief of the Gods in the Epic period. In the Sutra literature we learn that Sita the furrow goddess is the wife of Indra. Is it then an untenable conjecture that Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, is in his original conception like Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata, only a new edition of the Indra of the Rig Veda, battling with the demons of drought? The myth of Indra has thus been mixed up with the epic which describes a historic war in Northern India, and the epic which describes the historic conquest of Southern India?"

III. *Prof. Jacobi*.—"The foundation of the Ramayana would be a celestial myth of the Veda transformed into a narrative of earthly adventures according to a not uncommon development. Sita can be traced to the Rig Veda, where she appears as the Furrow personified and invoked as a goddess. In some of the Grihya-sutras, she again appears as a genius of the plough-field, is praised as a being of great beauty and is accounted the wife of Indra or Parjanya the rain-god. There are traces of this origin in the Ramayana itself. For Sita is represented, as having emerged from the earth, when her father Janaka was once ploughing and at last disappears underground in the arms of the goddess Earth. Her husband Rama would be no other than Indra, and his conflict with Ravana would represent the *Indra-Vritra* myth of the Rig Veda. This identification is confirmed by the name of Ravana's son being Indrajit or Indra-Satru, the latter being actually an epithet of Vritra in the Rig Veda. Ravana's most notable feat, the rape of Sita, has its prototype in the stealing of the cows recovered by Indra. Hanumat, the chief of the monkeys and Rama's ally in the recovery of Sita, is the son of the wind-god with the patronymic Maruti and is described as flying hundreds of

leagues through the air to find Sita. Hence in his figure perhaps survives a reminiscence of Indra's alliance with the Maruts in his conflict with Vritra and the dog Sarama who as Indra's messenger crosses the waters of the Rasa and tracks the cows occurs as the name of the demoness who consoles Sita in her captivity."

The body of the work is divided into seven *Kandas*, the *Bala*, the *Ayodhya*, the *Aranya*, the *Kishkindha*, the *Sundara*, the *Yuddha* and the *Uttara*. But the plot admits of four broad landmarks, corresponding to the chief epochs in Rama's life:—

1. His youth ; his education and residence at the royal court ; his marriage ; his installation as crown prince.
2. The circumstances leading to his banishment and his exile in the forest.
3. His war with the giants and the recovery of Sita.
4. His return to Ayodhya ; his coronation ; and his rebanishment of Sita.

Whatever may have been the fanciful interpretations of modern theorists, the Epic has maintained its unity of plot and action for centuries more than twenty and it has withstood both as regards construction and proportion the intellectual onsets of keen criticism. In Baconian language, it can be said that the Ramayana has come home to the business and bosoms of all men. Influence on life is the true test of real art and that our poem has had in abundance. Cosmogony and theogony, folklore and tradition, mythology and history

have all found a part "in the weaving of this mighty web and woof of magic drapery evolved by Valmiki." For a picture of Hindu life of the tenth century, writes Dutt, when the Kosalas and the Videhas had by long residence in the Gangetic valley become law-abiding and priest-ridden, learned and polished, enervated and dutiful, we would refer our readers to the Ramayana. The classical excellence and perspicuity of its style, the exquisite suggestions of poetic tenderness, the graphic delineations of heroic history, the deepest acquaintance with Nature's grandest scenes and the observed proportion of paragraphic classification—all this gains for Valmiki the presidential chair in the pantheon of the world's poetic geniuses.

SECTION III.

The Epics Compared.

1. **As to subject matter.**—The Mahabharata is the oldest representative of the Itihasa group, whereas the Ramayana is but a Kavya—the first of the kind.

2. Both of these have a main leading story whereon many other narratives are engrafted. But in the Mahabharata the main narrative plays a minor part, simply serving to interweave a vast collection of unconnected myths and precepts, while in the Ramayana the minor episodes never eclipse the importance of the dominant story. The solid character is never broken and the principal subject never impeded by didactic discourses or sententious maxims.

3. The epics belong to different periods and different districts. Not only was a large part of the Mahabharata composed later than the Ramayana but they belong respectively to the West and East of Hindustan.

4. The circle of territory embraced by the story of Ramayana reaches to the Videhas in the east, to the Surastras in the south-west and to the Vindhya and Dandaka in the south, and therefore more restricted in area, while the Mahabharata represents the Aryan settlers as having spread themselves to the mouths of the Ganges, to the Coromandel and the Malabar Coasts. Even Ceylon brings them tribute.

5. The religious system of the Mahabharata is far more catholic and popular. The idea of the supreme importance of the hero is not strong. Krishna is by no means the head of the Hindu pantheon. In the Ramayana, Rama's divinity is undisputed and Rama's character in a way illustrates the one-sided exclusion of Brahminism.

6. The Ramayana forms the first source of recorded information of the tenets of Hinduism as perfected by the Brahminical influence. We can discern no confusion of religious principles and the growth of spiritual ideas has reached an unmistakable position, whereas the Mahabharata reflects the mutilated character of Hinduism and a confused combination of monotheism and polytheism, of orthodox intolerance and materialistic catholicism.

7. "Notwithstanding wild ideas and absurd figments, the Mahabharata contains many more illustrations of real life and of domestic and social manners than the sister epic."

8. Though simple and natural in style and language the Mahabharata comprehends a diversity of composition, resorting at times to loose and irregular constructions and exhibiting complex grammatical forms, vedic and archaic. The bulk

of the Ramayana, on the other hand, worked up as it is by one author, presents a uniform simplicity of style and metre. "The antiquity is proved by the absence of studied elaboration of diction."

(ii) **As to their relative priority.**—Professor Weber has advanced the theory that the composition of the Mahabharata must have preceded that of the Ramayana. So also Mr. Dutt : "We must premise even as a picture of life the Ramayana is long posterior to the Mahabharata. We miss in the Ramayana the fiery valour and the proud self-assertion of the Kshatriyas of the Mahabharata and the subordination of the people to the priestly caste is more complete."

The traditional belief of the orthodox Hindus as to the decided priority of Valmiki's poem is apparently shaken by the acceptance of these theories. Tradition as it is of unhistorical people, still it is not so undefended as it may at first sight seem to be. External and internal evidence there is ample to falsify the modern theory and corroborate Indian tradition. In some cases the very words and arguments of the theorists weaken their basis. We thus sum up our defensive arguments:—

1. Clear references to the story of the Ramayana occur in the sister epic. *Sringiberapura* is considered a place of sanctity and pilgrimage because of Rama's visit thereto. Not one of the heroes named in the Mahabharata occur in the Ramayana, whereas the story of Rama is very frequently referred to in the other. In Mahabharata Book VII, two lines of Valmiki Book VI are quoted unaltered in diction. In Mahabharata Book III, a *Ramopakhyana* based on the larger epic,

some of the verses closely resembling the original, is related and Vyasa postulates that the story of Rama was too popular to need any detail.

Such direct references cannot fail to convince us of the priority of the Ramayana. But the negativists try to explain it away by the plea that *these are later interpolations*. This argument, if it can be called so, is a very useful weapon for many modern scholars when their theory can make no other stand. "When the pistol misses fire they knock you down with the butt-end of it." What does the orthodox Hindu gain by purposely interpolating unimportant references and arguing the feigned priority of the one epic to the other? If the original of the Mahabharata did not contain any references to the Ramayana, they had no business in such interpolation and they are not a whit better in their religious or spiritual beliefs. The Mahabharata loses not, nor does the Ramayana gain, a particle of their belief or regard by questions of chronological priority or posteriority. For it is in the inherent nature of the Hindu mind to disregard all questions of history. If the Ramayana had really been composed later, how is this fact accounted for—that the Mahabharata war, the most important incident as it is in the world's history, fails to have the least reference to it in Valmiki's work? Valmiki's ignorance of the Great War cannot stand as an argument. Nor can the sanctity of Kurukshetra be less conspicuous than that of *Sringiberapura*, so as to lose mention of it in a religious work as the Ramayana. Therefore it must be conclusively granted that the argument of interpolation fails, as it has neither purpose nor probability. It is however a hobby for many European critics in their study of Oriental works, whose archaic constructions are rarely palatable to their modern tastes.

2. It is an admission that the epics abound in hyperboles. Ranging from the sacrifice of *Put* to the return of Rama to Ayodhya in the ærial cendent appears an evolution of the poet's intellect. *yana* represents its actors as never moving in an. But "in the latter" says Weber himself, "h everywhere predominates and a number of w characters are introduced, to whom the possibility of existence cannot be denied....." No scholar c improbability in gambling, loss of kingdom, Besides the *Mahabharata* deals with men and monkeys. An advanced race of men can place in the story of a ten-headed monster. The e into the world's history, the more simple and world is. So the *Ramayana* must have been co the Indian public had yet time to grow practic able.

3. Rishyasringa is represented in the *Ramay* ever in solitude and unseen by men or women. of a hind and had a horn on his head. The inti mythical character like this demonstrates the an work.

4. In the *Mahabharata Adiparvan* a house of is erected by a *Mlecha* called *Putrochana* at th Duryodhana. Again Vidura, trying to reveal the the lac house to his friends the Pandavas, ta in a *Mlecha* tongue ununderstood by the accor pulous. The war-portion of the same epic names half a dozen *Mlecha* Kings taking part in the wa *Drona Parva* 26, 93, 119, 122). On the contrary t

makes no such references at all and the only few allusions to the *Yavanas* do not prove alien interference in politics. The signification of 'Yavana' is not the same as that of 'Mlecha.' It is therefore safe to deduce that at the time of the Ramayana foreign influence was not felt, at any rate not enough to give the foreigners a territorial dominion in the international policy of Indian States.

5. The geographical account of Valmiki regarding Southern India denies the existence of any civilized kingdoms there. On the other hand the country South of the Vindhya range is the haunt of savage demons like Viradha and Kabandha. In the royal invitations at Dasaratha's Court no one King of Southern India has a summons, nor does Rama in his journey southwards make alliance with a civilized prince. On the other hand the Kings of Southern India have a prominent reception at the *Rajasuya* sacrifice of Yudhistira. The geographical sketch of *Bharata-varsha* as given in the *Bhishma-parva* shows a very intimate acquaintance with the advanced states of the Dekhan. Hence, since the days of the Ramayana the country has from a political point of view made a decided advance.

6. The test of archery at the marriage of Sita had better be compared with that at Draupadi-Swayamvara. The latter indicates an obvious advance in the dexterity of the test. In the construction of the army also, we see an improvement in the science of war. Rama's army knows not of varied dispositions, whereas in the Bharata war the plan of *Vyuhas* or arrays has already been devised, by means of which a small force can withstand a powerful one. The ordered supervision of the commandants, the regular signals of colored standards, the

applausive roars of victorious combatants—all these never miss a detailed delineation in the battles of the Great War. The complexity in the development of martial tactics shows a sign of a later age.

7. The encyclopædic variety of the contents of the Mahabharata together with its vastness of knowledge in every line of science or art shows a rapid progress from the age of Valmiki. Vyasa notes law and science reduced to a system, whereas no idea of codification is discernible in the Ramayana.

8. The character of Sita is advantageously compared with that of Draupadi. Sita is simpler and more cowardly. She exhorts the reluctant Rama to permit her company to the woods. Draupadi musters her strength to argue the justice of Yudhistira's authority to pawn his wife when once he has enslaved himself. Sita belongs to an age of ignorance and cowardice; Draupadi of wisdom and courage. Draupadi's religious convictions are looser than the god-fearing instinct of the daughter of Janaka.

9. The rigour of patriarchal ties and institutions is palpably visible in the history of Rama. The disintegration of the presbyterian respect enjoined by Hindu canons of conduct has set in by the time of the Mahabharata. Rama is a model son, innocently submissive to paternal mandate; Bharata, the paragon of a brother; Sugriva, the standard of a friend. Rama says: नसर्वे भ्रातरस्तात भवन्ति भरतोपमाः । A sense of sincere duty animates Valmiki's characters and the pivot of Rama's victory is the truthfulness of his adherents. Quite the reverse is the case in the Mahabharata. Bhima is ready to

revolt against Yudhistira, if only he should consent to a conciliation. He is impatient to throw off the Kaurava princes, despite their promise of self-slavery on a failure at dice. Salya readily takes the side of the Kurus. Business and self-seeking overrides the feeling of truthful responsibility.

Otherwise too the age of the Mahabharata is corrupt and degenerate. For victory's sake every crime is readily committed—from false evidence and forgery to robbery and murder. Duryodhana's attempt to poison his own kinsmen or Yudhistira's abetment at Drona's murder are sufficient instances.

This state of corruption and degeneracy clearly points to a later sceptic state of society.

10. Ravana carries off Sita by force and she would not allow her to be touched by Hanuman, when he proposes to take her on his back to Rama's abode. Even after victory she has to pass through an ordeal of fire for admission to the queenship. Similarly in the Kamyaka forest Jayathratha abducts Draupadi by force and is easily received again without any test of good conduct by her husbands. Apparently Rama's contemporaries had a stricter notion of morality and wifely duty and stronger was the faith in the interposition of Providence. The relaxation in such religious and ethical beliefs proves an advance in the age of the Mahabharata.

11. Valmiki does not transmit his poem by written records. He composes it and chooses Kusa and Lava to get it by heart and to put to lyre and singing. On the other hand, Vyasa is traditionally known to have dictated his work and Ganesa put

it in writing and so the first means of transmission was in writing. The conjecture is that at the time of the composition of the Ramayana writing was unknown or the practice of writing was in its embryo.

12. Lastly the racy and elegant style of Valmiki—a sign of antiquity—contrasts itself most favourably with that of the rugged and laboured language of the Mahabharata.

These arguments, then, must suffice to convince any negativist of the futility of his theory. “The heroes of the Ramayana are somewhat tame and common place personages, very respectful to priests, very anxious to conform to the rules of decorum and etiquette.....” If this were a negativist’s argument, his counsel must only throw out his brief. On the contrary that very tameness of heroes and priestly domination is a sign of antiquity. When people learn to reason and argue, priests can no longer claim predominance. Priests can only be “wits among lords” and not “lords among wits.” Orthodox Hindu tradition is not after all a deception to the eyes of a sober observer.

SECTION IV.

The Puranas.

The Puranas now deserve attention, as constituting an important department of Sanskrit literature in their connection with the later phases of Brahminism as manifested in the religious doctrine of emanation, incarnation and triple manifestation. The term ‘Purana’ signifies ‘old tradition’ and the ancient narratives eighteen in number are said to have been compiled by the venerable sage Vyasa, the supposed founder of the Vedanta School of philosophy. The range of their

contents is encyclopædical. They are histories of Gods, as opposed to Itihasas, the histories of heroic men. The theology they teach is anything but simple, uniform or consistent.

Every Purana is supposed to treat of only five topics:—
 (1) The creation of the universe (2) Its destruction and re-creation (3) The geneology of Gods (4) The periods of the Manuts (5) The history of the Solar and Lunar races of Kings. It was this characteristic of a Purana that made Amarasimha call it Pancha-Lakshani. The fact, that very few Puranas now extant answer to this index of contents and that the abstract given in the Matsya Purana of the subjects of the other Puranas does not tally with the extant works, proves the theory that the modern Puranas are but recensions or epitomes of more ancient originals. The mythology of the Puranas is more developed than that of the Mahabharata.

Prof. Wilson assigns the composition of these works to a period later than the 6th century A. D. "They offer" he says "characteristic peculiarities of a more modern description, in the paramount importance which they assign to individual divinities, in the variety and purport of the rites addressed to them and in the invention of new legends illustrative of the power and graciousness of those divinities and of the efficacy of implicit devotion to them." The Professor further discovers allusions to circumstances, which make the assignment of a comparatively recent date indisputable. As a culminating remark, he adds "they were pious frauds for temporary purposes."

The deductions which occasioned the learned scholar's remarks are based on internal evidence, the authority of

which modern research questions on all sides. Sectarianism consists in the exclusive and not merely preferential worship of any divinity. The Pūranas as a whole do not prohibit the worship of any god, but the sectarianism goes to the extent of recommending a particular deity in preference to all others. Passages are not rare in the Puranas, where all the deities are described as occupying an equal scale in the Hindu pantheon. Again the Professor seems to have given greater weight to the internal testimony from those passages, which he thinks have a modern appearance, than to that which results from those parts which the Puranas must have contained from their first composition, in order to entitle them to a sacred character and to that reverence with which these works have been regarded by the Hindus. But the fixing of a possible date when the Puranas received their present form is a question of little or no consequence, when it is admitted that there is abundant positive and circumstantial evidence of the prevalence of the doctrines which they teach, the currency of the legends which they narrate and the integrity of the institutions which they describe, at least three centuries before the Christian era. They cannot, therefore, be pious frauds in subservience to sectarian imposture. What more conclusive evidence of their antiquity can be required than their containing a correct description of the doctrines and institutions of the Hindu religion, which were prevalent in India three centuries before the Christian era? For it is probable more that the present Puranas are the same works as were then extant, than that eighteen persons should have each conceived 1300 years afterwards the design of writing a Purana and should have been able to compile or compose so accurately 18 different works which correspond so exactly in most of their minute particulars. Of course it must be admitted that their present form-

is an adulterated one, occasioned by causes incidental to the mode of preservation and the voluminousness of the works themselves. Later accretions and interpolations there might have been and these in themselves cannot make the whole body of works modern. The language of the prose of the Vishnu Purana is quite in keeping with this view. We shall glean out a particular instance :—

अयमन्योऽस्मत्प्रत्याख्यानोपायः । वृद्धोयमनभिमतस्त्रीणां किमुत
कन्यानामित्यमुना संचिन्त्यैतदभिहितम् । आकर्ष्य सर्वा अपिताः
कन्यास्सानुरागाः समन्मयाः करेणव इवेमयूथपतिं तमृषिमहमहमिकया
वरयांबभूवुः ॥ Vishnu IV.—ii—91.

These lines speak for themselves. Not the slightest artificiality is noticeable in them. The idea flows and the later figurative embellishments are seen in their embryo. This style certainly deserves to precede the period of Sudraka's. The very sources of Dandin's style are discernible here. The refined wording, the musical choice of words and the naturalness of the flow of expression are the chief characteristics of this prose and therefore the Puranas not undeservedly mark a transition from the Sutras to the Artificial Romance.

According to the traditional classification, the number of the Puranas is eighteen. They are subdivided into three classes based on the predominance of one of the three principles of external existence—*goodness*, *darkness* and *passion* :—

- i. The *Satvika* puranas—Vishnu, Narada, Bhagavata, Garuda, Padma and Varaha.
- ii. The *Tamasa* puranas—Matsya, Kurma, Linga, Saiva, Skanda and Agni.

- iii. The *Rajasa* puranas—Brahmanda, Vaivarta, Markandeya, Bhavishyat and Brahma.

The first two groups chiefly devote themselves to the commendation of Vishnu and Siva, while the third promotes the claims of individual forms as Krishna, Devi and Ganesa. The present Puranas are numbered at 400,000 couplets.

The *Upapuranas* have the same characteristics as the *Puranas*. One of them contains the episode of Adhyatma Ramayana, supposed to be a spiritual version of Valmiki's poem. The *Tantras* are a later development of the doctrines of the Puranic creed. They are the writings of *saktas* or votaries of the female energies of some divinity, mostly the wife of Siva. Such ideas are not altogether absent in the Puranic works. But in the *Tantras* they assume a peculiar character owing to the admixture of magic performances and mystic rites of perhaps an indelicate nature. Amarasimha knows not of them. Among these are the *Kularnava*, *Syamalarahasya* and *Kalikatantra*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KAVYAS OR ARTIFICIAL EPICS.

The Ramayana stands at the head of the Kavya branch of Sanskrit literature. In its composition it answers in every minute detail to the description of a Mahakavya as defined by Poetics. In perfection or in spontaneity the later poems can in no way compare themselves favourably with the work of Valmiki. The Mahabhashya of Patanjali has literary evidence

to show that the Kavya literature was eminently flourishing during the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era.

The earliest poem next to that of Valmiki that has survived the wreck of time is the **Buddha-Charita** of **Asvaghosha**. He was a brahmin of Eastern India, who after his conversion by Vasumitra, the President of the Buddhistic council, settled in Kashmir and became the twelfth Buddhist patriarch.* He was a contemporary of Kanishka and so belongs to the first century A. D. His Buddha-charita is a Maha Kavya celebrating the legend of Buddha. It was translated into Chinese about A. D., 414—421. He is also the reputed author of *Alankāralēka Sāstra*. His style is very simple and graceful and seems immediately descended from the language of Valmiki and the mischievous artificialities of later works are not at all noticeable. There is so much of similarity between his fancies and Kalidasa's that many scholars are of opinion that one of these must have copied from the other.

Here comes the Dark Age in the history of Kavya poetry. For centuries more than three, no work of the kind survived to us, so that this datum became the foundation of the famous Renaissance Theory of Max Muller—that in consequence of the Scythian incursions the Indians ceased from literary activity for some centuries and that the age of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain about the middle of the 6th century was the golden age of Sanskrit poetry. The merits of the theory itself as based on Fergusson's hypothesis will be discussed in a later chapter. But epigraphical research in recent years has brought to light a mass of literary work, which

* His sermons were so impressive that horses shed tears and would not eat fodder before him. Hence his name.

clearly disproves the theory of a sudden paucity in literature. Under Samudra Gupta, the second of the Gupta line, about 350 A. D., the poet Harisena composed a panegyric, partly of prose and partly of poetry, which for its simplicity and gracefulness of language rivals Kalidasa and Dandin. The prose portion is full of long compounds and the poetry follows the Vaidarbhi style. Again during the reign of Bandhvarman about A. D. 437, Vatsabhattacharya commemorated in a recorded inscription the consecration of the temple at Dasapura. The passage reveals its own beauty in thought and language, at any rate compatible only with the conjecture that a rich Kavya literature was in full activity before the advent of Kalidasa.

Kalidasa forms to us the first of a series Kavya writers that have contributed to the development of a vast artificial poetry. Regarding the private life of Kalidasa, no tradition can pass uninjured through the ordeal of historical test. He has been spoken of as a contemporary of a Vikrama or a Bhoja. A discussion of the age of Kalidasa is for the present deferred to the Chapter on the dramatic literature. A boor as he was by birth, he became an inspired poet by the grace of Kali. Hence his name. In this sense he may parallel the English Caedmon. Caedmon sang of philosophy or cosmogony; Kalidasa of mythical tales of love. Caedmon appeared at almost the dawn of the Anglo Saxon literature; Kalidasa, when the Sanskrit tongue was at the zenith of perfection.

The Raghuvamsha—a long poem of nineteen cantos—narrates the history of Rama with an account of some of his immediate ancestors and successors. Rama's actual history

begins in the tenth and ends with the fifteenth canto. The poem closes rather abruptly with the death of the voluptuous Agnimitra. The tradition is that the poem is longer than it really now is. Indigenous Indian scholars opine that the sequel to the history of the Raghu-race has been lost to us. Kalidasa's works generally have a natural conclusion and the rhetorical canons enjoin either a benediction or a happy completion of the story at the conclusion of a poem. The last canto presents to us the widowed Queen of Agnivarma on the throne in trust for a posthumous prince, whose history we know not. The people are anxiously awaiting the birth of a prosperous prince. This curiosity our poem does not abate. Certainly Kalidasa was not the poet to leave his work open to rightful criticism. He was more aesthetic and delicate in his tastes. "His object might have been to connect some one of the dynasties of Kings existing in his time with the race anciently descended from the Sun." Either Kalidasa could not finish his poem or the work has not descended to us in its entirety.

The Kumara-Sambhava—another poem of 17 cantos—opens with the courtship and wedding of Siva and Uma and concludes with the destruction of the demon Taraka by Kumara or the War-God. In short the Birth of the War-God is the subject of the poem.

Kalidasa's poems have been taken as a standard of poetic perfection and natural melody. His similies are apt and striking and it needs no effort to understand him. The story of the Raghuvamsa has more matter and has consequently to avoid all detail and to run fast over the narration. The story of the Kumara-Sambhava has less stuff and necessarily affords the

poet free scope for his artistic painting and delineation. Imagery and description find a longer pace in the latter. The language generally is free from verbal jugglery and enigmatic conceits. Kalidasa is therefore an epitome of the age of poetic perfection in India.

Dhanesvara's Satrunjaya-Mahatmya—a poem of 14 cantos—was composed at Valabhi under King Siladitya (605-615 A. D.). It consists for the most part of popular folk-lore and legend and there is little of history in it.

Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya, a poem of 18 cantos, describes the fight between Arjuna and Siva in the garb of a mountaineer. The last cantos are occupied with the description of the battle proper. Bharavi describes the Maharashtra country and so he may have belonged thereto. But this has not been verified. His name is mentioned along with Kalidasa's in an inscription dated Saka 556 (A. D., 634). Besides in an inscription of 776 A. D., mention is made of Prithivi Kongani, whose fifth ancestor Durvinita wrote a commentary on Bharavi's poem. Allowing about 100 years for the interval from the accession of King Kongani (726 A. D.), Durvinita must have reigned about 620 A. D. It is reliable, therefore, that Bharavi's work to have become popular and famous by this date must have been composed in the latter half of the *sixth century*. His nice similes drawn from nature's art are very amusing. His language cannot be called easy or simple.* Mallinatha calls it '*Narikela-paka*.' His style compares itself with that of Magha and has been the standard of vigour and gravity.

* The fifteenth canto illustrates all kinds of verbal gymnastics as described in Dandin's *Kavyadarsa*.

Kumaradasa's Janakiharanam a poem of 15 cantos opens with a description of Ayodhya and carries the tale in detail up to Rama's marriage. The rest of the story is disposed of in a few chapters. The author was a King of Ceylon of the 6th century A. D. and son of Moudgalyayana.

Bhatti's Ravana-vadha, a poem of 22 cantos, relates the story of Rama. The question of the identity of Bhatti and Bhartrihari is not finally settled. The negativists say that the confusion arose from the fact that Bhatti is a prakritised form of Bhartri. The poet was patronised by Sri Dharasena of Vallabhi, who is referred to as a *Maharajaadhiraj*. From the fact that the Vallabhi Kingdom was never free from vassalage except under Dharasena IV (641-651 A. D.), it is conjectured that our poet flourished somewhere about this time. The so-called poem aims at illustrating the intricate grammatical forms based on the aphorisms of Panini and the minute quibbles of rhetorical devices, yet the language shows out his readiness of vocabulary and the perfectness of grammatical studies. With all its defects the poem does not miss occasional lines noted for lyrical beauty and poetic fancy.

Harichandra's Dharmasarmabhyudaya, a long poem of 21 cantos, describes the life of Dharmanatha, the fifteenth Thirthakara. The author was the son of Ardradeva and a Kayastha of the Digambara Jain sect. Rajasekhara alludes to him in the first act of Kurpuramanjari and the work must therefore fall somewhere about the *eighth century* A. D.

Abhinanda's Kadambarikathasara epitomises the story of Bana's Kadambari in verse. The author was born in Kashmir, but seems to have lived in the Gauda country. His

fourth ancestor Saktiswamin is mentioned at the court of Muktapida (726 A. D.). His patron was the Yuvaraja Haravarsha of the family of Dharmapala. The Lochana of the 10th century refers to it and so our poet must have lived in the 9th century.

The *Kapphanabhyudaya* is a rare poem still in manuscript form. The author calls himself *Bhattasiva Swamin* and is identical with the poet quoted in the *Subhashitavali* of *Vallabhadeva*. He was one of the poets of the court of *Avantivarman* of Kashmir (855-884 A. D.). It is a *Mahakavya* and closely resembles *Magha's* work in diction and style.

Ratnakara's Haravijaya—A long poem of 50 cantos. The author was a Kashmirian poet and according to *Kalhana* (*Raj. V.*, 34) became famous under *Avantivarman* (855-884 A. D.); but his own statement that he was a servant *Brihaspati*, i.e. *Jayapida* (779-813) would place him earlier. His other works are *Vakrokti-panchasika* and *Dhwanigathapanchika*, of which the former is a collection of crooked sayings in the form of a dialogue between *Siva* and *Parvati*.

Magha is represented according to the *Bhoja-prabandha* as a contemporary of King *Bhoja* of *Dhar*. *Anandavardhana* of the 9th century quotes him and *Magha* himself refers to *Jinendrabuddhi*. This latter datum assigns the poet to a period not later than the 9th century and no earlier than the 6th. The period of *Magha's* activity, says *Duff*, would be about 860 A. D. The poet calls himself the son of *Dattaka* and grandson of *Suprabha*. Only one work of his, the *Sisupalavadha*, has come down to us. A *Mahakavya* of 20 cantos, it has maintained its place as a classical poem through these

centuries. At times the thoughts are voluptuous, but everywhere his width of knowledge is apparent. In style he compares with Bharavi and is less stiff than Harsha. Its plot relates to Krishna's slaying of Sisupala. The Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhistira is described wherein Sisupala's misconduct to Krishna—the immediate cause of the war—is carefully delineated. The three last cantos are solely devoted to the actual warfare.

Kaviraja's Raghava-Pandaviya—a poem celebrating the story of the Kosalas and Kauravas at the same time. The ideas are founded on the choice of words and the paranoia on them. The poet's history is utterly in the dark, but he appears to have flourished about the beginning of the *9th century*. The name Kaviraja appears to be an epithet rather than the name proper. Duff's chronology makes Srutakirti the author of the poem whose name is mentioned in an inscription dated 1130 A. D. In that case the poem must be assigned to about the 10th or 11th centuries.

Padmagupta's Navasahasankacharita is a poem written in honor of Sindhuraja. The author was a poet-laureate under the Parama King Munja (974—995) and Sindhuraja (995—1010) and so the work was composed about the end of the *10th century*.

Bilhana was born in the village of Konamukha near Pravarapura, of Jyestakalasa and Nagadevi in the race of the Kausikas. Passing the career of education at Kashmir, he dwelt near Mathura engaged in playful disputes with the Pandits of Brindavan. He had made a special study of grammar and poetics and now began his tour to distant royal

courts. Having visited Dahala (Bundelkhand) and Oudh, he performed his devotions at Somnath. His tour extended South to Rameswara, when he turned back and finally there Vikrama gave him the place of Vidyapati in his Court at Kalyan. *The third and the fourth quarters of the 11th century* embrace in all probability the career of Bilhana. For,

- (i) The two Kings Ananta and Kalasa referred to by Bilhana as having passed away before him did according to General Cunningham reign from 1028 to 1088 A. D.
- (ii) The story as related in the Vikrama Charita concludes with a Chola war and is silent as regards the expedition of 1088 beyond the Narmada.
- (iii) Kalhana says (Raj. VII, 936) that Bilhana lived to see Harsha, son of Kalasa on the throne.
- (iv) Bilhana mentions Karna of Dahala as his patron, whose kingdom was destroyed by Somesvara I. The latter died about 1069. Bilhana's reference must therefore be dated earlier.
- (v) Bilhana speaks of Bhoja of Dhar as a contemporary to whom he omitted to pay a visit.

The *Vikramankadevacharita*, a Mahakavya in 18 cantos, describes the life of the poet's patron Vikrama. His other work the *Chaurapanchasika* describes his company with a royal princess Sasilekha whose tutor he was and with whom he had a Gandharva intrigue. His drama *Karnasundari* will find a place in a later chapter.

As a poet Bilhana ranks high. The difficulty of transforming history into poetry did really mar his high poetic merits,

but still his Panchasika has much of genuine feeling, poetic fancy and musical harmony. "Really beautiful passages occur in every canto. One of the most touching is the description of Ahavamalla's death. Bilhana's verse is musical and flowing and his language simple. He professes to write in the *Vaidarbhariti*."

Kshemendra is known to have flourished in Kashmir under the patronage of King Ananta. He was a Saivite in his earlier years until he was converted into a Vaishnava Bhagavata by the instructions of Somacharya. He underwent his poetic studies under the famous Abhinavagupta. His *Samayamatrika*, a poem describing the arts and tricks of women, on the plan of Kuttinimatam, gives the date of its composition as the 25th year of the Kashmirian cycle in 1050 A. D. His *Chitrabharata* is a drama obviously based on the wonders of the Great War. *Lavanyavati* and *Muktavali* are known to be short poems. *Dasavatara-charita* describes the story of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. *Chaturvargasangraha* is a concise exposition of the whole dictum of the four great motives of human activity. Besides his work was one of epitomes of more voluminous books. His *Bharatamanjari* summarises in easy poetry the eighteen parvams of Vyasa's work, thereby indicating to us that at his time the Mahabharata had a form similar to that we have to-day. So does his *Ramayana manjari*. *Brihatkathamajari* translates into sanskrit poetry the original of Gunadhya's, supposed to have been written in the Paisachi language. His summaries are clearly woven and even the minor incidents of the original have at least an indirect reference. His language does not display much of the later poetic decay and his poetry does in many instances resemble that of Bilhana.

Jalhana's Somapalavilasa is a poem describing the life of King Somapala of Rajapuri near Kashmir. This king was defeated by Sussala in 1118 A. D. and the work must be assigned to the first half of the *twelfth century*. He is referred to as a contemporary by Mankha and as the author of a short poem called *Mugthopadesa*.

Abhayadeva's Jayantavijayam is a poem in 19 cantos. The author was a pupil of Vijayachandra and third in succession to Jinasekharasuri, who flourished about samvat 1204, (1148 A. D.)

Sri Harsha was born of Heera and Mamalladevi. His father was a court-pandit of King Vijayachandra of Kanouj. Routed in a competition by a fellow poet, his father retired from public service and importuned his son on his death-bed to avenge his disgrace. Entrusting his family cares to his kinsmen, Harsha proceeded to educate himself and in a few years was master of *Chintamani mantram*, kindly communicated to him by a venerable sage on the Ganges. Thereby he could withstand any opponents in learning and his thought and language could flow unceasingly. He visited the royal court again and composed the Naishadhiya-charita at the king's request. The work then met with the wide approval of the learned assemblies of Kashmir and honored by a personal acceptance by the Sarasvati on the *peetham* there. He bore the title of *Narabharati*. The jealous queen who called herself Kalabhariti could not bear this and attempted to disgrace Harsha, whereupon he resorted to the banks of the Ganges to spend the rest of his life as an ascetic. Jayantachandra ruled over Kanouj in the *12th century* and necessarily Harsha must have flourished about the same time. External evidence besides this amply justifies this conclusion:—

- (i) No genuine edition of the *Sarasvati-kantabharana* quotes any of Harsha's verses.
- (ii) Rajasekhara, the younger, assigns the composition of the poem to somewhere about 1174 A. D., for Jayachandra's minister's pilgrimage to Somnath was later than Harsha's return from Kashmir.
- (iii) Chanda's *Prithiviraja-rasau*, which has been understood as describing Harsha as a predecessor of Kalidasa, must have been composed far later than the *Prabandhakosa*, perhaps in the 14th century. The interpretation put on Chanda's wording is not at all acceptable.
- (iv) Rajasekhara's account of Jayantachandra closely tallies with Harsha's hints and references.
- (v) The *Naishadha-dipika*, a commentary by Chandu, is dated A. D. 1296 and calls the poem '*navam*' or new.

The *Naishadhiyacharitam* is a Mahakavya of the highest renown in all India. It describes the story of Nala, the king of Nishadha; his love to Damayanti, the Vidarbha princess; his message through a swan; Damayanti's marriage by self-choice with all its vicissitudes; and her happy company at the royal palace. The extant work contains twenty-two cantos, where it seems to be complete. Tradition carries it further to the length of 60 or 120 cantos. It is hoped that the rest of the work is still hidden in some of the unransacked libraries. The work is a masterpiece of Harsha. His ideas, though at times far-fetched, are yet fine and imaginative. All mythology is at his fingers' ends. Rhetoric he rides over. He sees no end to the flow of his description. Still we cannot see in him that ease or felicity of expression that is characteristic of Sudraka or Kalidasa. To the best learned pandit his language

is often a stumbling block. He displays his all-round mastery in every situation and as a Mahakavya his work is the standard of perfection. Among his other works are *Khandana-Khadya*, a destructive critique on the works of Udayana, also a contemporary court-pandit of Heera; *Gaudorvisakula-prasasti* and *Chandaprasasti*, both of which are panegyrics on his royal patrons; *Arnavavarnana*, a long description of the beauties and traditions of the ocean; *Sivabhakti-Siddhi*, a religious work devoted to the worship of Siva; and *Sahasankacharita*, a Champu kavya devoted to the life of a Gauda King of that name.

Mankha's *Srikanthacharita* is a poem in 25 cantos, describing the destruction of the Three Cities by Rudra. The whole of the first canto is devoted to benediction and not one deity escapes his salutation. The style is rugged and harsh. Many of Mankha's stanzas have a double meaning and the poetical ideas are rarely distinct. His learning and mastery of the Sanskrit language is however wonderful.

His birth-place was Kashmir. His brother Alankara, a poet too, was the minister of Sussala and Jayasimha and another brother Sringara held the office of *Brihattantradhipati*. Ruyyaka was his Guru. He wrote his poem probably between 1135 and 1145 A. D. His work forms a landmark in literary history. In one of the later cantos he refers to a number of his contemporary poets of whom principally were Kalhana and Jaibana.

Hemachandra was born at Dhunduka on the full moon of Karthika Samvat 1145 (A.D. 1088). His father was Chachiga-sreshti and mother Pahini. During the father's absence a monk Devendrasuri by name came home and demanded the

young child of five years for an entry into the monastic order. The mother willingly gave him away and he was initiated under the name of Changadeva. On a tour of pilgrimage he stayed at Karnavati in the house of Udayanamantri. His father who ran in quest of him found that his child had already realised the essence of an ascetic's life. As a test he put his hand in the blazing fire and instantly the bony arm was turned to gold ; hence his appellation Hemachandra. He had a respectable reception and patronage at the court of the Chalukya Kings of Anhilvid in Guzerat where he spent the rest of his life till his death in 1173 A. D. He was almost a minister at the royal durbar and through his influence Jainism was encouraged and *Viharas* to the number 1400 were constructed. Laws against cruelty to animals were enacted and meat consumption was prohibited. However his partiality to Brahminism is said to have been equally praise-worthy. His **Kumarapala-charita** is a long poem, the first twenty cantos of which are sanskrit and the last eight prakrit. Hence it was called *Dvyasrayakavya*. The history of Anhilvid princes is given in detail, ending in an enthusiastic appreciation of King Kumarapala. The work appears to have solely been written to illustrate Hemacharya's *Sutras*. Besides Hemachandra is a grammarian, rhetorician and lexicographer. Among his works are *Abhidhana-Chintamani*, *Desinamamala*, *Anekarthamala*, *Chhandonusasana* and *Alankara-Chudamani*.

Vasudeva's Yudhisthiravijaya has 8 chapters. A pupil of Bharathiguru, the author flourished under Kulasekhara of the 12th century A. D. (Ind. Ant. VI, 143.)

Amarachandra's Balabharata narrates the story of the Mahabharata in the order of the *Parvans*. The author was

a pupil of Jinadatta or Vagbhata. He became a genius by his Saraswata-japa. At the court of Visaladeva of Gujrat (1244-1262) he proved himself a most powerful poet and thenceforward he stayed there alone. He wrote also *Chandoratnavali* and *Jinendracharitam*. He therefore flourished about the middle of the 13th century.

Viranandi's *Chandraprabhacharita* is a poem of 17 cantos. It begins with a description of King Kanakaprabha and his line and closes with Indra's incarnation as Jina. The last canto summarises the tenets of the Jain religion. The author must have lived somewhere near Gujrat and his latest date cannot be above the 13th century.

Krishnananda's *Sahridayananda* is a poem giving an account of Nala, King of Nishadha. He was a Kayastha Sandhi-Vigrahika. He is quoted in the *Sahitya-darpana* and is known to have commented on the *Naishadhiyacharita*. He must therefore be assigned to about the 13th century.

Somesvara was a native of Guzarat and belonged to a class of royal priests. He flourished between 1179-1262 A.D., under King's Bhimadeva and Visaladeva. His *Kirtikaumudi* describes the greatness of a Chalukya prince. His *Surathotsavam* is a poem in 15 cantos, narrating the history of Suratha of the Chaitra race. The description of the Hymalayas is most delightful. The killing of Sumbha and Dhumralochana is most vividly depicted. The style follows Bilhana as also the narration. His *Ramasatakam* is devoted to the praise of Rama.

Vedanta Desika was born in 4369 year of Kali and lived 108 years. Thus his period was between 1268 and 1376

A. D.—the times of the Muslim invasions of the Dekhan. His scholastic career was over when he was barely twenty and his life for the rest was one of ceaseless literary activity. His collected works number about 121—separate treatises of which only eight are literary works proper. The *Yadavabhyudaya*, a long epic after the manner of Kalidasa's work, describes the advent and life of Sri Krishna. The *Rughuvira-gadya* is a short prose poem. The *Paduka-sahasra*, a series of one thousand verses in praise of Rama's Sandals, was composed in a single night in a competitive literary duel. Desika's work was more in the field of Logic and Theology. He was the follower of the Ramanuja School of Vedanta philosophy. His memorable work for the Vaishnava Sect has made him a saint of their Church and his image is worshipped to this day. He was at home in every branch of art or literature ; so much so he was named a ' *Sarva-tantra-svatantra*.' " Great as Desika was as a scholar and poet, yet from the point of view of universal literature, we cannot well say there is much of originality either in the choice of his subjects or in his manner of treating them. Perhaps this was largely a fault with all the writers of Sanskrit during that period. Yet our author's works are characterised by fluency of style and command over the force and fecundity of language not easily met with in latter-day scholarship."

Chandrachuda was the son of Purushottama Bhatta. He must have flourished near Benares about *the end of the 15th century*. His *Kartavirya-Vijayam*—a long poem of 14 cantos—describes the story of Kartavirya. The descriptions are in the style of Harsha's but the language not so stiff or obscure. He has a greater grace and melody about his verse.

Govinda-makhin was born of Sri Dhalli and Kuppamba in the race of Sandilya. He was patronised by one Achyutabhupala and himself in his later life was the minister of Kondama-Naik. The small *mantapams* he caused to be constructed by that prince are still to be seen on the banks of the Kaveri near Kumbakonam. His name is likewise associated with the gifts of many *Agraharams*. Once when he was dwelling in the *Madhyarjunakshetra* he had an interview with Appayya-dikshit, who highly pleased by the learning of Govinda condescended to comment on his *Kalpataru*, an epitome of the *Shad-darsani*. Hence Govinda must be assigned partly to the latter half of the 16th and partly to the former of the 17th century. His *Harivamsasara-charitam*, a long poem of 23 cantos, describes the story as related in the Harivamsa. His language especially in this poem is unstrained and natural. We miss here the tediousness of the original and the story is presented to us in a most palatable and attractive poetry.

Venkatesvara was the son of Srinivasa. He was a Vaishnavite by religion and of the Atreya clan. Born near Kanchi in 1595 A. D., he lived for more than fifty years. The exact date of his demise is not known. His *Ramachandrodayam* is a long poem of thirty cantos describing the history of Rama — which on his own authority was composed at Benares in the fortieth year of his life, *i.e.*, 1635 A. D. The poet himself sums up his story :

“आसीतेशाभिषेकादुदित शुभकथं त्रिंशता यत्तु सर्गैः ।
तस्मिन्नामाभिषेकाम्युदयशुभकथस्त्रिंश आभाति सर्गः ॥”

Nilakantha was a descendant of the famous Appayya-dikshit. His father was Narayana and mother Bhumidevi.

He had four brothers all well-versed in Sanskrit learning and all of them gifted with the poetic muse. He was a staunch Saivite by religion and he was best at the Srikantha philosophy. His *Nilakanthavijayam*, a champu kavya, has the date of its composition :—

“अष्टत्रिंशदुपस्कृतसप्तशताधिकचतुस्सहस्रेषु ।
कलिवर्षेषु गतेषु ग्रथितः किल नीलकण्ठविजयोऽयम् ॥”

This year 4138 of Kali corresponds to 1637 A.D. Therefore Nilakantha must doubtless have flourished in the first half of the 17th century. His *Sivalilarnava* is a long poem of 22 cantos describing the history and actions of Siva. It comprehends in itself all the legends that make up the whole range of Siva's incarnation. His *Gangavatarana*—a poem of eight cantos—describes the story of the descent of the celestial Ganges to the human world by the efforts of Bhagiratha. Among his minor poems may be mentioned *Kalividambanam*, *Sabharanjanam* and *Anyapadesa-Satakam*. As a poet, Nilakantha ranks high. His fancies are highly imaginative, his sentiments fine and his language natural. His style has been thus described: “मञ्जुलपदसन्निवेशा विचित्रोद्देखा रसनिर्भराविशङ्क-
टप्रवाहा चास्य साहित्यसरणिः”

Laxmipati was the fourth son of Visvarupa. He flourished in the troubled times consequent on the death of Aurangzeb. His *Avadullacharitam* is a long poem on the life of the King-maker Sayyid Abdulla. It presents no division into sargas or chapters. There is a frequent influx of Persian words due to the contact with the Muhamadan public.

CHAPTER V.

THE INDIAN DRAMA.

Drama is the image of history, the poetry of the present where the past and future meet. It is likewise a poetical embodiment of universal history. The object of the drama is, to quote Shakespeare, "to hold as it were the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time, her form and pressure." Epic poetry represents past history only as a passive fact, merely reporting what has taken place. Every action it relates appears a determined fact unalterable in itself over which man has no control. The purpose served by the drama is unique in itself. No other form of poetry can give a vivid and impressive picture of the nature of man, of the external world and of the relation subsisting between man and the external world.

A central idea in every drama is the first requisite, all other actions and events being duly subordinated to it. The different scenes and acts of a drama must have their end in leading the audience gradually towards a definite goal. Besides this central idea a moral ideal must be present. The sole purpose ought to be the elevation of character through the inculcation of sound morals and the illustration of their benefits. The subject of a drama is but action, and actions are inconceivable without ethical conditions. Hence the inevitable result is that most dramas, whether intended by the poet or not, are invested with a moral ideal. "The Hindu drama, like the Elizabethan, bursts on us in full flush of perfection, and its beginnings, the unskilled stammerings of the voice which charm us with its plenitude of harmony, are lost to us. The natural cause for this seems to be the printing press which

creates an artificial immortality and embalms for the bewilderment of future generations the still-born efforts of an infant muse." The invention of the Indian dramatic entertainments is usually ascribed to Bharata Muni, but according to others they had a still more elevated origin and the art having been gathered from the Vedas by Brahma was by him communicated to the Muni. This is on its face a legend. Three theories have been advanced as to the origin of the Sanskrit Drama :—

1. It had its origin in *religious solemnities and spectacles*. But as the most ancient of the dramas treat of civil life and never speak of religious ceremonies and as allegorical dramas after the manner of the English moralities were of very late growth in the Sanskrit theatre, we must premise that this theory can have no foundation.

2. Professor Weber supposes that the Sanskrit drama had its beginnings "*in the influence of the Greeks wielded on the Hindus.*" This is a mere conjecture and the statement proves no settled opinion on the part of the learned theorist, who in the very next sentence writes "no internal connection, however, with the Greek drama exists."

The Sanskrit drama had unmistakably an indigenous origin. It had begun to be cultivated from the sixth century B. C. and passed into lethargy by the fourteenth century A. D. No historical records point to any relations between the Greeks and the Hindus prior to Alexander's invasion. The few traditions that have come down to us regarding the matter are too vague and uncertain to warrant us in drawing any sound conclusion. The very fact that the Indian drama began

to be cultivated in the sixth century B. C., sufficiently proves that it could not have had any Greek origin.

Another objection is perhaps graver. Dramas are classified by modern critics, Schlegel among others, into *classical* and *romantic*. The Greek tragedy belongs to the classical type, whereas the Sanskrit drama is by universal consent admitted to be romantic. Conceding for a moment the possibility of the Greek origin, is it conceivable that the copy would be so utterly different from the original? They belong to two opposite schools utterly alien to each other in construction, taste and sentiment.

A third objection appears to be more natural. In the ordinary course of things science or art with a foreign origin must be expected to have some borrowed terminology. The most striking example is seen in the case of Indian Astronomy. The Hindus found it impossible to borrow the principles of Greek astronomy without the words in which they were clothed. More than this two separate works called the Romaka and Yavana siddhantas have a distinct place assigned to them in the Indian astronomical literature. No such transference of technical terms we can discern in the case of the drama. Except the allegation that the word *Yavanika* is a derivative from Yavana, the science of Indian dramaturgy makes use of technical terms of pure indigenous origin. Regarding the allegation itself, Indian etymologists derive the term from the root युमि भ्रमणे, the sense being that Yavanika is so called from the fact of the actors assembling behind it. Moreover the word *Yavana* has not been universally accepted as a synonym for the Greeks. It has a widest application and perhaps an indiscriminate one. Hence the

mere existence of the word *Yavanika*, exhibiting by chance a formative resemblance to a term vague in itself, can carry no weight with it. Lastly, all institutions, sciences or arts that have their origin in religion are admittedly home-sprung. The Sanskrit drama as invariably written and exhibited at religious festivals and congregations cannot have a foreign origin.

These theories are obviously advanced at random to dishonour the half-refined capabilities of primitive Indians and the natural tendencies of their time-honoured institutions. No wonder, therefore, they have as usual sought their way back to their original sources and are now no more rewarded than with oblivion and ignominy.

3. *Music*, dialogue, gesticulation and imitation may be confidently asserted the precursors of Sanskrit drama, be it on a secular or religious basis.

Music in its theoretical as well as its practical aspect may be traced in India as far as the Vedic age. Men who presided at sacrifices and those who witnessed them were not satisfied with the dull incantations of the Hotris or with the monotonous recitations of the Adhvaryus. Something to charm the people, something to elevate their imagination was the need. And this want was soon supplied by the formation of a third class of priests called Udgatris. Their business at sacrifices was to chant the Saman which was totally borrowed from the Rig Veda and was adapted to singing. Thus the primeval cultivation of the science and art of music is to be found in the Samaveda.

Dialogue, being an impressive form of composition, was often employed in the Vedic, Epic, and Rationalistic periods

of Sanskrit Literature. In the Rig Veda we occasionally find conversations between supernatural beings and Rishis. As examples, the conversation of Indra, Agastya and Maruts, and the dialogue between Yama and Yami, may be mentioned. The epics may be called actual dialogues, the whole of the Mahabharata being composed in the form of a dialogue between Suta and his disciples. The Upanishads contain many dialogues of which the pathetic conversation between Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi on the occasion of their mutual separation, may be pointed out as an instance.

Gesticulation is one of the instruments by which languages are formed. Though gestures cannot express with the same degree of facility all that can be expressed by language, they are the rude beginnings of every language. Even the most polished languages of the world, not to speak of the uncultivated jargons, cannot dispense with the use of gestures or bodily eloquence, whether it be for a rhetorical purpose or for the purpose of the speaker's understanding. Thus we see the use of gesticulation is a natural and primary instinct of the human race. All acting includes the use of gestures. The laws of gesticulation deduce from observation what is appropriate for the expression of particular sentiments of the human mind, of particular ages of life and character, and of peculiar characteristics of nationality.

The fourth element which has contributed to the formation of the drama is *imitation*. The art of imitation is an innate faculty without which man would not have been what he is. In childhood and youth this faculty is in the highest activity, while in manhood it lies dormant, and in old age becomes sterile. Our mother-tongue as well as our manners and

actions are acquired by imitation. The method of dramatic art is imitation in the way of action.

"In all likelihood, the germ of the dramatic representations of the Hindus as of the Greeks is to be sought for in public exhibitions of dancing, which consisted at first of simple movements of the body executed in harmony with singing and music. Very soon dancing was extended to include pantomimic gesticulations accompanied with more elaborate musical performances, and these gesticulations were aided by occasional exclamations between the intervals of singing. Finally natural language took the place of music and singing, while gesticulation became merely subservient to emphasis in dramatic dialogue." (*Monier Williams*).

The terms denoting the drama and acting are derived from the same root '*nat.*' Besides the fact of the identity of derivation, the Dasarupa says, "Acting is the imitation of conditions; *Rupa* is so called because it is to be seen, and *Rupaka* from the artificial assumption of forms by actors." Corresponding to the several stages in the development of Sanskrit dramas, five modes of early dramatic representation are noted :—

- (i) *Natya* or dramatic representations proper.
- (ii) *Nritya* or gesticulation without language.
- (iii) *Nritta* or pure dancing without any admixture of gesture or language.
- (iv) & (v) *Tandava* and *Lasya* : These were merely styles of dancing, the former being so named from Tandau an attendant of Siya whom the God instructed in it, while the other was "taught by Parvati to the princess Usha, who instructed the Gopis of Dwaraka,

and by them communicated to the women of Sourashtra the art passed to the females of various regions."

SECTION II.

The date of the origin.

The earliest reference to works on dramatic representations is made by Panini, from which we may infer that at least two works on *Natyasutra* by *Silalin* and *Krisaswa* must have existed in his time.

Goldstucker decides that Panini lived in the sixth century B. C. which must also be the latest date of the *Natyasutras*. Besides we have another testimony afforded by the sacred books of the Buddhists. There it is stated that two disciples of Buddha witnessed dramatic representations.

The negative evidence is to be adduced from the absence of certain antecedents. Sanskrit ceased to be the *lingua franca* of the Aryans at least before Buddha's time from the fact the Buddha preached his religion in Pali or Prakrit. One reason why Sanskrit dramas are polylingual may be sought for in the fact that the poets desired to make them intelligible to the uneducated masses. The very fact of the introduction of Prakrit establishes the statement that the men who were first inspired by the dramatic muse had borrowed their initiative from Buddhist practices.

Mritchakatika is the most ancient drama, extant, being assigned at the latest to the 1st century B. C. Examining the simplicity of diction and the development of the plot therein,

it is absurd to suppose that it was the first drama that ever came out of a Sanskrit poet's hands. It is like arguing that Ben Jonson was the first English dramatist, Panini the first Sanskrit grammarian or Vergil the first Latin poet. In the absence of anything urged to the contrary, we must clearly conclude that the drama ascribed to the royal author Sudraka is the result of a long and laborious cultivation of the science and art of dramaturgy at least from the 6th century B.C., to which period we have referred the *Natyasutras*.

SECTION III.

The Dramatic Arrangement.

Every drama opens with a prelude or introduction, in which the audience are made acquainted with the author, his work, the actors, and such part of the prior events as is necessary for the spectators to know. The actors of the prelude were never more than two, the manager and one of his company, either an actor or actress, and they led immediately into the business of the drama. The first part of this introduction is termed the *Purva-ranga* and opens with a prayer, invoking in a benedictory formula the protection of some deity in favour of the audience. This is termed the *Nandi*, or that which is the cause of gratification to men and gods. There is a difference of opinion as to who recites the *Nandi*, and the commentator on the *Mudra-Rakshasa* observes, "that it is equally correct to supply the ellipse after *nandyante* by either *pathati* 'reads,' or *pravracati* 'enters,' in the former case the *Sutradhara* reciting the *Nandi*, and then continuing the induction; in the latter the benediction being pronounced by a different individual." The *Sutradhara*, according to the

technical description of him, "was to be well-versed in light literature, as narrative, plays and poetry; he should be familiar with various people, experienced in dramatic details and conversant with different mechanical arts." The prayer is usually often followed by some account of the author of the piece, in which most of the authors "give a long description of their genealogies and of their own attainments, while it is a characteristic of Kalidasa's writings that they all begin with a charmingly modest introduction, marked by great diffidence;" and in some places, the mention of the author is little more than the particularisation of his name. The notice of the author is in general followed by a complimentary appeal to the favour of the audience, and the manager occasionally gives a dramatic representation of himself and his concerns in a dialogue between himself and one of his company, either an actor or an actress, who is termed the *Puriparswika* or associate. The conclusion of the prelude, termed the *Prastavana*, prepares the audience for the entrance of one of the dramatic personages, who is adroitly introduced by some abrupt exclamation of the manager, either by simply naming him as in the *Sakuntala* and *Mālavikāgnimitra*, or by uttering something he is supposed to overhear, and to which he advances to reply, as in the *Mritchakati* and *Mudra-Rākshasa*. The play being thus opened, is carried forward in scenes and acts, each scene being marked by the entrance of one character, and the exit of another; for in general the stage is never left empty in the course of the act, nor does total change of place often occur. Contrivances have been resorted to, to fill up the seeming chasm which such an interruption as a total change of scene requires, and to avoid such solecism which the entrance of a character, whose approach is unannounced, is considered to be.

Of these, two are personages ; the interpreter and introducer ; the *Vishkambhaka* and the *Praveçaka*. These are members of the theatrical company, apparently, who may be supposed to sit by, and upon any interruption in the regular course of the piece, explain to the audience its course and object. The *Vishkambhaka*, it is said, may appear at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an act : the *Praveçaka*, it is said, may appear only between the acts. But this is contradicted by the constant practice, for in every place the *Praveçaka* indicates a change of scene. The duty of the *Praveçaka* was probably of a very simple nature and he merely announced the change of scene and approach of a certain character. The *Vishkambhaka* had a more diversified duty, and besides filling up all the blanks in the story, he was expected to divert the audience by his wit and repartee. The employment of the *Vishkambhaka* and *Praveçaka* is indicated by a simple naming of them, and what either is to do or say is left to the person who fills the character.

The first act or the *Ankamukha* furnishes a clue to the subject of the whole story and the ensuing acts carry on the business of the story to its final development in the last. The piece closes, as it began, with a benediction or prayer, which is always repeated by the principal personage, who expresses his wishes for general plenty and happiness.

SECTION IV.

Its Characteristics.

The Indian drama presents an obvious analogy to the tragedy of the Greeks, which was "the imitation of a solemn and perfect action, of adequate importance, told in pleasing

language, exhibiting the several elements of dramatic composition, in its different parts represented through the instrumentality of agents not by narration, and purifying the affections of human nature by the influence of pity and terror."

In the Sanskrit dramas there is a total absence of the distinction between Tragedy and Comedy. They never offer a calamitous conclusion, which, as Johnson remarks, was enough to constitute a Tragedy; and although they excite all the emotions of the human breast, terror and pity included, they never effect this object by leaving a painful impression upon the mind of the spectator. "They are mixed compositions, in which joy and sorrow, happiness and misery, are woven in a mingled web—tragi-comic representations, in which good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, are allowed to blend in confusion during the first acts of the drama. But in the last act, harmony is always restored, order succeeds to disorder, tranquillity to agitation; and the mind of the spectator, no longer perplexed by the apparent ascendancy of evil, is soothed and purified and made to acquiesce in the moral lesson deducible from the plot." The Hindus in fact have no tragedy, and tragic catastrophe is prohibited by a positive rule. The death of either the hero or the heroine is never to be announced, and death must invariably be inflicted out of the view of the spectators. The excepted topics are, hostile defiance, solemn imprecations, exile, degradation, and natural calamity; whilst those of a less grave or comic character, are biting, scratching, kissing, eating, sleeping, bath and the marriage ceremony.

The Dramatic Unities.

"With regard to the unities we have that of action fully recognised and a simplicity of business is enjoined quite in the

spirit of the Greek drama. The unity of place is not noticed as might have been expected from the probable absence of all scenic embellishment. The unity of time is curiously modified, conformably to a principle which may satisfy the most fastidious and the time required for the fable elapses invariably between the acts. In practice, there is generally less latitude than the rule indicates and the duration of an act is very commonly that of representation, the night elapsing in the interval."

The Hindu drama confines itself "neither to the crimes nor the absurdities of mankind ; neither to the momentous changes, nor lighter vicissitudes of life ; neither to the terrors of distress nor the gaieties of prosperity." They interweave sorrow and seriousness with mirth and levity. The Hindus in fact have no tragedy. "In truth, however," says H. H. Wilson "the individual and social organisation of the native of India is unfavourable to the development of towering passion and whatever poets or philosophers might have intimated against the contrary, there is no doubt that the regions of physical equability have ever been and still are those of moral extremes."

CHAPTER VI. THE DRAMATIC WRITINGS.

The Sanskrit drama must have been in cultivation at least since the sixth century B. C. But no drama of the centuries before the Christian era has come down to us. Foremost among the reasons that can be adduced to account for the loss of this dramatic literature stands the fact of the absence of a proper machinery of preservation. The multiplication of MSS.

was therefore a difficult and expensive process. The Brahmans with their marvellous memory never cared to recite the dramas and to propagate dramatic literature orally since the drama formed no part of their sacred scripture. Besides the works of a certain dramatist became the property of a particular class of professional actors who deliberately withheld publishing them and with whom necessarily the dramas themselves became extinct.

The one drama that survived this wreck is the **Mrit chakatika**. **Sudraka** is the reputed author and the prologue gives him a high place in arms and in letters. He lived a hundred years and then burnt himself leaving his kingdom to his son.

Tradition includes him among the universal monarchs of India and places him between Chandragupta and Vikramaditya. The late Col. Wilford considers him the same with the founder of the Andhra dynasty of Magadha Kings, succeeding to the throne by deposing his master, the last of the Kanwa race, to whom he was minister. It is further asserted in the Kumarika-Khanda of the Skanda Purana that in the year 3800 Kali a great King Sudraka would reign. This date is 190 A. D. Therefore Sudraka must be that king.

A work of Sudraka's reign, this may be considered the oldest specimen of the Hindu drama, and internal evidence there is ample to support the view:—

1. The style of the play is simple, unartificial and free from rhetorical devices with which similar work teem. Such a simplicity cannot be attributed to any *riti* or school.

2. The peculiarity in the language of Samsthanaka. His citations of literary passages are from the two great Epics and "not even one from the Puranic legends." Therefore Wilson suspects that the drama was written prior to the composition of the Puranas or at least before the stories they contain had acquired by their aggregation familiar and popular currency.

[*N. B.*—This argument is not verified. The slaying of Sumbha and Nisumbha by Durga forms the theme of the Markandeya Purana. So are the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice and the killing of Krouncha by Kartikeya.]

3. Hindu law prohibits suicide everywhere but Prayag. But the breach of the law by Sudraka without any odium for the violation leads Wilson to think that the society of the drama preceded law.

[*N. B.*—The subsequent foot-note of Wilson invalidates this assertion. 'That the practice of voluntary cremation was observed at the beginning of Kali we know from classical authority.' Besides suicide was sometimes permitted and regarded meritorious, *e.g.*, in Sarvaswara sacrifice.]

4. The love of a respectable brahmin for a courtesan though prohibited in the Kali age indicates perhaps a period anterior to the prohibition.

5. "The accuracy with which Buddhist observances are adverted to and the flourishing condition in which the Buddhists are represented to exist." In the second century the worship of Buddha was prevalent in India and it is clear that the play was written in the days of their prosperity.

6. Weber bases his argument on the use of the word Nanaka (I-23)—a term borrowed from the coins of Kanerki, a king who reigned about 40 A. D. But there is no reason to suppose that the Goddess Naina did not similarly occur on more ancient coins so as to place the drama after the 2nd century A. D.

“The play though long has considerable dramatic merit, the plot being ingeniously developed and the interest well-sustained by a rapid succession of stirring events and picturesquely diversified scenes of everyday life. The character of Samsthanaka, a vicious dissipated man, stands in striking contrast to that of Charudatta. As the one is a pattern of generosity, so the other stands in bold relief as a typical embodiment of the lowest forms of depravity. The heroine Vasantasena, a beautiful and wealthy lady, although according to the strict standard of morality not irreproachable, might still be described as conforming to a high-minded liberal woman. The third act contains a humorous account of a burglary, where stealing is treated as a fine art.

“The dexterity with which the plot is arranged, the ingenuity with which the incidents are connected, the skill with which the characters are delineated and contrasted, the boldness and felicity of the diction are scarcely unworthy of our own dramatists. The asides and aparts, the exits and entrances, the manner, attitude and gait of the speakers, their tones of voice, tears and smiles and laughter are as regularly indicated as in a modern drama.”—*Williams*.

The name of **Bhasa** is an enigma in Sanskrit literature. His fame as a dramatist has been traditionally conceded, but no

evidence has been preserved to test the merit of the tradition. Dandin and Bana had already recognised the greatness of Bhasa in the field of letters. Modern theories identify his personality with that of *Dhavaka* or *Ghatakarpara*. The three beautiful dramas ascribed to King Harsha and the two musical lyrics in the name of Ghatakarpara are consequently argued to be the production of his mighty poetic intellect. Apart from the real value of these theories, his dramatic genius is unquestionable. Orthodox tradition ascribes twenty-four dramas to his authorship, not one of which has seen the light of the modern press. If as these theories premise he were of the most humiliating trade of a washerman, this may sufficiently account for his oblivion. At least the names of three of his works we have known on reliable authority. The *Udatta-raghava* develops the eminent side of the character of Rama. The *Svapna-vasavadatta* occupies itself with the story of Udayana's marriage with Vasavadatta. The *Kirana vali* is said to be a natika in the mode of the Ratnavali. From the rare quotations from these works in later works on rhetoric, we can safely form an estimate of Bhasa's poetry. His work is one of natural sweetness. His dramas, as Bana says, were orderly and principled. Variety of character pleased him most. Indeed in originality of conception and versatility of imagery, he was a worthy fore-runner of him, who had found an immortal place among the nine gems of the learned assembly of the renowned Vikramaditya.

Next in the list of dramatists comes Kalidasa, the greatest of all. But it is to be regretted that his greatness has not been concurrent with a correct history of his own life or writings. If any part of Indian chronology is unsettled, it is the age of Kalidasa, whereinto the brightest light of

modern research has not penetrated. In this diversity of opinion some of the pertinent *theories* had better be examined.

M. Hippolite Fanche assigns Kalidasa to the reign of the posthumous child that ascended the throne on the death of the voluptuous King Agnimitra. This would take back Kalidasa to about the eighth century B. C.

If Kalidasa were to be a contemporary of a reigning king, his omission to give any history of his own ruler is unaccountable. Besides, as we had already said, the *Raghuvamsa* cannot be said to be a complete poem. Tradition says that the sequel to the history of Solar Kings has been yet unrecovered. The simple fact that Kalidasa's account closes there cannot conclusively prove the end of the dynasty itself. The *Vishnu-purana* mentions a list of thirty-seven Kings after Agnimitra. Bhavabhuti's age is with tolerable certainty fixed to the eighth century A. D. Granting Fanche's theory, there is a wide gap of sixteen centuries between them—which long distance of time must have caused a corresponding change in style and language. The artificiality of diction discernible in Bhavabhuti can at the most allow an interval of five centuries and no more.

Sir William Jones places Kalidasa in the first century B. C. This date rests on no other foundation than that of tradition which runs to the effect that there was once a king named Vikramaditya, who after defeating the Sakas or Scythians established the *Samvat era* which commences 57 B. C. Thus runs the memorial verse:—

धन्वन्तरिः क्षपणकामरसिंहशङ्खवेताळभट्टघटकर्परकालिदासाः ।

ख्यातो वराहमिहिरो नृपतेस्सभायां रत्नानि वै वररुचिर्नव विक्रमस्याः ।

Here, there are involved two questions of importance :—

Was there such a prince as Vikramaditya, the destroyer of the Mlechas, the founder of the Samvat era, who reigned in the 1st century B. C.?

1. The belief in a Vikramaditya rests on tradition. But it is also confirmed by the Pathavali of Merutunga, who says that after Nabhovahana, Gardhabhilla ruled at Ujjain for 13 years, when Sri Kulikacharya, on account of the violence offered to his sister Saraswati, uprooted him and established the Saka Kings at Ujjain. They ruled there for four years. His son Vikramaditya regained the kingdom of Ujjain and commenced the Vikrama Samvat era. This took place 470 years after Vira's era. The Saka era began 605 years after Vira Nirvana." Thus it is seen that a Vikramaditya ruled 135 years before the Saka era.

2. Some antiquarians doubt the very historical existence of such a prince, saying there is absolutely no documentary evidence, in the first century B. C. Fergusson however attempted a theory. He arrives at the following conclusions :—

- (i) That the Vikramaditya who conquered the Sakas at the battle of Karur was Harsha of Ujjain;
- (ii) That he died about 550 A. D.;
- (iii) That before 1000 A. D., when the struggle with the Buddhists was over and a new era was opening for Hindu religion, the Hindus sought to establish some new method of marking time—to supersede the Buddhist Saka era of Kanishka;
- (vi) That the Guptas and the Kings of Valabhi having then passed away, in looking for some name or

event of sufficient importance to mark the commencement of a new era, they hit on the name of Vikramaditya as the most illustrious known to them and his victory at Karur, the most important event of his reign.

- (vii) That, since the date of victory A. D. 544 was too recent to be adopted, they antedated the epoch by ten cycles of sixty years, thus arriving at B. C. 56 and not content with this devised another era, which they called the Harsha era from the other part of his name and the epoch of which was fixed at B. C. 456 by placing it ten even centuries before the date of Karur. It is an actual fact that the name of Vikrama does not occur in connection with the era of B. C. 57 until a comparatively recent date.

But this theory of Mr. Fergusson's is vitiated throughout by the undue reliance which he placed on the quasi-historical records of the Rajatarangini. The early chronology of Kashmir has still to be fixed and the means of adjusting it are to be found in A. D. 533 as the date of Mihirakula, who according to the book itself reigned in 8th century B. C. And if the date of Harsha of Ujjain is really dependent on the date of Hiranya of Kashmir, it certainly cannot be placed as early as 6th century A. D.

Besides, the new Mandassor inscription, which was composed and engraved when the year 529 had expired from the tribal constitution of the Malavas, gives us, through his feudatory Bandhuvarman, the date of the year 403 of the same era for Kumara-gupta. This proves :—

1. That Kumaragupta dynastic dates and with them those of his father Chandragupta II and his son Skandagupta, which belong undeniably to the same series and also any other which can be shown to run uniformly with them, must be referred to the epoch 319-320 A. D., brought to notice by Alberuni and substantiated by the Veyavala inscription of Vallabhi Samvat 945.

2. That under another name connecting with the Malava tribe, the Vikrama era did undoubtedly exist anterior to A. D. 544, which, as we have seen, was held by Fergusson to be the year in which it was invented. These results are of course independent of the question whether the early Guptas established an era of their own with the above-mentioned epoch or they only adopted the era of some other dynasty.

Thus Fergusson's theory collapses and the tradition on which our belief in the Vikrama of the 1st century B. C. really exists is in this instance corroborated by a fact.

Did the celebrated nine gems flourish at the court of a Vikramaditya of B. C. 56? The only authority in support of the affirmation is the Jyotirvidabharana, the authenticity of which is highly questionable. The tradition moreover does not speak as to the identity of this Vikrama with the founder of the Samvat era. Besides the evidence of language is against the tradition. Houen Thsang places Harsha Siladitya about 580 A. D. and makes Vikramaditya his immediate predecessor. Again Varahamihira, who is included among the nine gems, gives the date of the composition of his Brihat Samhita and this is the sixth century A. D. Against this negative evidence, the tradition that the nine gems were contemporaries makes no stand.

Again *Dr. Bhau Daji* has fixed the first half of the sixth century A. D. and this date is acquiesced in by many of the celebrated antiquarians of the present day. The ratio bearing on this conclusion may be arranged as follows :—

- (i) Kalidasa has been known to be one of the gems of Vikrama's Court. Of these Varahamihira died in A. D. 587, as appears from a commentary on Brahma Gupta. Colebrooke had already assigned to him the close of the fifth century of the Christian era from a calculation of the position of the stars affirmed as actual in his time by Varahamihira.
- (ii) A line in the *Meghaduta दिङ्नागानां ...I. 14*, affords another datum for fixing the date. The suggested sense according to Mallinatha refers to a pointed allusion to the poets Dingnaga and Nichula, contemporaries of Kalidasa. Of these the former is a celebrated name in the *Pramana Sastra* or *Logic*. From the life of Bhagavat Buddha by Ratnadharmaraja, we learn that Dingnaga was the pupil of the Buddhist Arya Asanga in Nyaya 900 years after the death of Buddha and this Asanga was the elder brother and teacher of Vasubandhu. Hiouen Thsang tells us that the latter was the contemporary of Vikrama of Sravasti. According to Fergusson, the reign of Siladitya Pratapasila ends in 580 A. D. He ruled, as Ferista says, fifty years and was preceded by Vikrama whose reign must therefore have ended in 530 A. D.
- (iii) Besides Kalidasa must have lived after Aryabhata (A. D. 499) because he displays a knowledge of scientific astronomy borrowed from the Greeks.

But this argument may seem weak: "A passage in the Raghuvamsa XIV. 40 has been erroneously adduced in support of the astronomical argument, as implying that eclipses of the moon are due to the shadow of the earth; it really refers only to the spots in the moon as caused, in accordance with the doctrine of the Puranas, by a reflection of the earth."

His religion:—From the fact that Kalidasa invariably invokes Siva at the beginning of his works, it would be wrong to infer he was a strict Saivite. His veneration for Vishnu appears to have been even greater than that of Siva. For his works abound in passages extolling the attributes of Vishnu, whom he seems to consider the head of the Hindu pantheon. In language used by Vaishnava works, he describes Vishnu as the deity of whom all the other Gods including Siva are but so many different manifestations (Raghu X. 16—17). On the other hand Kumara-Sambhava II assigns to Brahma the same high attributes as those assigned to Vishnu which would show Kalidasa to be no more a Saiva than a Vaishnava or a Bramo. In one place he says all are one.

"The mythological notions of the author, as inferable from the benedictory stanzas opening the three plays, are rather adverse to a remote antiquity, as the worship of any individual deity as a Supreme being and with Bhakthi or Faith appears to be an innovation in Hindu ritual and theology of a comparatively modern period. At the same time, the worship of Saiva undoubtedly prevailed in the Dekhan at the commencement of the Christian era and Vikramaditya, the patron of Kalidasa, is traditionally represented as devoted to Siva and his Consort.—*H. H. Wilson.*